

New Teachers Face NCATE Litmus Test on Diversity—

Educators must exhibit “correct” attitudes toward race and lifestyles

By Robert Holland



Robert Holland

Multicultural Education (NAME).

Donna Gollnick unveiled new standards for schools, colleges, and departments of education promulgated by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). That Gollnick is both NAME president and senior vice president of NCATE suggests the close relationship the two organizations have developed.

Gollnick pointed out how multicultural diversity will be a factor in education schools implementing four of the six NCATE standards, while a fifth standard is entirely about diversity.

For instance, Standard One, which has to do with the “knowledge, skills, and dispositions” of teacher candidates, will have a “performance-based” evaluation to determine if would-be teachers exhibit what the examiners deem to be racist or sexist attitudes unacceptable to NCATE.

On Standard Two, dealing with field experiences, NCATE will insist this work be done “in diverse settings.” In Standard Five, faculty will be expected to “integrate diversity in their own teaching” by way of modeling what NCATE deems “best practices.”

Overall, the emphasis on diversity is so single-minded as to suggest intellectual *conformity* rather than diversity of thought.

Limiting Choice

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), based at Teachers College, Columbia University and funded by the Carnegie Foundation, wants

The tight link between political advocacy of multicultural diversity and accreditation of the higher education institutions that train the nation's K-12 teachers was on display during the recent annual convention of the National Association for

to see all teachers compelled to graduate from education schools that are NCATE-accredited. Such a requirement would severely limit choice in education for parents and teachers alike. The National Education Association [NEA], the nation's largest teacher union, was one of NCATE's founders and remains influential in its affairs.

At a NAME institute just before the start of a convention attended by 1,000 educators from all fifty states, Gollnick stressed repeatedly how diversity is *the* single yardstick NCATE will use above all to measure the work of teacher trainers.

What does NCATE mean by diversity? Here is its official definition, as stated in the glossary of its Professional Standards:

“Differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area.”

Looking for Diversity

Gollnick explained NCATE would look for diversity not only in faculty numbers but also in how professors teach their classes. NCATE seeks “performance-based assessment” so that, through videos or portfolios of work, teachers at all levels will have to show they are “teaching multiculturally.”

The NCATE standards repeatedly emphasize the necessity for teacher trainers and future teachers to exhibit the correct “dispositions” with regard to diversity. What does that mean? Another presenter, G. Pritchey Smith, an education professor at the University of North Florida, made the point more explicitly.

Lamenting the fact that 80 percent of teacher-education students are white, Smith said, “Many do not have the requisite attitudes and lifestyle diversity. I have yet to be convinced that a student who is racist can teach.” “We should be more aggressive,” he concluded. “We should hire people who are anti-racists and encourage them to create a new world order. Social justice is the way to

close the achievement gap. This should be the central ‘disposition.’”

Smith commended long lists of books and other curricular materials to teach teachers to value the kinds of diversity valued by NCATE and NAME. Among the recommended works were ones sympathetic to black English or Ebonics, the special needs of gay and lesbian students, and bilingual education to help children retain their non-English first language.

Elevating Fact over Feeling

While saying much about the differences known as diversity, the new NCATE standards have little to say about raising student achievement. That could be because the view of NCATE accreditors pretty much corresponds with the dominant view of the NAME conference: standardized tests are unfair impediments to diversity.

For example, keynote speaker Peggy McIntosh, associate director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, criticized tests for a “get-it-right syndrome” that elevates fact over feeling.

“African-Americans learn holistically,” elaborated Smith. “They are not so concerned about specific little details. Most white kids have respect for validated knowledge. In other cultures, it has to feel like the truth.”

So, if the professional multiculturalists have their way, there can never be meaningful intellectual standards tied to a common core curriculum. There can only be standards for celebrating and accentuating cultural differences. If NCATE and NAME get their way, this is how all future teachers will teach. **EM**

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Just Say No!

Dear AAE,

I am a member of AAE and a teacher in the Adelanto School District in California. In this district, SB 1960 [California Senate Bill] was implemented in November (rather than October). I followed the procedures you outlined, and just before Christmas my refund check in the amount of \$226.65 from the California Teachers Association (CTA) was delivered.

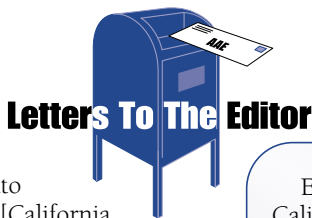
I chose to wait until I KNEW my union dues had been involuntarily withheld before initiating the procedure. However, I admit that the folks at the CTA were rather prompt in responding to my request for my legal refund.

Thank you for your 'just say no' help! Without this help, the paperwork job would have been much more difficult.

