

Money Isn't the Answer for Better Schools

By David W. Kirkpatrick



David Kirkpatrick

Some years ago an article by Al Knight in *The Denver Post* was headlined, "If Money is the Solution, That's the Problem," and it is demonstrably true. Of course money is needed. However,

contrary to what is often claimed, and too often believed, it has been provided.

The student-teacher ratio is lower than it has ever been. And although it may not seem so, so is class size. More guidance counselors, specialists, teacher aides, and the like have been hired. Adjusted for inflation and enrollment, the dollars spent per pupil are at an all-time high. And yet the continual charge is made that the schools are underfunded and that more money will solve all the problems.

It hasn't happened. It won't happen. A prime example is the Kansas City, Missouri, school district.

After nine years of litigation, in 1986 a federal judge ordered the school system to be drastically revised. The judge was assured by educational experts that if he followed their recommendations great improvements would result within five years. Trusting them, he ordered greatly increased funding to pay for changes.

Many schools were torn down. Fifty-six "magnet" schools were created. Technology flourished, with one computer for every three pupils at Central High School, which was rebuilt at a cost of \$32 million. Nearly a million dollars was budgeted each year to promote the district on television to persuade parents to keep their children in, or return them to, schools in the district. This required significant financial support from the state, support that could only be provided by scrimping on what was available for the rest of the state's schools and students.

Adjusted for cost-of-living, more money was spent per pupil than in any of the rest of the nation's 280 largest school districts. The student-teacher ratio of 13-1 was the lowest of the major school districts. By the time the experiment ended in 1997 more than \$2 billion *additional* were spent in the modestly sized district.

The result? Test scores did not rise. Dropout rates continued high. Enrollment continued its downward trend, from 72,000 in 1970 to 32,000 in 2000. And it would be worse except for the creation of fifteen charter schools. While total district and charter school enrollment in 2000 was up about 600 from the year before, the charter schools had 4,354 pupils. This indicates that the district's own student population had declined again.

There was even less student integration than when the process started. There were twenty superintendents in 31 years, nine from 1990 to 2001 alone. There had been a series of court-appointed monitors, and many changes in school board membership.

In May 2000 the district lost accreditation because it failed to meet even one of the state's eleven performance standards. Then, May 2004, a further complication was introduced when a state judge said

the system by which the schools were financed was unconstitutional, and ordered Kansas to close them at the end of the school year.

Kansas City may be the worst example of the failure of money but it is by no means the only one. A number of years ago economist Eric Hanushek cited almost 200 studies that indicate more spending on traditional schooling does not necessarily translate into improved learning, higher attendance, or other desirable goals. Subsequent studies have confirmed these findings.

Of all the professions, those in education should be the least likely to repeat errors of the past. Those who claim to teach critical thinking and problem solving should be able to think critically and solve at least some of their own problems. Yet, when it comes to funding, they seem incapable of learning. Instead, they tend to be unwilling to even discuss alternatives, much less try to accept them.

Where are the education establishment groups or "professional" associations that promote open and full debate of any and all educational ideas? Where are the ones that are willing to support trial efforts of alternative programs to see whether they show promise of working better? Where are those primarily concerned with what could benefit students?

It is this inability of its defenders to establish viable programs that threatens the present system, not the reformers. **EM**

David W. Kirkpatrick, a former public school teacher who has been actively and extensively involved in education reform, previously served as the editor-in-chief of School Reform News. Dave was recently appointed senior education fellow at the U.S. Freedom Foundation in Washington, D.C., 202-547-2200.

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Testimony Against Over Diagnosis

Dear AAE,

This spring I traveled to Sacramento, CA, to testify before the Assembly Education Committee in support of AB2286, which would prohibit school personnel from suggesting any particular diagnosis, recommending that a student take a psychotropic (mind-altering) drug, or using the refusal of a parent to the administration of psychotropic drugs as a basis for prohibiting the student from attending class or participating in a school-related activity.

A small measure of hope came out of the hearing. After the supporting testimonies of five witnesses plus the words of Assemblyman Mountjoy, author of the bill, Chairperson Jackie Goldberg stated that she recognized that there was a problem and expressed a willingness to work with Mountjoy to modify the language of the bill so that the opposing Democrats would accept it. This is progress.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
There is a book
entitled *The Myth of
the Hyperactive Child
and Other Means of
Child Control* that
should be required
reading by every
educator, parent,
and government
official in America.

tell how the door was opened for the ADD/ADHD labels and a flood of drugging released.

