

Are We Living in a Moral Stone Age?

By Cristina Hoff Sommers

If there was ever a case to be made for a return to formal character education in our public schools, Cristina Hoff Sommers makes it. Read on!

Editor's Note—

Over the summer we will be reprinting a number of articles that appeared in previous editions of Education Matters. Our newer members have not had the privilege of reading some of those "Golden Oldies." The articles selected received the most positive responses from our members. You may also want to revisit the newsletter section of our web-site and check out other selected articles from previous editions of Education Matters. EM



Cristina Hoff Sommers

We

hear a lot today about how Johnny can't read, how he can't write, and the trouble he is having finding France on a map. It is also true that Johnny is having difficulty distinguishing right from wrong. Along

with illiteracy and innumeracy, we must add deep moral confusion to the list of educational problems. Increasingly, today's young people know little to nothing about the Western moral tradition.

This was recently demonstrated by *Tonight Show* host Jay Leno. Leno frequently does "man-on-the-street" interviews, and one night he collared some young people to ask them questions about the Bible. "Can you name one of the Ten Commandments?" He asked two college-aged women. One replied, "Freedom of speech?" Mr. Leno then turned to a young man and asked, "Who, according to the Bible, was swallowed by a whale?" The confident answer was, "Pinocchio."

As with many humorous anecdotes, the underlying reality is not funny at all. These young people are morally confused. They are the students I and other teachers of ethics see every day. Like most professors,

I am acutely aware of the "hole in the moral ozone." One of the best things our schools can do for America is to set about repairing it—by confronting the moral nihilism that is now the norm for so many students.

When you have as many conversations with young people as I do, you come away both exhilarated and depressed. There is a great deal of simple good-heartedness, instinctive fair-mindedness, and spontaneous generosity of spirit in them. Most of the students I meet are basically decent individuals. They form wonderful friendships and seem to be considerate of and grateful to their parents—more so than the baby boomers were.

In many ways they are more likable than the baby boomers—they are less fascinated with themselves and more able to laugh at their faults. An astonishing number are doing volunteer work (70 percent of college students, according to one annual survey of freshmen). This is a generation of kids that, despite relatively little moral guidance or religious training, is putting compassion into practice.

Conceptually and culturally, however, today's young people live in a moral haze. Ask one of them if there are such things as "right" and "wrong," and suddenly you are confronted with a confused, tongue-tied, nervous, and insecure individual. The same person who works weekends for Meals on Wheels, who volunteers for a suicide prevention hotline or a domestic violence shelter might tell you, "Well, there really is no such thing as right or wrong. It's kind of like whatever works best for the individual. Each person has to work it out for himself." The trouble is that this kind of answer, which is so common as to be typical, is no better than the moral philosophy of a sociopath.

We have been thrown back into a moral Stone Age; many young people are totally unaffected by thousands of years of moral experience and moral progress. The notion of objective moral truths is in disrepute.

The Loss of Truth

It was not always thus. When Thomas Jefferson wrote that all men have the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," he did not say, "At least that is my opinion." He declared it as an objective truth. When Elizabeth Cady Stanton amended the Declaration of Independence by changing the phrase "all men" to "all men and women," she was not merely giving an opinion; she was insisting that females are endowed with the same rights and entitlements as males.

The assertions of both Jefferson and Stanton were made in the same spirit—as self-evident truths and not as personal judgments. Today's young people enjoy the fruits of the battles fought by these leaders, but they themselves are not being given the intellectual and moral training to argue for and to justify truth. In fact, the kind of education they are getting is systematically undermining their common sense about what is true and right.

Too many young people are morally confused, ill-informed, and adrift. This confusion gets worse rather than better once they go to college. If they are attending an elite school, they can actually lose their common sense, and become clever and adroit intellectuals in the worst sense. George Orwell reputedly said, "Some ideas are so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them." Well, the students of such intellectuals are in the same boat. Orwell did not know about the tenured radicals of the 1990s, but he was presciently aware that they were on the way.

What is to be done?

The problem is not that young people are ignorant, distrustful, cruel, or treacherous. They just talk that way. The problem I am speaking about is *cognitive*. Our students are suffering from "cognitive moral confusion."

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See... "Are We Living in a Moral Stone Age?"