Due to the moral and philosophical differences, I would have preferred not having to pay dues to the CTA at all, but at least the refund I received is almost twice my annual AAE dues! Just in case you are interested, a copy of the CTA letter (see below) and check that I received are enclosed.

Again, my grateful thanks.

—Harris W. Olson, Jr.
Apple Valley, California



Editor's Note

Editor's note—Senate Bill 1960 was a bill introduced in California that effectively “closed shop” on all teachers teaching in the state who had chosen not to join a teacher union. The teacher unions were successful in getting lawmakers to require teachers in the state to either join or pay dues to the union (called agency fees) even if they don't want to be represented by the unions. The only relief a teacher has is to request a refund of the amount of dues the union admits it uses for “non-representational” purposes—or, in other words, it uses for politics (see the CTA letter below).

Teachers like Harris Olson, Jr., are to be commended for standing on their principles. And teachers in right-to-work states across the nation should be counting their blessings they don't work in states that usurp the right of free association!

Local Teachers Force Union Out

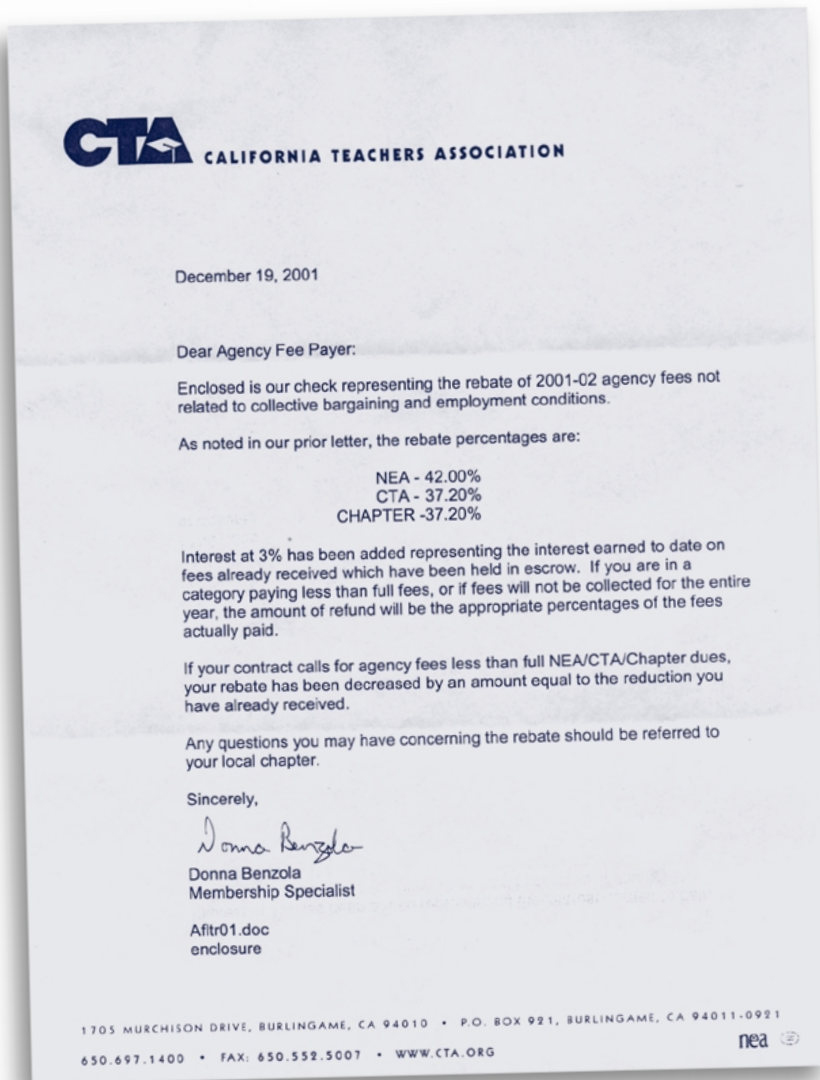
Dear AAE,

I want to thank AAE for its legal advice and assistance as my colleagues and I went through the process of decertifying the Michigan Education Association (MEA) from Island City Academy. As a recent graduate from Hillsdale College, I learned about the handcuffs placed on teachers by many collective bargaining agreements. Further, as a lifelong resident of Michigan, I have heard, and seen for myself through my own public school experience, that the MEA does not really help teachers make progress as professionals. But, the MEA refused to listen to the teachers at Island City until we got your legal services director, La Rae Munk, to help.

Through the advice of Mrs. Munk and the AAE, we were able to get in contact with the right people, and get the State of Michigan and the MEA to at least listen to our complaints. However, ultimately, it became necessary to force the MEA to leave our school. Mrs. Munk was able to help us organize meetings with all our teachers and tell them their rights, answering questions sometimes with only a few minutes notice. She was also able to provide tons of research and statistics that we would have never had the time to find or even known where to look. It was a relief to have such a professional available when the union started its intimidation tactics, and she helped us stand up for our rights. The fact that Mrs. Munk didn't falter when the MEA began attacking her personally and professionally gave us the courage to stick with the fight.