Early in 1975, the FDA decided that Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD) lacked sufficient medical foundation to be associated with the prescription of drugs. Henceforth MBD would be too vague to be used as the "disease" for which a drug could be indicated. The symptoms on the package labels for Dexedrine, Ritalin, and Cylert would be the forms of behavior which once constituted the separate elements for the MBD definition: short attention span, hyperactivity, impulsivity. It appeared to be an admission that unacceptable behavior by itself was sufficient reason to feed a child a psychoactive drug, that no organic illness need even be suggested.

Shortly thereafter, the labels of ADD/ADHD began to appear in the psychological and educational vocabulary.

Another voice of concern comes from Dr. Glen Elliot, director of the Langley Porter Psychiatric Institute's Children's Center at UC San Francisco, who says: "The problem is that our usage has outstripped our knowledge base. Let's face it; we're experimenting on these kids without tracking results."

The chemical management of America's children needs to stop! Many states have already enacted similar legislation, and a bill is currently pending in the U.S. Senate addressing the same problem.

—Sharon S. Kientz
Auberry, CA

Letters To The Editor

Happy for the Legal Support

Dear AAE,

This is a letter of Thank You to you. I am so glad I found out about the Association of American Educators several years ago.

The administration of the public school system I work for does not give their teachers the support they need in the classroom to get the job done. Our local union's favorite mantra is "Do not rock the boat." So, we do not get much help from them as well, with our concerns.

On the other hand, I cannot say enough of the counsel and support I have received from your Legal Services Department. I greatly appreciate the quick and hard work that your Director of Legal Services, La Rae Munk, has done for me. With her support and information, I am more confident in handling situations that arise in my classroom, and with the administration.

Your association is a valuable resource to me. I thank God you are there for us.

—Michael J. Gallo
Attica, NY

Thoughtless Realignments

Dear AAE,

I thought it might be of interest what has happened to many of the teachers in Minneapolis. This summer my principal called to tell me that 142 of us that have second licenses were taken out of the classrooms and put into our second licenses. We have never used these licenses, but this fall most of us will be teaching special ed. The principals were shocked and unable to do anything. Four teachers in my building were "realigned" so that younger tenured teachers wouldn't lose their jobs. There was no thought for the children or principals and their programs.

When we appeared at a board meeting last Tuesday evening, many parents were nearly in tears. One man, whose wife was realigned, said "Last year she was at this podium to be nominated for Teacher of the Year. Now she has been pulled from the classroom, where she is super, to teach in a resource room."

The interesting thing to me was that at one meeting of the realigned teachers, one teacher stood and declared, "When I was a new teacher, the union said it couldn't help me because I was untenured. Now the union says it can't help me because I have too much experience. I think we should all tear up our union card and send it back to them with a letter of resignation!"

I'll have to admit I felt good since I've been one of the few who haven't belonged to the union! I am putting a "blurb" about AAE in our *Upfront* e-mail publication. Hopefully, it will generate a few more members.

—Becky Garrett
Bloomington, MN

Student Misbehavior Impedes Learning, Drives Out Teachers

By Krista Kafer



Krista Kafer

Student discipline problems seriously obstruct teaching and learning in America's public schools, according to a new report from the opinion research organization Public Agenda, which recently

surveyed 725 middle and high school teachers and 600 parents of teens.

The survey's findings point to a rising problem of distracting and disrespectful student behavior that interferes with the classroom environment and compels many teachers to leave the profession.

"Rowdiness, disrespect, bullying, talking out, lateness, and loudness—these misbehaviors are poisoning the learning atmosphere of our public schools," said Public Agenda President Ruth A. Wooden. "At a time when the achievement stakes for students have never been higher, the fact is that in school, a minority of students who routinely challenge legitimate school rules and authority are preventing the majority of students from learning and teachers from teaching."

Threats of legal action by students and parents compound the problem by making it difficult for teachers and administrators to crack down on misbehavior. To restore order in the classroom, respondents to the Public Agenda survey support stricter enforcement of rules of conduct, transferring problem students to alternative schools, reforming special education, and placing limits on lawsuits over disciplinary actions.

The survey findings are detailed in the May 2004 report, "Teaching Interrupted: Do Discipline Policies in Today's Public Schools Foster the Common Good?" Key findings include:

Good Behavior Is Essential

A large majority of teachers (97 percent) and parents (78 percent) believe effective discipline and good student behavior are essential to a successful school. A similar large majority (93 percent of teachers and 88 percent of parents) believe the mission of schools extends beyond academics to teaching students to follow rules so they can become productive citizens.