Avoiding the Dreaded Negative Evaluation

A Word from our Director of Legal Services, La Rae G. Munk



La Rae Munk

Teachers have no reason to fear or dread an evaluation if the administration's purpose of evaluations is to help teachers improve their instructional practices. Evaluating teachers' performance is a critical responsibility

of a school supervisor's ability to provide a successful instructional program.

However, teacher evaluations are believed by most teachers to be fraught with subjectivity, particularly stressful, and of little or no lasting value, especially if there is a strained relationship between the evaluator and the teacher. What, if anything, might teachers do to protect themselves in those situations, which seem to occur all too frequently?

Pro-active steps by teachers can minimize or at least neutralize the effects of a negative evaluation. Teachers should be prepared to take steps, in advance of an evaluation, to set up the appropriate positive relationship with the evaluator whenever possible.

In addition, teachers should try to be prepared to have an independent observation by a respected retired former administrator, a master teacher, or an education college faculty.

Teachers should also try to video tape regularly their teaching (recognizing they have to protect the identity of children as required by FERPA) so that in the event the evaluation leads to termination proceedings, the teacher can provide the school board with evidence of actual classroom teaching. Studying the video tapes can also assist in improving specific teaching methods and styles. For example, an AAE member who followed this recommendation shared that he realized how frightening his physical size was to his lower elementary-aged students and because of the video tape he learned that he had to kneel down or bend down when talking with students rather than towering over them.

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It is also valuable to maintain a portfolio that includes updates of certifications and professional recognition that the teacher receives. Furthermore, routinely, teachers should ask parents to write letters or comments that can be added to personnel files. One AAE member used an autograph-style notebook and asked parents at parent-teacher conferences if they were willing to write a comment in her notebook because she found it a helpful annual memory for her classes. She never expected to need to use those notebooks, but

when a subjective evaluation led to board-level termination hearings, her attorney was able to show a long pattern of positive parental support and the teacher was retained.

Finally, AAE members should not hesitate to contact AAE with questions and concerns they might have regarding their evaluation or other job-related issues. **EM**

New Longitudinal Study Shows Core Knowledge™ Boosting Scores, Closing Achievement Gap

A new study indicates that the Core Knowledge Foundation's curriculum improves students' scores on standardized tests and also narrows the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

Researcher Fred Smith tracked the effect of Core Knowledge™ on the achievement of elementary students in a Virginia school using a quasi-experimental, longitudinal, matched-comparison design. Smith, then a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, compared students in a Core Knowledge™ school with students in another school in the same district with a similar demographic make-up.

Smith examined test results on Virginia's state tests, the Standards of Learning (SOL), and on the national Stanford 9TA test. He also tracked gain scores, the achievement of disadvantaged and advantaged students, and the achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students at the two schools. Smith found that Core Knowledge™ had the following positive effects:

- Core Knowledge™ increased student academic achievement as measured on the Stanford 9TA tests.
- Core Knowledge™ promoted fairness in schooling by providing equal educational opportunity to disadvantaged as well as advantaged students.
- Core Knowledge™ helped narrow the achievement gap on the Stanford 9TA test between advantaged and disadvantaged students.
- Core Knowledge™ helped students achieve larger gains on the Stanford 9TA over two-year periods.

Smith's research provides compelling evidence that Core Knowledge™ can improve academic performance for both advantaged

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and disadvantaged students, and can help to narrow the achievement gap between these two groups. His findings also suggest that Core Knowledge™ may have certain latent effects—effects that may not be visible immediately, and may not show up in a one- or two-year study, but begin to appear after several years of exposure to the curriculum and can grow quite large when exposure persists throughout the elementary years.

Smith's dissertation is available on microfilm and in digital form through Proquest/UMI, 1-800-521-0600. **EM**

Editor's Note—Core Knowledge™ is a highly recommended curricula resource and can be found on AAE's web-site at www.aeteachers.org/resources.htm.

Remembering a Classic, and the Man Who Wrote It

By John Blundell and Lawrence Reed

In 1870, the Sultan of Turkey gave a book by a Scotsman to his entire entourage of top-ranking officials. The Khedive of Egypt had the same work inscribed and painted on the wall of the Royal harem. Two years later, the Meiji dynasty ordered the book to be issued throughout Tokyo's school system. Eventually, every prefecture in Japan followed suit. General George Custer described the volume as his favorite text. Many people kept it next to their Bible.