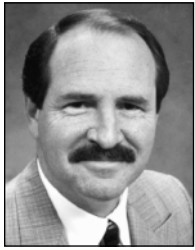
We have been able to communicate with other teachers in the greater Lansing area who are also interested in getting better representation than the MEA in their schools. Whatever assistance you can provide to get the information regarding teachers' rights into the hands of teachers, as well as to make your legal services available to them, will finally give teachers choices. Thank you.

—Sarah Parker Coons
First/second grade teacher
Island City Academy



The State of American Education

A Word from our Executive Director—Gary Beckner



Gary Beckner

“The fate of nations,” wrote Aristotle, “depends on the education of the young.” In 1983, the landmark report, *A Nation at Risk*, handed down a shocking verdict about the education of America’s youth: *too many* of our public

schools are turning out poorly educated children unable to function as responsible and informed members of a free society.

Frankly, nearly twenty years later, *too little* has changed to dramatically affect the quality of public education in America. But there is light at the end of the tunnel. And, no, it’s not an oncoming train.

We are beginning to see improvements in national academic achievement reports and, in many school districts across America, we have been doing a good job all along, especially in suburban and rural districts. Unfortunately, most of the nation’s largest school districts, primarily those in the urban areas, are still stuck in neutral, or worse, slipping into reverse. And because the majority of America’s students are enrolled in these bureaucratically bloated districts—we cannot expect dramatic improvement any time soon.

What can we do to accelerate the restoration of our education system?

Everyone has ideas—from President Bush and Secretary Paige, to the NEA and AFT, as well as hundreds of think tanks, commissions, and foundations.

We, the Association of American Educators, even get a chance to add *your* two cents from time to time. When we are asked to comment in the press or in media interviews, we always rely on our annual member surveys for your positions on various reform ideas. In fact, one of the very reasons we started this organization was because we were concerned that classroom teachers were not being consulted enough. We hear the opinions of union leaders, special interest groups, politicians, educational theorists, self-appointed gurus, and many others. Many haven’t been in the classroom for years, if ever. Most have an agenda or something to be gained personally from the acceptance of their “ideas”—which an experienced classroom teacher could have told you wouldn’t have worked in the first place.

When the leadership of the AAE is given the opportunity to expound on the state of the American education system, we share that our greatest concern is that America is splitting into two classes: educated and not educated.

We must close this gap at once! Contrary to some of the ideas in vogue today, we’re convinced that *raising the bar* is the fastest way to *narrow the gap*. If it is still true that “knowledge is power,” then the best way to empower our children is to give them the advantages of a knowledge-based education. We must also ensure that their teachers are equipped to help them get over the bar, not continue to lower it for them out of well-intentioned but misguided compassion.

To this end, we must free teachers from restrictive contracts, regulations, and mandates that require the use of unproven theories and uncalled-for agendas being forced on them by distant bureaucrats and special interest groups. Teachers should not be surrogate parents, social workers, or “change agents.” Teachers should be supported and encouraged to do what they do best: Teach.

The “No Child Left Behind” Act contains many promising provisions that could indeed give *teachers* more flexibility, freedom, and authority to make decisions that are in the best interest of their students. That’s a great first step, and the AAE will enthusiastically support this administration and the U.S. Department of Education toward implementation of these reforms. However, in all the media attention given to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), very little has been said about the need to reinvigorate *character education*. That’s because very little has been proposed thus far.

We firmly believe that “good character” must be restored to its historical place as a central desirable outcome of the public school enterprise. It is inadequate and irresponsible merely to concentrate on raising *academic* standards. Raising our *moral* standards will be the greatest gift we can give America’s children for their future. As Benjamin Franklin said, “Only a *virtuous* people are capable of freedom; nothing is more important for public wealth than to form and train up youth in wisdom and virtue.”

The AAE is going to do everything in its power to see to it that America’s educational system is once again the envy of the world. And we will strive to ensure that character education becomes an indispensable part of that system. Obviously, the circumstances caused by the September 11 attack on our nation has redirected and occupied President Bush’s attention. However, I hope the President will be able to turn his attention soon toward his campaign promise of restoring character education in our nation’s schools. We simply must. There is no time to lose. The late Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, said it best—“To have people who are *well informed* but not *constrained by conscience* is, conceivably, the most dangerous outcome of education possible.” **EM**

SMALLER IS BETTER—

According to a report in Education Week

By Debra Viadero

Studies conducted over the past ten to fifteen years suggest that in smaller schools, students come to class more often, drop out less, earn better grades, participate more often in extracurricular activities, feel safer, and show fewer behavior problems.