Just a Few Cause Most Problems

A large majority (85 percent of teachers

and 73 percent of parents) believe just a few perpetual offenders are harming the experience of the whole student body. Seventy-seven percent of teachers say dealing with disruptive students detracts from effective teaching. Roughly half of respondents (52 percent of teachers and 43 percent of parents) report there is an armed police officer on their campuses.

Parents Are Part of the Problem

Most respondents (82 percent of teachers and 74 percent of parents) believe the failure of parents to discipline their children is a prime cause of the problem. Half of the teachers surveyed (52 percent) say today's teachers are softer on discipline because they can't rely on parents or the school administration to back them up.

Teachers Leave When Offenders Stay

A third of teachers (34 percent) say they know colleagues who have left because of student misbehavior and difficulties in maintaining discipline. A third (34 percent) also had considered leaving themselves. Three-quarters of teachers (78 percent) say persistent student offenders who should be removed from school are allowed to stay.

A Litigious Culture

Teachers are further frustrated by today's litigious culture. A majority of teachers (78 percent) say students remind them the students have rights and their parents can lodge a lawsuit. Half of the teachers (49 percent) say they have been accused by parents of unfairly disciplining their child. Just over half (55 percent) say discipline is undermined when school districts back down from aggressive parents.

Proposed Reforms

Respondents supported several reforms, including alternative placements, stricter enforcement of rules, special education reform, and limits on lawsuits. A large majority of respondents (91 percent of teachers and 88 percent of parents) think by strictly enforcing small rules, schools set a tone of civility that averts larger problems. A similar large percentage (93 percent of teachers and 89 percent of parents) support "zero tolerance" policies so students know they face expulsion for serious offenses. Eighty-seven percent of teachers and 75 percent of parents think alternative schools for persistent offenders would help.

More teachers than parents see litigiousness as a problem. Eighty-two

percent of teachers and 78 percent of parents would limit lawsuits to major disciplinary actions such as expulsion. A similar gap in support exists over eliminating monetary rewards for parents who sue regarding disciplinary actions, a proposal supported by 82 percent of teachers but only 69 percent of parents.

"The present legal environment undermines order in schools by enabling students and parents to threaten a lawsuit over virtually anything," commented Philip K. Howard, chairman of Common Good. "The legal system must strike a better balance between the claimed rights of individuals and the legitimate interests of society as a whole."

Three-quarters of teachers (76 percent) think special education students are disciplined too lightly, and the majority (94 percent) would like schools to discipline such students the same as their nondisabled peers unless the disability caused the misbehavior.

The Public Agenda report was based on a mail-in survey of teachers, a telephone survey of parents, and focus groups. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points. It was underwritten by Common Good, a bipartisan coalition committed to legal reform. **EM**

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*Quote
of the
Month*

*"Education is simply
the soul of a society
as it passes
from one generation
to another."*

*—G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936),
English writer*



Arizona Says English Immersion Working

A study released last month by the Arizona Department of Education concludes that students in English immersion classes “outperformed bilingual education students in every grade level between second and eighth grade in reading, language, and math, based on Stanford 9 scores.”

“There is not a single exception,” Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne told the *Arizona Republic*. “It tells us that the students in English immersion do substantially better.”

Since a 2000 voter-approved law made immersion the state’s primary method for teaching limited-English students, the study was very good news for everyone... almost.

The National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) called the study “irresponsible.” James Crawford, NABE’s executive director, called immersion “a crap shoot for kids” that “has no track record.” **EM**

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

Charters Ease Florida Public School Crowding

Everyone with kids in Florida public schools knows that the state’s schools are horribly crowded. What most people don’t know is that the state’s public schools have actually been getting less crowded over the last several years. And even less well appreciated is that the growth in charter schools has contributed significantly to the reduction in school crowding.

Charter schools help reduce school crowding in several ways:

First, charters help facilitate the more rapid opening of new schools by attracting additional capital for school construction from the federal government, foundations, and corporations. By tapping into more sources for funds, Florida has been able to open more schools faster.

Second, charter schools have drawn

students away from crowded traditional public schools, easing those crowded conditions.

Third, charter schools are often designed to be small, not overcrowded, schools themselves.