What was this book, and who was its author? It was called, simply, *Self Help*, and its author was a man named Samuel Smiles.

When he died at the age of 86, exactly 100 years ago this past April, in 1904, only Queen Victoria's funeral cortege three years earlier was said to have surpassed that of Samuel Smiles. He was loved for not only his book but also a wealth of other works that celebrated the virtues of independence, thrift, civility, character, and hard work.

The cover of the 2002 Oxford University Press edition of *Self-Help* declares that the book "is the precursor of today's motivational and self-help literature" and that it "awakens readers to their own potential and instills the desire to succeed." In his lifetime, the author inspired riots in Belgrade, carnivals in Milan, and plaudits from leaders the world over. However, sadly, just a century since Smiles died, he is largely unremembered, even in his native Scotland. Needless to say, decades of the welfare state have not been kind to a man who preached personal independence and entrepreneurial capitalism.

Dipping into its pages is a curious experience. In part, you travel back in time to his mid-19th century perceptions. To Smiles, the son of a poor farmer, human nature was both timeless and locationless. It is as good for a Japanese man of commerce to exhibit the plain virtues of honesty, punctuality, diligence, and energy as it is for a Swede or an American. Today, his message is especially needed in our major cities, where far too many of our citizens have been conned into expecting a handout from the government.

Self-Help, which appeared in 1859, had the most humble of origins. It began as a series of evening lectures to apprentice engineers in Leeds. A kind of Victorian Dale Carnegie, Smiles thumped his message home in a way that moved and inspired almost everybody of his time. Live and trade with integrity and you lift all you meet, not just yourself, he argued. Character, the sum of one's choices and actions, is of paramount importance; indeed, Smiles called it "the crown and glory of life" and the very thing upon which "the strength, the industry, and the civilization of nations" depend. Being a man of faith, Smiles would agree with Rick Warren,

author of the current bestseller, *The Purpose Driven Life*, that one's time on earth is meant to be a time of "character building for eternity."

To Smiles, the road to riches was not paved with over-reaching ambition, disregard for others, or cutting corners when it came to matters of truth. It didn't mean securing favors from government at the expense of the competition. He celebrated honest enterprise, applauded personal responsibility, and defined the proper source of wealth as what we do for ourselves, not what government might forcibly redistribute in our direction.

The books of Samuel Smiles are full of inspiring stories of 19th century entrepreneurs who often rejected the easy path of

unprincipled compromise and the fast buck, and, instead, treated others according to the Golden Rule, and went to their graves with their character and integrity intact.

In painstaking detail, he explained why keeping high our standards of speech and conduct was not just worthwhile but also an indispensable ingredient of freedom and progress. Life to him was not an ego trip. It was not about calling attention to oneself, but, rather, about being the best one can be in all endeavors. The fame and fortune that might follow was secondary, and imposed additional responsibilities to use that fame and fortune to foster virtue in others.

Does Smiles' message bear relevance for society today? Scandalous headlines and television spectacles that depict degraded standards suggest we would all benefit by dusting off the work of Samuel Smiles and learning again what we should never have forgotten. **EM**

John Blundell is director general of the Institute of Economic Affairs in London, England. Lawrence Reed is president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a research and educational institute headquartered in Midland, Michigan. More information is available at www.mackinac.org.

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$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

New from LessonLab—

Explorations of Algebra Teaching

LessonLab, Inc. is offering a 10-hour video course to assist algebra teachers in the classroom.

This course, sponsored by the Intel Foundation, offers U.S. teachers the opportunity to observe and learn from their counterparts in countries recognized for high student performance in mathematics.

Entitled *TIMSS Video Studies: Explorations of Algebra Teaching*, the course presents videos of actual classrooms in Hong Kong, Japan, and Switzerland. This is a unique chance to analyze the different teaching strategies used in countries known for high achievement.

Participants use interactive tools and guided reflection activities to connect what they see on the videos with what they want to happen in their own classrooms.

Because the studies were funded by the Intel Foundation, the pricing of the 10-hour series is only \$40!