In fact, writes Mary Anne Raywid, one of the pre-eminent researchers in the field, the superiority of smaller schools over larger, more impersonal settings has been established “with a clarity and a confidence rare in the annals of education.”

“An awful lot of people, including some who are professional educators, think the secret of education is in curriculum and pedagogy, and those are the only two things that matter,” Raywid, a professor emeritus of education at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., adds in an interview. “And that is wrong.”

Yet a recent national opinion survey suggested the American public is not quite as sold on the idea. In a report published in September by Public Agenda, a nonprofit opinion-research group based in New York City, 48 percent of the parents and 44 percent of the teachers who were surveyed said that, if their own districts wanted to break a large high school into schools of 500 or fewer students, they would support the idea. One in four parents and teachers, however, said they would oppose it. The remaining 19 percent of parents and 16 percent of teachers chose to take a more neutral stance on the subject.

And statistics show that American schools, all the while, are getting bigger. Currently, U.S. Department of Education figures indicate nearly 44 percent of all public elementary and secondary students attend schools of 750 students or more. Among high schools, enrollments of 1,000 or more are the norm in at least seven states.

“There seems to be a disconnect,” says Michael D. Klonsky, the director of the Small Schools Workshop, a nonprofit group in Chicago that supports efforts to establish small schools. “The research still has not been communicated well to ordinary folks. You can fill a library with reports saying small schools are better, but it doesn’t make much difference.” **EM**

For more information on the story, go to www.edweek.org, and go to archives of Education Week for the November 28, 2001 issue.



Diversity is Good...Until it Costs Union Jobs

On December 23, 2001, Bev McCarron of the *Newark Star-Ledger* wrote an uplifting story about thirty-one teachers who spent three days at Ground Zero, helping with relief efforts. They aided displaced workers and residents, handed out Christmas presents to victims and their families, and offered a friendly ear to those overcome by paperwork and bureaucracy. Teachers all over the country pitched in after the September 11 attacks, but what made these thirty-one teachers special is that they weren't Americans. They were participants in the Visiting International Faculty program (VIF), and came from places such as Spain and Germany. "I realized a lot of people did not realize that America is not alone," said teacher Elke Wiederoder. "There are others who help and support them."

This year, VIF will place approximately 1,700 teachers from more than forty countries in America's elementary and secondary schools. Eight states participate in the program, which is designed to "provide students with both high-quality instruction and intensive interaction with another culture, thus leaving students better educated, more tolerant, and better prepared for the global economy. VIF teachers also work as cultural ambassadors in the communities where they live."

To qualify for the program, applicants must be fluent in English, have a university degree or teaching diploma equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree, and have teacher training and experience at the elementary or secondary level. If selected, they get one-time three-year work visas, and fulfill the same job requirements and receive the same pay and benefits as their peers. Sounds great, doesn't it?

Well, it doesn't sound so great to the members of the National Council of Urban Education Associations (NCUEA),

an NEA caucus of 251 local affiliates from urban areas. The NCUEA is calling on NEA to "investigate" the VIF program because its teachers are not certified. VIF, for its part, says its selection process is thorough, including verification of credentials, references, and personal interviews. Only one in ten applicants is accepted.

More at issue is whether the union will allow temporary foreign workers to fill slots that could go to grateful dues-paying Americans. One local president is already calling on members to report the presence of VIF teachers to UniServe staff. **EM**

Source—The Education Intelligence Agency conducts public education research, analysis, and investigations. Director Mike Antonucci can be reached at 916-422-4373; or by e-mail at EducationIntel@aol.com.

Goals 2000 National Panel Eliminated

Two years after former president Bill Clinton's National Education Goals Panel should have shut down, Congress has finally sent it packing. The Goals Panel was launched as a part of the Clinton 2000 initiative in 1994. When the year 2000 came without the achievement of the eight National Educational Goals, the Goals Panel kept on meeting and kept on talking about the Goals.

In this year's appropriations cycle, the U.S. House of Representatives provided no funds for the Goals Panel, while the U.S. Senate earmarked \$2 million for fiscal year 2002. The final joint education appropriations conference report includes \$400,000 "for expenses necessary for costs associated with the termination of the National Education Goals Panel."

That's right. It will cost taxpayers \$400,000 just to shut down the program, proving again that once a government program is started, it is very costly, if not impossible, to eliminate. **EM**

A Pledge to End the Pledge

A father from Loudoun County, Virginia, has petitioned the U.S. Department of Justice to stop Virginia school students from reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Last year, Virginia passed a law requiring all public schools to lead

the recitation of the pledge. Students have the option to remain silent.