Remember that families choose to attend public charter schools voluntarily, unlike traditional public schools where students are often simply assigned. To attract students, charters have to offer features that families want, including smaller, less-crowded learning environments. **EM**

Source—Manhattan Institute’s Education Research Office in Davie, Florida. For more information please e-mail mi@manhattan-institute.org phone (212) 599-7000, or fax your request to (212) 599-3494.

Dictating Reform

Massachusetts has decided to do away with its mandatory dictation exam for prospective teachers. The dictation test, implemented under John Silber’s watch as chairman of the State Board of Education, measured test takers’ grammar, spelling, and punctuation skills by asking applicants to take dictation. Now, however, it’s been replaced with a multiple choice exam. Why? Apparently the deaf community complained that the exam was both a form of discrimination and irrelevant. Although the state doesn’t keep a record of the number of deaf applicants who have failed the test, the director of the Center for Deaf Children, in Framingham, said the number was “significant.” **EM**

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

Homeschooling Movement Grows

According to a new report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), nearly 1.1 million children, or 2.2 percent of the country’s children ages 5-17, received their education at home in 2003. That number represents a 29 percent increase from 1999, when 850,000 children, or 1.7 percent of the country’s school-age children, were being homeschooled. And, more than 60 percent of the parents who homeschooled said they did so for one of two reasons: they were concerned about the environment in their children’s regular public schools, or they wanted to provide religious or moral instruction. Only 16 percent claimed dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools as the most important reason for homeschooling. For more information,

go to <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubinfo.asp?pubid=2004115>. **EM**

Numbers Game: NEA’s 501(c)(4) Forms a 527

Education Intelligence Agency (EIA) has been well in front of the herd when tracking the doings of Communities for Quality Education (CQE), the NEA-created, NEA-operated, NEA-funded 501(c)(4) political advocacy organization. EIA reported the existence of the group (then called America Learns) and the identities of its officers on March 29, 2004. On July 3, EIA revealed that the organization’s income consisted of \$1-per-member contributions from NEA state affiliates, \$4 million from NEA’s national media fund, and \$1.8 million from NEA’s political action committee – the NEA “Fund for Children and Public Education.” This latter contribution has since been disclosed by the Center for Public Integrity and reported by the Associated Press.

Now this newly formed political group is about to lose itself (on purpose) in the forests of campaign finance.

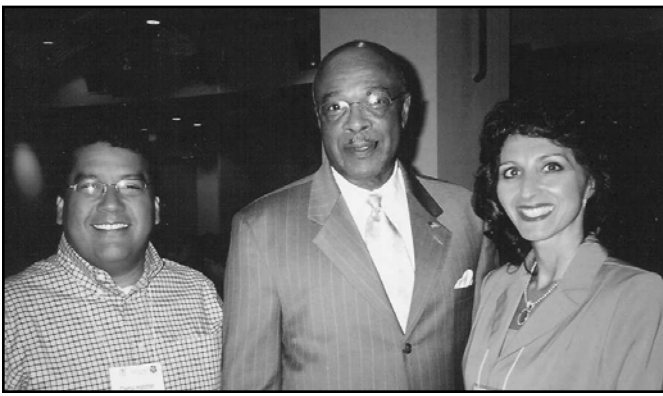
Last month, CQE formed its own 527 organization, called the Communities for Quality Education Action Fund. Its initial filing includes only the name of a contact person (Corina Cortez, an NEA manager for state policy and politics) and the organization’s treasurer (Robert Bonazzi, member of CQE’s board of directors and the executive director of the New Jersey Education Association).

A 527 can accept contributions in any amount from any source and is not overseen by the Federal Elections Commission. Such groups (MoveOn.org and The Media Fund are examples) cannot directly advocate for candidates for federal office, but, as watchdog groups like the Education Intelligence Agency points out, sometimes the line is extremely thin.

The purpose of such a Byzantine arrangement escapes many, though it makes sense to someone with a detailed knowledge of campaign finance laws. There is no evidence that any funding or decision-making is controlled by anyone other than an NEA officer or employee.

Why the need for multiple organizations with interlocking directorates?

The more distance created between the source of funding and its ultimate expenditure greatly reduces accountability. Teachers send dues money (or even PAC contributions) to their union, which then directs the money to a second organization (CQE), which then directs money to a third organization (CQE Action Fund), which then spends the money... somewhere. **EM**



Pictured with U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, are two state leaders from our Oklahoma affiliate, Associated Professional Oklahoma Educators (APOE), Darryl Hatcher and Betty Minton. The two recently traveled to Washington, D.C., to

attend the Research-to-Practice Summit hosted by Secretary Paige. The first-ever event was a part of the Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative begun by President Bush to provide opportunities for teachers and researchers to share best practices, with the ultimate goal of implementation in the classrooms of our nation's schools. Minton commented, "This is a positive effort that will help teachers improve student learning and gain a better understanding of the No Child Left Behind legislation."