To register for the course, go to www.intel.com/education/math.



Almost Half of NEA Employees Make Six Figure Incomes

NEA may have had to institute some last-minute budget cuts this year, but if the organization's latest financial disclosure report is any indication, no one is starving at NEA headquarters.

The national union's \$59.4 million payroll for the school year 2002-03 included salary for some 565 regular employees plus payments to about 170 others who were either part-time or temporary employees, or retired, were let go, or moved on during that year. Of the regular employees, 260 received salaries of \$100,000 or more. That figure is for salaries alone; it does not include other taxable allowances, benefits, or expenses. Nor does it include payments to NEA's elected officers or state affiliate executive directors.

The money list was led by NEA Executive Director John Wilson, who made \$244,423 last year. And although he retired in November 2000, Wilson's predecessor, Don Cameron, still received \$101,466 in deferred salary from NEA last year. **EM**

Source—The Education Intelligence Agency (EIA) Communiqué. You may find more information about EIA at www.eiaonline.com.

Audit Charges \$100 Million Fraud in Miami-Dade Schools

Corruption and mismanagement have cost taxpayers more than \$100 million, according to a forensic audit of the Miami-Dade County (Florida) School Board conducted at the request of a state oversight board.

Independent auditors from Lewis B. Freeman & Partners, who produced the report, recommended the appointment of a special prosecutor and statewide grand jury to investigate the Miami-Dade school district's multibillion-dollar Facilities

Construction Department, alleging massive disorganization and waste as well as "probable malfeasance, misfeasance, and potential for fraud."

District officials dispute the April 28 Forensic Audit Report and argue the auditors provided no evidence to substantiate their claims. The Freeman auditors respond that the district has refused to cooperate and has not provided a complete set of records that document how and where construction funds were distributed. The auditors found the district's reporting systems could not even provide definitive answers to such basic questions as "How many schools do you have?" and "How many students do you have?"

No wonder the public is reluctant to pour more money into public schools with stories like this surfacing all across America. **EM**

Source—Lisa Snell is director of the education program for the Reason Foundation in Los Angeles. Her e-mail address is lisa.snell@reason.org.

Minimum Grades, Minimum Motivation

Every teacher has a story about a smart kid who failed because she just refused to do even the bare minimum to pass. Well-intentioned teachers also learn the hard way that lowering expectations and letting shoddy work slide by only makes things worse. The moral is apparently lost, though, on some school districts. Across New York State, districts are enacting policies that give students an automatic minimum grade of 50 for the quarter, regardless of attendance, test scores, class participation, etc. Proponents say the policy will motivate low-achieving students to stay in school and give them a chance to pull themselves up by their bootstraps even after abysmal performance in one or more quarters. Unfortunately, the minimum grade policy may do the exact opposite. According to Sally Jo Widmer, president of the Auburn (NY) Teachers Association, "We have students who have successfully completed the first three marking periods and they are, with pen and pencil, calculating how little work they can do and still receive a passing grade." What's worse, some fear that minimum grade policies will exacerbate high-school grade inflation. Once you start giving kids who are doing nothing a 50, how can you justify giving a kid who works extremely hard, but has not mastered the material, the same grade? According to Val Carr, an 11th grade social studies

teacher in Syracuse, such fears are already being realized. "[Some] administrators are asking the nontenured teachers to consider bumping [grades] to a 65 in the case of a student who is really trying." Don Little, a social studies teacher in Syracuse, argues rightly that you cannot motivate a student by giving him a grade he doesn't deserve. "A 50 says you're halfway to perfection but that 50 could be a 6. As cold and hard as a 6 is, a 6 tells a parent how little their child is doing." **EM**

Source—Education Gadfly, an electronic publication of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. Web-site: www.edexcellence.net/gadfly.

NYC Public Schools Chancellor Calls for Charter Schools

So why is it, that I—New York City's public schools chancellor—am an unalloyed supporter of charter schools? Frankly it's simple: Educators, families, and children want good schools. Charters are one way to create them.

Charters bring in new blood. These are leaders and entrepreneurs who are not otherwise part of the system. They are people with ideas, with creativity, and who are willing to give their all for their students. On that central basis, when we have a city where there are thousands of kids not getting the education that they need and deserve, I don't see why we would in any way shut down more options and new opportunities.