According to the *Washington Times*, December 12th, Edward Myers argues that the pledge is "offensive" to many foreign nationals and religious groups and should be replaced with patriotic songs that are neutral to religion and citizenship.

Myers filed the grievance in response to the public's renewed reverence for the flag after the September 11 attacks. Myers argues, "The pledge is being sold as a uniform activity, but the problem is it is not inclusive of those who are foreign nationals...Certain religious groups also oppose it because it pledges allegiance to something other than their god." Myers prefers that children sing the national anthem rather than recite the pledge because he claims, "There is a difference between respecting another country and bowing in allegiance to it." **EM**

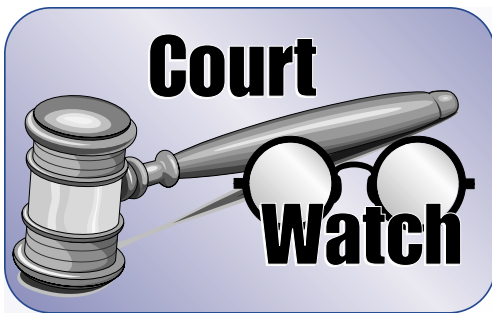
Editor's note—It should be noted that the citizen-taxpayers of the United States provide free public education to foreign nationals. It should also be noted that the Pledge of Allegiance is a pledge to uphold a Republic—the fairest and most tolerant form of government to date.

Students – 1 Ed Schools – 0

Thanks to the districtwide implementation of a phonics-based reading curriculum (Open Court), dozens of Los Angeles grade schools are experiencing double-digit increases in their reading, math, and language scores. Los Angeles is not the only district to use Open Court; its neighbor to the north, Oakland, also uses Open Court—but with modest success.

The difference? Los Angeles retrained its teachers to use Open Court effectively. Herein lies the irony: California taxpayers not only must pick up the tab for retraining Los Angeles' teachers to teach Open Court, but also their taxes support ed schools that oppose Open Court and other phonics-based programs supported by the National Reading Panel. **EM**

Source—Teacher Quality Bulletin, a publication of National Council on Teacher Quality, www.nctq.org.



Judge Sides with Federal Unions

By D. Ian Hopper

Siding with the Democratic Party and unions, a federal judge ruled that federal election regulators must keep secret documents that show how the party let unions approve or veto campaign activities in return for labor donations.

U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler, appointed by former President Clinton in 1994, agreed with Democrat Party leaders' contention that the thousands of pages—which contain confidential information, strategies, and employee names—are too sensitive to be released.

"This court observes that this is a case in which, to put it colloquially, 'what is

sauce for the Democratic goose will also be sauce for the Republican gander,'" Kessler wrote.

The contents of the documents were already disclosed in stories reported by The Associated Press last July.

The AP reported then that the papers showed AFL-CIO representatives were allowed to serve on state party steering committees to help approve or reject plans for Democrats' so-called coordinated campaign activities during elections.

"We request the AFL-CIO review these budgets and programs. If you approve them, we ask that you encourage your affiliated unions to contribute to each congressional district coordinated campaign," Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) official Rob Engel wrote in a September 1996 memo to an AFL-CIO official.

A few days later, the DCCC sent over revised strategies with the following note: "Attached is our updated and improved requests for your big bucks."

Federal Election Commission (FEC) officials ultimately concluded the unions had "apparent veto power" over the campaigns but dropped the probe after becoming worried the coordination may be protected by the First Amendment.

"We're very pleased by the ruling," Democratic National Committee spokeswoman Maria Cordona said, "which means that candidates and parties will now know that their most sensitive political documents will not be made public."

FEC spokesman Ron Harris said the commission is still reviewing the ruling, and had no immediate reaction. The AFL-CIO did not return a message seeking comment.

In arguing for making the papers public, the FEC told the court that much of the information was already in the public domain and that the public should know "what the government is up to."

Judge Kessler dismissed those arguments, saying there must be a claim of illegal activity for the court to consider revealing the names of union officials involved in the probe.

The FEC began its investigation in 1996 after Republicans complained that the unions illegally spent up to \$35 million to help Democrats.

The commission routinely releases documents from closed cases, and had planned to release at least 36,000 pages from this case. **EM**

Source—D. Ian Hopper, Associated Press writer.

Explosive New Complaint Filed against the NEA! Teachers' Union May Have Violated Federal Tax Law by Coordinating Campaign Activities with Democrats

The Landmark Legal Foundation in Herndon, Virginia, recently made public the most explosive tax complaint ever filed against the National Education Association (NEA). Landmark's complaint, which was filed with the Internal Revenue Service, provides new evidence of not only the NEA's use of millions of dollars of tax-exempt funds for political purposes but also its extensive campaign coordination activities with the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

Landmark's complaint provides overwhelming evidence of the NEA's political activities, including its key role as a member of the so-called "Coordinated Campaign Steering Committee," which set national and statewide campaign strategy for the election of Democratic candidates. In addi-

tion to the NEA and the DNC, other members of the Steering Committee were the 1996 Clinton-Gore Campaign, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the Democratic Governors' Association, the Democratic Leadership Campaign Committee, the AFL-CIO, and Emily's List. Landmark's complaint also reveals the involvement of the NEA's state affiliates in coordinating campaign activity with Democratic congressional candidates.