Secretary Paige welcomed more than 150 teachers from every grade level,

academic discipline, and nearly every U.S. state to the National Research-to-Practice Teacher Summit. A number of other AAE teachers participated in this inaugural event. The event teamed up education researchers and teachers who have effectively put research into practice in the classroom and asked them to demonstrate their strategies in reading, math, science, and the arts. In turn, participating teachers will share what they have learned with colleagues in their schools and districts. And, to reach as many teachers as possible, the Department will make ten of the best sessions from the Summit and corresponding regional workshops accessible via the Internet and on satellite television; the tapes should be available soon. For more information go to <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tools/initiative/>. **EM**

The War On College Conservatives

When Ruth Malhotra told her college professor she planned to miss a class to attend a conservative political conference, the professor wasn't happy.

"You're just going to fail my class," she said the instructor told her.

Malhotra, a student at Georgia Institute of Technology, ultimately filed a grievance with the school, saying the professor used her public policy class to push her outspokenly liberal viewpoints on students.

"We're there to learn the foundations of policy, not the professors' personal plat-forms," said Malhotra, 20, Atlanta.

Georgia Tech spokesman Bob Harty said school policy barred him from disclosing how Malhotra's grievance was decided, but he said many of the facts in the case are open to interpretation.

Malhotra is one of a growing number of conservative college students who are complaining that liberal professors promote their viewpoints in the classroom, creating a hostile atmosphere for students who favor a more conservative perspective.

The trend has spawned a group called Students for Academic Freedom, which claims 135 chapters in colleges and universities and hosts a web-site (<http://www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org/>) that collects liberal-bias complaints from students throughout the country.

Those complaints have struck a sympathetic chord with some conservatives in Congress.

They have proposed a measure that would encourage colleges to present dissenting sources and viewpoints in the classroom and to promote intellectual pluralism

in selecting outside speakers and financing student activities.

The measure is part of reauthorizing legislation to provide billions in college grant and loan money for the next six years.

Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif., chairman of the House subcommittee in charge of the reauthorization bill, said the proposals are designed to send a message to liberal academic officials: "You're using the school in many cases to brainwash and not to educate."

College administrators counter that the legislation marks an unprecedented and unjustified attempt by Congress to control college curricula.

"We cannot have officials in Washington, D.C., regulating the content of our classrooms," Rebecca Wasserman, president of the United States Student Association, told House lawmakers earlier this year.

Debra Nails, a philosophy professor at Michigan State University, said the legislation "is not written by people who know what our job is."

"Anytime something from outside the university, whether it is big business or government or the church, starts to set the academic agenda, students are in trouble, and the free society is jeopardized," she said.

The congressional language is based on an Academic Bill of Rights promoted by activist David Horowitz, a driving force behind the campus conservative movement. Horowitz has traveled the country

for the past year asking Congress and state legislators to adopt his eight provisions, which he says are aimed at protecting political and intellectual diversity on campuses.

Horowitz said professors who use their position to promote liberal causes are shirking their duty to students.

"You have a responsibility to teach them and not to indoctrinate them," he said.

The language under consideration in Congress faces an uncertain future, but Horowitz's campaign is resonating among state legislators.

Language modeled on his proposals passed the Georgia Senate earlier this year and has been introduced in California, Washington, and Missouri. A state representative in Colorado withdrew similar legislation in March after the state's public colleges agreed

to take steps to protect political diversity on their campuses.

A representative of the American Council on Education acknowledged that liberal bias among faculty members is a real issue at many colleges, but he said those schools should address the problem "in a manner that is appropriate to each school."

"Legislation is hardly an appropriate mechanism for trying to redress this purported imbalance," said Sheldon Steinbach, general counsel for the group, which represents about half the nation's colleges and universities. **EM**

Source—Katherine Hutt Scott, Indianapolis Star.