We should support charters for another reason. Public education in large urban areas in the United States has failed. This is a somewhat heretical thing for a schools chancellor to say. New York City is actually one of the best urban school systems in the United States; however, by any measure, I guarantee you that at least half, probably more than half, of our students are not remotely getting the education they deserve.

What I find shocking is that this has been going on for so very long.

So why have we had so many decades of reform and so little change? I think it is because people continue to focus on program-based reform. They are unwilling to get their minds around the fact that in large urban areas the culture of public education is broken. If you don't fix this culture, then you are not going to be able to make the kind of changes that are needed.

Programmatic reform is important: curricula, class size, after-school programs, sum-

mer school—those things are very important. However, unless we are prepared to deal with the culture in public education, I don't think we can get the kinds of results that we need for our kids.

Let me explain what I mean by this. Over the past decades we have tried to regulate ourselves into success. The thinking was that more rules, requirements, and prescriptions would do the job. But it hasn't happened, and more rules and regulations aren't going to do it. In addition, we have contractual rules permeating the system trying to figure out how to run a school. These kinds of vectors are not going to get us to success.

The best schools are very sensitive communities in which people have a shared vision and mutual commitment. They respect each other and are passionate about educating kids. They are willing to run the extra mile, to take some risks, and to be entrepreneurial. That's what creates a school culture that will work. Sadly, public school education is exactly on the opposite end of the spectrum.

I want charter schools as part of our system because they embody a different culture. Charters recognize the need for strong leadership, and charters are willing to be accountable for their students' achievement. I want charters as part of our efforts so that they can influence the things that are going on in our system.

Charter schools present a tremendous opportunity. I want them at the forefront of our reform movement here in New York City because our reform is about values; it's about culture. It's about bringing change to a system that has for far too long disserved our children and especially our children who most need an outstanding education. **EM**

Source—[EXCERPTS from the] Remarks of New York City Public Schools Chancellor Joel Klein made at the Annual New York State Charter Schools Conference, March 27, 2004.

Teacher Preparation— NCATE Nods to its Critics

At least not rhetorically immune to its many critics, the nation's leading accrediting body of schools of education, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), has announced it is making some changes to its accreditation process. Institutions seeking accreditation or renewals must now file a report containing the results of one "assessment" that

measures all candidates' content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and the impact on student learning. While this new requirement may seem like a seismic shift for an organization that has been flagrantly indifferent to such matters, the list of assessments that NCATE is willing to accept strikes a more familiar tone. Among the assessments NCATE will allow are portfolios of candidates' work, research reports, GPA, intervention plans, lesson plans, teacher work samples, case studies, and follow-up studies. **EM**

Source—The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) TQ Bulletin, a weekly e-mail newsletter. NCTQ web-site: www.nctq.org.

Teaching American History with Florida Flavor

The Teaching American History grant program, part of the No Child Left Behind Act, supports three-year projects to improve teachers' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of traditional American history through intensive, ongoing professional development. Under this program, the U.S. Department of Education awards grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) working in partnership with organizations that have extensive knowledge of American history, including libraries, museums, nonprofit history or humanities organizations and higher education institutions. The following is an excerpt from a recent *News Chief* (Fla.) article highlighting how history teachers in Polk County, Florida will benefit from the grant:

Polk history teachers will get a chance to apply their knowledge in a hands-on setting this summer. As part of a three-year \$908,000 federal grant, twenty-nine history teachers will participate in a week-long immersion program at Florida historical sites and landmarks from June 7 through 12.

"I think one thing that makes the program work so well is we're able to give our teachers some [intensive] content training in the specialized areas of history," said Rozy Scott, a coordinator for the program. "They get to see where history happens. They get the firsthand knowledge you can't get from a textbook."

The Polk County Schools District was among six statewide designated as recipients of a "Teaching American History" grant. This is the second year of the grant's implementation.

The grant is for curriculum development, teacher training, and instructional materials to promote the teaching of traditional American history. Polk schools have titled the weeklong summer seminar and immersion program, "Teaching American History with Florida Flavor."