Landmark President Mark Levin says, "The extent to which the NEA and its state affiliates have coordinated their political activities with the Democratic Party, and have used millions of dollars in tax-exempt general revenues to support these activities,

is truly breathtaking. The evidence Landmark has made public demonstrates that the NEA has become an appendage of the Democratic Party, complete with an ATM machine that dispenses tax-exempt membership dues to underwrite that party's political activities. The NEA has concealed these activities from America's teachers, the public, and the IRS. But the information is concealed no longer."

Landmark's complaint is the culmination of the Foundation's five-year investigation and legal research into potential violations of federal tax and election laws by the NEA and its state affiliates. **EM**

For more information, contact Eric Christensen at 703-689-2370 or e-mail him at info@landmarklegal.org.

Is it Too Late for Middle School Students to Develop Positive Character?

By Shay Wren Prescott



Shay Wren Prescott

Does puberty hamper the teaching of character? Is it too late for middle schoolers, once their hormones, socialization, and lifelong patterns of behavior kick in or out of bounds? This is not the case with Mississippi teenagers in a school set in a small rural pecan grove. One hundred percent of the students receive free breakfast, lunch, and medical assistance. By careful planning and school intervention, middle schoolers are stopping at their turning points and listening to authorities here. One way this is being achieved is through a character education program called *Character First!* Middle school students receive instruction in a different character quality each month. Teachers have integrated the curriculum to accommodate the teaching of these character education units.

This was done under part of an original grant I wrote over three years ago. The first year there was money to hire a special speaker who came to our school and taught valuable information about nine different character qualities. Public school children in grades 1-6 benefited. One carryover from that grant has been the Praises program. Students receive written praises if teachers observe a student practicing the character quality of the month or previous qualities studied. Teachers have manuals and rotate the character qualities with one another, so the cost is minimal. Memory work reinforces the character quality studied. Students hear and respond to oral renditions of stories from nature. They study historical accounts of scientists, songwriters, presidents, and other historic figures. Teachers may be creative with integrated instruction. Teachers plan the character lessons just as they do for any other subject, and include the character emphasis in lesson plans. The character quality studied is integrated into the state-mandated content areas.

As an example of how this works, I recently finished the character quality of tolerance. Students in fifth and sixth grades participated in hearing how George Washington Carver practiced tolerance while an adolescent. They could identify with the five “I Wills” given in the study. The “I Wills” serve as the objectives for each lesson. One example given in the tolerance lesson was, “I will learn to look for ways to help others mature.” Teachers work to help students practice these

“I Wills” to help students review the objectives and recognize them in nature and history stories given in the program. It takes teamwork and effort from teachers, classes, and students for this to work. Individual classes may also exercise character qualities. Classes receive a free recess if they have the most praises for the month.

Middle schoolers are like all other students. They want to succeed. As a result, praises have significantly reduced the number of office visits, especially with our middle schoolers. It has been rare that a middle school aged child has not responded well to written and verbal praises. When students respond this way, teachers are more positive. Classes work together to help each other mature, and the fifth grade class stays busy counting the praises. Although I wrote the grant and learned to teach behavior modification, I got in trouble for writing too many praises! Can you blame me for wanting to make up for lost time with these middle schoolers? I enjoy seeing students achieve and beam as they hear something they did well instead of the constant displeasure shown them. It makes my day easier when I can find something positive about those long-legged fifth and sixth graders!

Parents, especially single parents, have difficulty balancing earning a living and supporting their middle schoolers. Attitudes get in the way. Social pressures and living in poverty are among the reasons why early adolescents seem like bad apples to these parents. Indeed, I have seen many examples of bad apples in the past five years since moving to Mississippi, but the success of teaching character outweighs the negative effects of the environment on our students. Parents are grateful that we teach, “Character becomes who you are in the dark when you think no one is looking!” We have given students the benefit of the doubt that they have feelings, want recognition, and can succeed. Their parents also benefit.