A Little School That Could

By Mary Kathryn Hassett

This year at the Core Knowledge conference in Atlanta one may have noticed some thirty conference attendees from the **American Horse School** in South Dakota—teachers, paraprofessionals, and even one board member. In their second year of implementing Core Knowledge, this school, chartered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, is pleased to be part of the Core Knowledge network and proud to be the only one of seven schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation to make its annual NCLB yearly progress goals for 2003. The story of how the American Horse School came to adopt Core Knowledge is instructive and shows, for one thing, how appropriate it is that Principal Gloria Coats-Kitsopoulos counts among her ancestors the intrepid warrior and accomplished diplomat, Chief Red Cloud.

When Gloria Coats-Kitsopoulos retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the U.S. Army, she was living in Texas. However, she didn't head for Padre Island or for a golf resort in the Rio Grande Valley. Instead, she headed back to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota where she grew up. She was determined to find some way to relieve the impoverished conditions of life in that place. She focused on helping children by improving schools. Within a year she was principal of the American Horse School in Allen, South Dakota.

"When I came here," she said, "there was no structured curriculum, and the library had been converted to classroom space. I found this dusty book in the corner of a classroom, *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High Performing, High Poverty Schools*, and was electrified by the description of a school that was using a curriculum called Core Knowledge." After doing some research and convincing a number of skeptics, she secured a grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, brought in a Core Knowledge consultant, Jane Brower, and began the long process of implementing the exciting and challenging Core Knowledge curriculum that offered students the same rich content they might receive at an expensive private school. Ninety-nine percent of her students were eligible for free lunch; however, as with other Core Knowledge students, they began to study Mayan civilization in first grade and elements of geometry in second grade. In third grade they donned togas and celebrated holidays related to their study unit on ancient Rome.

"Some people," she said, "continued to scoff, asking why Native Americans needed to know about ancient Rome." "However," she added, "they study their own culture, too." The school teaches the Lakota language and integrates many other local elements into the Core Knowledge

curriculum. The town of Allen is close to many iconic locations in American history, among them the Badlands, the Crazy Horse Monument, and Mt. Rushmore. All of the schools in the area, including hers, are named after famous Lakota Sioux chiefs.

Since adopting the Core Knowledge curriculum, Ms. Coats-Kitsopoulos has observed that her students' attitudes have improved dramatically. They can't wait to show off their accomplishments. "Our teachers can't wait to learn more either," Ms. Coats-Kitsopoulos said, "That's why so many came to Atlanta, even though each teacher had to write five Core Knowledge units to qualify for the trip." Phoebe Tallman, a paraprofessional who helped her teacher write her units, remarked that she appreciated the opportunity to hear other teachers give their presentations in the Saturday sessions. Ms. Tallman has been at the school for eleven years and is working on a degree in Lakota Studies at the Ogallala Lakota College.

Ms. Coats-Kitsopoulos is particularly proud of having reclaimed space for the school library by adding five new classrooms. She secured a library grant of \$13,000 and let each teacher select 500 books. More remarkably, a retired reading teacher and friend of the Lakotas drove a U-Haul from Virginia to South Dakota with a gift of 5,000 books to stock the new library.

Connie Smith-Hammock, the librarian and newsletter editor, reports a new enthusiasm for reading among the students. This is no doubt reflected in the 30-point gain the school has made in language arts testing. Sharlene May, a member of the school board, confirmed this impression and added, "I see a big difference. Parents now have to sign off on their children's reading, and the little ones insist that their parents listen to them read."

The first three years at the American Horse School are ungraded in order to accommodate the various levels of reading readiness displayed by entering students. Children are enrolled in little communities called Tiospayes in Lakota fashion. The communities are named after animals, such as squirrels, robins, owls, foxes, and coyotes. Next year the school hopes to obtain a grant to implement a preschool program, which will enable all children to be ready to learn at grade level. "We will do whatever it takes," said Ms. Coats-Kitsopoulos, "to identify early reading problems and to solve them. We are happy to have the books to work with and the guidance of the Core Knowledge curriculum." Among the improvements at the American Horse School is the attendance, which now averages 90 percent. "I'm a little worried," Ms. Coats-Kitsopoulos said, "that we may have jumped too high. How can we beat that next year?"

Principal Coats-Kitsopoulos is already looking forward to the conference in Philadelphia, and hopes to encourage some of her teachers to make presentations. She even hopes to raise money to bring her student dance group, Teci Wacipi, to perform at the conference. **EM**

Mary Kathryn Hassett joined the Core Knowledge Foundation in 2002 as public relations specialist. Prior to this she spent ten years in academic publishing, five of them as Assistant Director of the University of Virginia Press. The early part of her career encompassed ten years of teaching as an adjunct university instructor and high school English teacher. She is thrilled to be even a bit player in the mission of Core Knowledge—instituting a life-long love of learning in every child and making educational equality a new civil right.