Polk educators will use knowledge gained from the seminar to implement elements of state history into their instruction and link that knowledge to broader events affecting the nation. **EM**

Unfunded Mandate— Not!

The Government Accounting Office has ruled that since states can opt out of following the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, the law—including testing and other requirements—is NOT an unfunded mandate. The law is being challenged by the National Education Association (NEA), which, along with other groups, decried the ruling, claiming that meeting its requirements would be "devastating" for public schools that lost federal funds because they refused or failed to meet the NCLB. **EM**

Source—Center for Educational Reform Newswire, web-site: www.edreform.com.

NEA? Never Heard of It

Communities for Quality Education (CQE), the new advocacy organization created, run, and funded by the National Education Association and its affiliates, now has new digs on D.C.'s trendy Dupont Circle and its own website www.qualityednow.org. However, you'll search in vain for any mention of the union or the union officers and employees who comprise CQE's board.

The "About Us" section identifies no one. The "Frequently Asked Questions" are not, except for the one about how CQE will be funded. The answer, however, is "with the help of individuals and organizations that share our goals and our priorities." The "Contact Us" page contains no names, and the words "union" or "NEA" do not appear on any page.

CQE staffers made the rounds in Florida last month, citing contradictions between the school ratings systems of Florida and the federal No Child Left Behind Act. **EM**

Source—The Education Intelligence Agency (EIA) Communiqué. You may find more information about EIA at www.eiaonline.com.

Online Writing Evaluation Tool Adopted by Indiana Department of Education

ETS (Educational Testing Service) announced today that the Indiana Department of Education will provide all ninth-grade classes with access to its Criterion online writing evaluation tool, which uses automated scoring technologies to evaluate writing samples. Criterion will be available for both parochial and private schools.

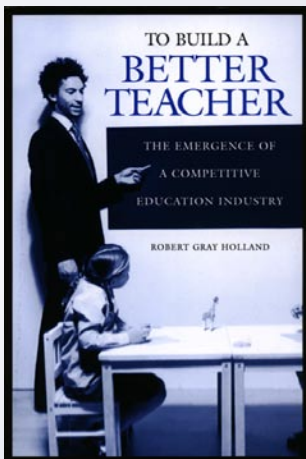
Students in Indiana will now have unlimited opportunities to submit essays on topics assigned by their teachers and receive instant diagnostic feedback that analyzes elements of grammar, mechanics, style, and organization and development. Students can use the diagnostic feedback when creating future essays, ultimately strengthening their writing skills. By using Criterion, teachers will be able to spend more time helping individual students build on their writing strengths and work on their weaknesses, and less time grading papers.

“Learning to be skillful writers is absolutely critical for students,” says John

Oswald, ETS Senior Vice President of Elementary & Secondary Education. “We are thrilled to work with the state of Indiana to help it achieve its longstanding goal of improving writing skills and look forward to showcasing student achievement using Criterion.”

To use Criterion, students log on to a computer, pick up an assignment, and write an essay based on the assigned topic. After completing the essay, they submit it for grading. Within seconds, Criterion calculates a grade based on state standards, and provides the student with feedback, highlighted in the essay. In addition to the feedback, students can view their teacher’s comments and recommendations.

Hundreds of middle schools and high schools across the country use Criterion in their classrooms. Some thirty colleges and universities also use the program both to improve writing and to help prepare students for testing. For more information about Criterion, visit <http://www.ets.org/criterion/index.html>. **EM**



B O O K R E V I E W

To Build a Better Teacher— The Emergence of a Competitive Education Industry

By Robert Gray Holland

Here is a thought-provoking new book by one of our favorite education writers!

Throughout the 20th century, grade-school teachers were trained in schools of education where progressive theories largely held sway and were licensed by state bureaucracies philosophically compatible with the education schools. Vested education interests now seek to make the monopoly even more controlling by requiring that all teachers be products of education schools accredited by a single national agency dedicated to the so-called “progressive” ideals. Bob Holland proposes an alternative vision compatible with the emerging 21st century paradigm of a competitive education industry: Eliminate pretentious and unnecessary

barriers to teaching so that the brightest persons will seek the profession.