Students in middle school are at risk but not because parents and teachers do not care. During a tolerance unit, I took a survey of the favorite music groups sixth graders listened to. I got an education. The lyrics, message, and violence the majority of students loved to hear from their favorite music groups, Three Six

Mafia and Hot Boyz surprised me. When I asked what I would hear if I listened to their music, they were honest about the lyrics and its effect on their lives. Sex, violence, degradation, and derogatory statements permeated the lyrics. Middle schoolers’ feelings about gang involvement became the topic of discussion as they expressed their dislike for wearing uniforms. Teachers who are willing to guide adolescents in appropriate social behavior, provide alternatives to bad situations, and listen to adolescents, find that they can teach character. It is not too late to teach character to early adolescents. Some will have a hard time because of the negativism to which they have been exposed, especially the students who favor Three Six Mafia and their *World Domination*. We have an awesome job ahead of us. When we stop to realize that these students will be our next citizens and leaders, the benefits of teaching character education will help us realize the importance of teaching positive character

qualities. A positive approach to character education would serve our students and us better.

Middle schoolers need not be thrown out with the bath water. Let’s rally to make it a point to protect their innocence with programs such as *Character First!* Teaching students the consequences of bad choices before they occur is a good idea. When students learn appropriate character qualities that become part of their daily behavior, everyone wins! **EM**

*Shay Wren Prescott is a veteran teacher of nearly 25 years. She has taught all grades but specializes in Reading, grades K-12. She has been a public school teacher for nine of those years. She home-schooled her own two now grown children, Seth and Stephanie. Shay was coordinator of a local home school association where she was first introduced to Character First!**

Source—MPE Journal, a quarterly publication of Mississippi Professional Educators (MPE). Reprinted with permission.

**Character First! is one of the comprehensive public school-approved character education programs that the AAE endorses. For more information on other recommended programs, log on to our website at www.aateachers.org and click on “Resources” and “Recommended Character Education Programs.”*

How to Protect Yourself in Today's Litigious Society

By LaRae Munk, Attorney, AAE Legal Services Department

W here are the days when a student knew if he got in trouble at school, he was facing twice the disciplinary action at home? In school district after school district across the country, it seems the frustration of parents over the lack of quality education has reached the level where even very good teachers now regularly face parents who shout, "I'll sue."

There is an all-time high of charges of harassment, abuse, and discrimination by parents against teachers. Coaches are being accused of bias and unfairness when every student is not given equal playing time. Claims for verbal and physical violence against a student are becoming even more common, often in face of clear facts disputing such claims.

The number of parents making such charges remains in the minority, but even one such incident can ruin a teaching career or drive a good teacher from the classroom because of the publicity.

What can teachers do to protect themselves and minimize such incidents?

- Know board policies related to the teaching position, particularly those policies that are relevant to student conduct, grading, communication with parents, classroom management, etc.
- Never meet privately with a student of the opposite sex.
- Keep parents informed through regular communication with the home; in the age of websites and e-mail, many teachers are finding it useful, efficient, and economical to post class syllabus, activities, and class assignments on a personal website so that parents can stay informed.
- Let your students know that you will be in regular communication with their parents.
- Keep the school administration apprised of any unusual circumstances that occur during the day, that involves student conduct or communication with you.
- Document the basis for a lower-than-normal grade. For example, a student who

plagiarized part of an assignment received a lower grade. The teacher was challenged by the parents and had to justify the basis for the grade; i.e. "why this many points off." Fortunately, because the teacher had kept copies and documented the plagiarism, she was able to justify the grade and maintain administrative support.

- Document, through regular note taking, classroom conduct, assignments, and participation if those factors are relevant in the grade given.
- Document and tape any conversation with a student of the opposite sex if it is not possible to have a colleague or a witness present.
- Request that positive comments from parents and supportive students be reduced to writing for placement in your personnel file.

Generally speaking, although it is burdensome and time consuming, you should document, document, document. **EM**

BOOK REVIEW

10 Traits of Highly Effective Teachers

By Elaine K. McEwan

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10 *Traits of Highly Effective Teachers*, by Elaine K. McEwan, is bound to be a bestseller. The American public is tired of pie-in-the-sky theory; they want no-nonsense answers about what makes administrators and teachers effective so that these traits can be emulated and transferred to the next generation of educators.

Ms. McEwan admits in the book that she likes lists; and the busy reader profits from her lists because they contain substance. Her lists are not full of superfluous rhetoric but are nuggets of digestible truth.

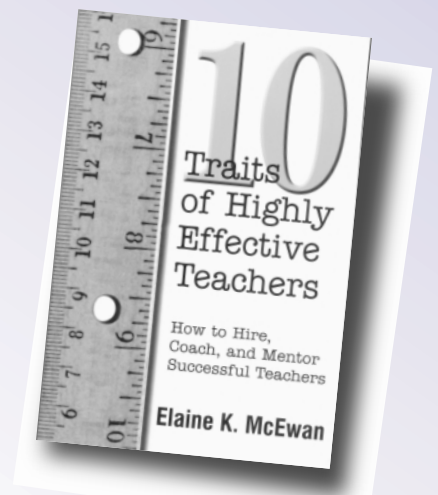
What traits should quality teachers seek to develop? McEwan lays them out concisely. What should principals do to encourage classroom teachers? McEwan tells the inquiring reader. What questions should a principal and/or a committee ask when hiring prospective teachers? McEwan spells

them out through helpful snippets of real-world scenarios. How can a teacher develop his own teaching style? McEwan gives fascinating examples. How can a teacher manage instructional time to the maximum? McEwan illustrates actual experiences from her own life as an experienced educator.