For more information about Core Knowledge Foundation, visit our website <http://www.aetteachers.org/resources.htm>.

Special Opportunity—

Flexible Part-Time Job Openings with ABCTE

The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (www.abcte.org) seeks experienced educators (all subject areas) as advisors for its current Passport to TeachingSM certification candidates. Advisors serve as guides to active teacher candidates pursuing certification through the American Board and work on a part-time basis in all fifty states. American Board advisors are required to establish weekly contact hours to offer support to candidates upon request. These hours can be evening or day hours.

In June, the American Board certified its first group of teachers and numbers are rapidly growing. Advising is one of the services that ABCTE provides to all of its certification candidates.

The majority of the advising work is done by phone and email. Advisors can live anywhere in the country and work in this flexible part-time position.

Please direct questions to Buffy DeBreaux-Watts at 1-888-AB-TEACH or e-mail her at bdebreaux-watts@abcte.org.

Putting Education to the Test: A Value-Added Model for California

By Harold C. Doran and Lance T. Izumi

How would a CEO fix the problems we face in education today? He would begin by identifying the most important desired result – greater student achievement. He would then determine the best way to evaluate and improve progress towards that result – accountability.

This is at the root of education failures – the lack of accountability in the system. Many school officials despair that they lack the tools to measure and improve their students' progress. This problem is becoming even more acute as schools nationwide struggle to meet the goals set forth in the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

But there are groundbreaking tools on the horizon, as is revealed in Pacific Research Institute's new study *Putting Education to the Test: A Value-Added Model for California*, by Harold C. Doran and Lance T. Izumi. The authors provide a model for measuring growth in student achievement that could

transform our ability to hold students, teachers, and schools accountable. And it could be implemented in any state.

Using student test score data collected over time, the PRI model, called the REACH value-added model (REACH VAM), provides annual achievement growth information for each individual student to meet federal and state goals of subject-matter proficiency. The REACH VAM answers the question, "Given a student's level of performance, how much does he need to grow each year to become proficient in the subject matter by the time he leaves school?"

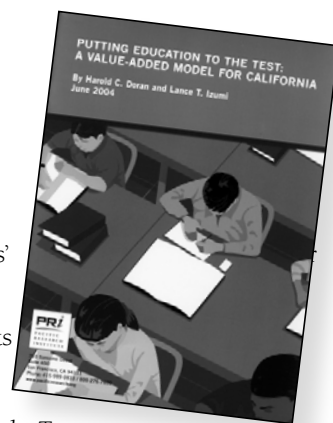
California currently focuses on average test scores and growth at the school level, which overlooks the individual student, especially those performing at the lowest levels. By changing the focus of schools to achievement progress for each individual student, PRI's new model will help prevent the lowest performing students from being left behind and

help schools' efforts to meet the requirements of NCLB.

Putting Education to the Test examines the flaws in the current system, explains this new way of measuring student achievement growth, and discusses how it can be used to bring about other important reforms within the education system.

"In light of No Child Left Behind, states are currently looking at how best to design testing and student accountability systems that fulfill both the letter and spirit of the law. This important study lays out a blueprint that states can follow to ensure that student performance is accurately measured over time, and to help them in their critical jobs."

—Bill Hansen, Former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education **EM**



Character Counts to the U.S.D.O.E. Too!

Just a reminder to visit the U.S. Department of Education's new Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center (CETAC). The center provides support and information for and about schools involved in character education and civic engagement across the country.

CETAC is working to create an educational system in which students leave school armed with the skills they need to compete in a global society. Too many leave without the skills they need to live in that society. The No Child Left Behind Act—Partnerships In Character Education Program provides resources for school communities to develop these critical skills for our youth.

CETAC offers a variety of online resources to help educators learn more about selecting, implementing, and evaluating character education and civic engagement efforts. CETAC will help states and local school districts address the guiding principles of character education programs as outlined in No Child Left Behind legislation by conducting the following activities:

Providing training and technical assistance for grantees targeted to effective program development, implementation, and evaluation.

Developing and disseminating publications and other resource materials about character education to state education agencies, local education agencies, and the public.

Developing and maintaining a publicly accessible web-site (CETAC Online) on resources for character education, civic engagement, and service learning.

Supporting regular meetings of character education resource groups, national education organizations, and Department of Education staff training sessions.