What others are saying about To Build a Better Teacher—

“Holland’s approach to solving some of the problems addresses the issues associated with those who teach our teachers what and how to teach. He makes the case that, in the absence of proof to the contrary, change has to occur if we want improvement in the product, the product being those children who have been entrusted to our care, instruction, and nurturing.”

—*The Honorable L. Douglas Wilder, Distinguished Professor, Virginia*

Commonwealth University and former Governor of Virginia.

“This superbly written book exhibits a humane tone that is very welcome amid the uncharitable shrillness of education debates. . . . This book is concrete, readable, accurate, up-to-date, and authoritative. If you want to know what is going on in the all-important teacher-education debates, what is being proposed, and what needs to be done, this is the book to turn to.”

—*Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation.*

Order today from Amazon.com for some great summer reading.

Are We Living in a Moral Stone Age?

(Continued from page 1)

What is to be done? How can we improve their knowledge and understanding of moral history? How can we restore their confidence in the great moral ideals?

In the late 1960s, a group of hippies living in the Haight-Ashbury District of San Francisco decided that hygiene was a middle-class hang-up that they could best do without. So, they decided to live without it. For example, baths and showers, while not actually banned, were frowned upon.

Before long, the hippies' aversion to modern hygiene had consequences that were as unpleasant as they were unforeseen. Novelist Tom Wolfe describes them: "At the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic there were doctors who were treating diseases no living doctor had ever encountered before, diseases that had disappeared so long ago they had never even picked up Latin names, such as the mange, the grunge, the itch, the scroff, the rot." The itching and the manginess eventually began to vex the hippies, leading them to seek help from the local free clinics. Step by step, they had to rediscover for themselves the rudiments of modern hygiene. Wolfe refers to this as the "Great Relearning."

We need our own Great Relearning. Here, I am going to propose a few ideas on how we might carry out this relearning.

1. *We must make students aware that there is a standard of ethical ideals that all civilizations worthy of the name have discovered.* We must encourage them to read the Bible, Aristotle's *Ethics*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the Koran, and the *Analects of Confucius*. When they read almost any great work, they will encounter these basic moral values: integrity, respect for human life, self-control, honesty, courage, and self-sacrifice.

The last few decades of the twentieth century have seen a steady erosion of knowledge and a steady increase in moral relativism. This is partly due to the diffidence of many teachers who are confused by all the talk about pluralism. Such teachers actually believe that it is wrong to "indoctrinate" our children in our own culture and moral tradition.

Of course, there are pressing moral issues around which there is no consensus;

as a modern pluralistic society we are arguing about all sorts of things. This is understandable. Moral dilemmas arise in every generation. However, long ago, we achieved consensus on many basic moral questions.

2. *We must teach the literary classics.* We must bring the great books and the great ideas back into the core of the curriculum.

American children should be exposed to the exquisite moral sensibility in the novels of Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Mark Twain, to mention some of my favorites. These great works are their birthright.

This is not to say a good literary, artistic, and philosophical education suffices to create ethical human beings, nor is it to suggest that teaching the classics is all we need to do to repair the moral ozone. What we know is that we cannot, in good conscience, allow our children to remain morally illiterate.

3. *Teachers, professors, and other social critics should be encouraged to moderate their attacks on our culture and its institutions.* They should be encouraged to treat great literary works as literature and not as reactionary political tracts. In many classrooms today, students only learn to "uncover" the allegedly racist, sexist, and elitist elements in the great books. Their goal may be to improve students' awareness of the plight of exploited peoples, but what they are actually doing is producing kids who are capable of doubting that the Holocaust took place.

In my opinion, we are today not unlike those confused, scrofulous hippies of the late 1960s who finally showed up at the doors of the free clinics in Haight-Ashbury to get their dose of traditional medicine. I hope we have the good sense to follow their example. We need to take an active stand against the divisive unlearning that is corrupting the integrity of our society. **EM**

Christina Hoff Sommers is the W.H. Brady Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. She is also a professor of philosophy at Clark University, where she has served on the faculty since 1980.

Dr. Sommers has appeared on such programs as 20/20, The McLaughlin Group, Donahue, 60 Minutes, Nightline, and Crossfire, to discuss the future of feminism, gender bias in the schools, and moral education.

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Quote of the Month

"Every teacher I've talked to wants this. They want to earn more if they do better. Like any professional in America, they are judged by their performance."