McEwan's book is not wordy, and it can be consumed in small bites, which is a must for overcommitted educators. However, her content and style make the reader want to keep reading. Having been a classroom teacher for over 29 years, I found myself saying "Amen" again and again, but I also found myself learning new information to which I had never been exposed. **EM**

—Donna Garner

To order *10 Traits of Highly Effective Teachers*, call 1-800-818-7243 or contact Corwin Press at www.corwinpress.com.



This review is written by Donna Garner, an AAE advising member. Donna taught at Midway High School in Hewitt, Texas, for over 26 years. She was appointed by President Reagan and reappointed by President Bush to the National Commission of Migrant Education, and was appointed by Texas Education Commissioner Mike Moses to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) writing team for English/Language Arts/Reading. As a result she was instrumental in creating the Texas Alternative Document (TAD) for English/Language Arts Standards guide. Donna can be reached at dggarner@swbell.net.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



Non Campus Mentis

Professor Anders Henrikson has collected the following “pearls” during his tenure and swears that they are taken verbatim from **education** student papers, written at **education** colleges and universities throughout the United States. He has included these and hundreds of others in his book *Non Campus Mentis*. The book’s title is a play on the Latin phrase, non compos mentis, which means “not of sound mind.”

Say What!—

- “Corruption grew especially ripe in Zaire, where Mobutu was known to indulge in more than an occasional little armadillo.”
- “Civilization woozed out of the Nile about 300,000 years ago—every year it would flood and irritate the land. This tended to make people nervous.”
- “Greek semen ruled the Aegean. We know about this thanks to Homer’s story about Ulysees Grant and Iliad, the painful wife he left behind.”
- “[Greek] religion was polyphonic. Featured were the gods such as Herod, Mars, and Juice. Persepolis was the god of vegetables.”

- [The virgin] Mary was “different from other women because of her immaculate contraption.” And that “Mary and Joseph went from inn to inn trying to find a place for Jesus to be born, but they were refused everywhere because they were Jewish.”
- Medieval times brought the “manorial system,” where “surfs were dentured and bonded to the ground.”
- “Death rates [during the bubonic plague] exceeded one hundred percent in some towns.”
- Cortez led a group that conquered with great ease. “Small box, which they brought with them, was killing the natives at a very quick rate. This bothered the Spanish little, for as Catholics they did not believe in God.”
- A student analyzing the coming of the French Revolution says, “Another problem was that France was full of French people. Revolters demanded liberty, equality, and fraternities.”
- The Civil War was an important time in American history, when a country divided became reunited. Of course, the Civil War “began in 1830. Many soldiers repeatedly gave their lives for their country.”
- The “Davy Jones Index crashed in 1929 [and] many people were left to political incineration. Some, like John Paul Sart, retreated into extraterrestrealism.”
- The U.S.A. “turned around the corner with Martin Luther Junior’s famous ‘If I Had a Hammer’ speech.”

That these students could one day be teaching history is unsettling to say the least! **EM**

The “Best” EIA Public Education Quotes of the Year

From the Education Intelligence Agency’s (EIA) end-of-the-year survey comes some of the best quotes of the year (as voted by the subscribers of *EIA Communiqué*):

- “*The most popular form of choice is a choice system called the suburbs.*” —Dr. Joe Nathan of the Center for School Change, speaking at the National School Public Relations Association conference in Minneapolis on July 11.
- “*However, one thing I am sure of is that we are not truly listening to all of our members. All the Association feedback we have to review—both nationally and in Ohio—supports this conclusion. In particular, we are not listening to our newer and younger members. It’s time for me to be more specific. I know that all my suggestions are not perfect. They are my best thinking today. What would we really do differently if we really did listen to our members? First, we would very rarely, if ever again, give a cent to a politician or a political party.*” —former Ohio Education Association (OEA) Executive Director Robert Barkley.
- “*We do not believe that charter schools ought to exist just as a choice.*” —Eddie Davis, chairman of the NEA Special Committee on Charter Schools, while presenting the committee’s report to the NEA Representative Assembly on July 5th.
- “*Black people can be gullible.*” —Andre J. Hornsby, president of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, offering his explanation for the high rate of African-American support for school choice.



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