Please visit the CETAC web-site at www.CETAC.org. **EM**

What Assessments does No Child Left Behind Require?

No *Child Left Behind* (NCLB) requires states to ensure through state assessments that students are meeting grade-level content and achievement standards in math and reading each year in grades 3-8 and once during grades 10-12. States have until the 2005-06 school year to have annual math and reading assessments in place (until then they must administer annual assessments in reading and math at least once during grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12.) In the 2007-08 school year, states are required to begin testing in science once in grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12. Although some states already have their assessments in place, others are in the process of developing them. For the current year alone, Congress provided states \$390 million to pay for them.

To reach the NCLB goal of high achievement for all children, states must accurately and efficiently measure whether students are meeting the standards of learning expected of them, diagnose problems, and offer immediate intervention.

States also must take part in the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), in which only a sample of students in each state are assessed in math and reading in grades 4 and 8. Other assessments that districts and states use are not required by NCLB.

Tools for Teachers:

Cheryl Krehbiel, a 17-year teaching veteran currently serving as the staff development teacher at Summit Hall Elementary School in Gaithersburg, Md., wrote an article entitled "Quantitative Measures for Quality Results," explaining how she uses assessment data to inform her instruction. Check it out at http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OIIA/communityupdate/searchpage6.cfm?mag_id=66. **EM**

New Resources—

NASA Brain Bite Videos Available Online

NASA Johnson Space Center announces the production of 60-second video shorts that answer questions that 12-18 year-olds might have about science and space. They answer questions that deal with gravity, acceleration, motion, and friction, Newton's Laws, and more. A DVD and supplemental CD can be used in PowerPoint presentations/educational lessons. The high-quality videos can also be directly downloaded from the NASA web-site. To view the videos, visit <http://brainbites.nasa.gov>. For further information, contact Jenna Mills at 281-483-9261. **EM**

Can Busy Teachers Afford to Waste Time?

TimesaversforTeachers.com specializes in often-used teacher forms, resources, and tools that save time. Become a well-organized teacher and save time by using the popular books below, featuring:

- Often-used teacher forms
- Classroom awards, certificates, and passes
- Classroom management ideas
- Useful teacher tools and resources
- Printable, downloadable handouts
- Free printable worksheets
- Attractive forms for teachers
- Tips for getting organized
- User-friendly, timesaving classroom ideas
- Quality resources for every teacher
- Immediate download and use

Minimize the time spent on administration and planning. Maximize good teaching practices and get your life back!

Why spend hundreds of hours creating your own teacher resources? **EM**

New Lesson Plans from Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Council

Thanks to a \$320,000 grant from the Qwest Foundation, the congressionally charged National Council of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial is distributing educational CD-ROMs that allow students to explore important aspects of the expedition through the eyes of historians and American Indians. The CD-ROM includes a curriculum for fourth- through twelfth-grades, designed by a team of educators from Philadelphia and St. Louis, and linked to National Council for Social Studies and National Science Teachers Association standards; teachers can easily incorporate three to six lesson units into existing lesson plans. For more information, go to <http://www.backtoschoolwithlewisandclark.org/>. **EM**

National Geographic Relaunches its Online Mapmachine

Trying to locate a place you've heard about in the news? In search of a map for that homework assignment? Need a topographic map to better understand the terrain of a hike you're planning? *National Geographic's* online MapMachine, <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine>, is the best address on the Web for all of your mapping needs! **EM**



ON THE LIGHTER SIDE Become a Humor Being

By Walt Stasinski

Do you know how many times we laugh as adults? Fifteen times a day and that's on a good day. As a child, we laughed 250 times a day. What happened to us? As adults, we become more serious, don't we? But life is too important to take yourself seriously. It takes twenty-six muscles to smile and sixty-two muscles to frown. Why not make it easy on yourself?

Learn to laugh at yourself, but not in a low self-esteem kind of way. Laughing at yourself in a healthy way is a sign of psychological strength. It used to bother me when I started getting bald spots. But I don't look at it as baldness anymore. I now look at it as more face! And every year, I get to show more of my face. You know, you don't really lose your hair. It just starts growing out your ears instead.

When you're able to laugh at yourself, your flaws start to disappear, and you feel better about yourself.

For most men there are four stages in life:

- Stage 1. You believe in Santa Claus
- Stage 2. You don't believe in Santa Claus
- Stage 3. You dress up like Santa Claus
- Stage 4. You look like Santa Claus

Life is too important to take yourself seriously. **EM**

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