—U.S. Senator John Kerry, citing teacher support for a national performance pay proposal.

Rebuff of the Month

A confidential memo from National Education Association President Reg Weaver to union officials detailed a meeting he had last month with U.S. Senator John Kerry in which Kerry backed away from the "pay for performance" language in his proposed education plan. Weaver reported, "We raised our concerns that the Kerry campaign used the language 'pay-for-performance' in his press release. The Senator clarified that the campaign did not intend to use that language and would not do so in the future. He [Kerry] asked that I convey this point to NEA leaders."

A Toolkit for Teachers

The U.S. Department of Education is re-releasing the popular publication *No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers*. The publication was written to clarify for elementary, middle, and high school teachers what it means to be “highly qualified.” The first edition ran out in record time, and because of the demand, a second, revised edition has now been made available.

The next “Teacher Update” will specifically address what it means to be “highly qualified” and why Congress included this requirement in NCLB.

No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers is available online at <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/nclbguide/nclb-teachers-toolkit.pdf>, or e-mail your request to edpubs@inet.ed.gov. You may also order a copy of the booklet by calling 1-877-433-7827.

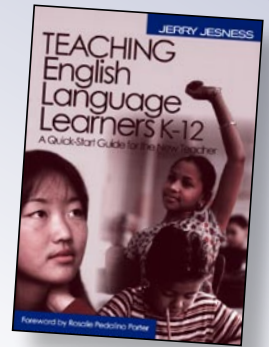
Teaching English Language Learners K-12—

A Quick-Start Guide for the New Teacher

Bring the English language to life with this valuable new resource!

Some say that learning a second language is like drinking water from a fire hose. However, teaching it does not have to be like standing under Niagara Falls. This is the fundamental message of Jerry Jesness’s new quick-start guide *Teaching English Language Learners K-12*. In our climate, ESL teachers face immense demands as educators because the ESL class is often the critical, transitional step into a student’s entire education. The author provides specific strategies to address the special challenges for instructors. This valuable resource offers a terrific framework to nurture that motivating spark in ESL learners. For ESL educators, it’s more than a job—it’s a mission!

To order, contact: Corwin Press, A Sage Publications Company, Thousand Oaks, California, 1-800-818-7243, www.corwinpress.com.



At a Glance: Who defines “highly qualified” teacher?

Federal	State	Local
<p>NCLB sets the minimum requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A bachelor’s degree. ▶ Full state certification, as defined by the state. ▶ Demonstrated competency, as defined by the state, in each core academic subject the teacher teaches. <p>NCLB sets a deadline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All new teachers of core academic subjects in Title I schools/programs hired beginning with the 2002–03 school year must meet the requirements before entering the classroom. ▶ All teachers of core academic subjects hired before the 2002–03 school year must meet the requirements by the end of the 2005–06 school year. <p>(Special considerations may apply for multi-subject teachers in eligible small, rural schools.)</p> <p>The secretary of education is responsible for monitoring state plans and providing assistance to states as they seek to meet these requirements.</p>	<p>States define “highly qualified teacher” according to the requirements of NCLB.</p> <p>States may develop this definition according to their own unique needs. States determine what is meant by “full state certification.” They may streamline requirements to make it less burdensome for talented individuals to enter the profession.</p> <p>States develop a plan with goals for their districts, detailing how they will ensure that all teachers of core academic subjects will be highly qualified by the end of the 2005–06 school year.</p> <p>States determine ways in which teachers can demonstrate competency in the subjects they teach, according to the requirements in NCLB. (For example, states choose whether or not to adopt their own high, objective, uniform state standard of evaluation [HOUSSE] for current teachers.)</p>	<p>Districts ensure that newly hired teachers in Title I schools/programs meet their state’s definition of “highly qualified teacher.”</p> <p>Districts work with states to communicate with current teachers regarding the “highly qualified” teacher definition, and provide a way for teachers to determine whether or not they meet the state definition of “highly qualified teacher.”</p> <p>Districts work with states to support teachers who do not meet the “highly qualified” teacher definition in the subjects they teach, providing opportunities or options for them to meet the requirements by the end of the 2005–06 school year.</p>



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