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What Republicans Wrought Starving Schools

By Frosty Troy

Few states have followed a more misguided education policy than Oklahoma since it fell under Republican legislative control.

Oklahoma leaders are whistling past the graveyard when they say: "But we're better off than most states."

Teacher salaries, when adjusted for inflation, are about the same now as they were in 1970. The gap between teacher salaries and the salaries of other college-educated professionals has increased from \$1,800 in 1960 to \$18,000 in 2007, according to U.S. Census data.

Oklahoma is dead last in regional teacher salaries and 48th lowest in the nation. The state is 49th on what it spends on a student's education.

Only three competitor nations in the developed world pay teachers less than America.

Approximately 50% of all new hires leave teaching in their first five years because of poor working conditions and low salaries.

Knowledgeable people know what it takes to enable students to outperform any other nation in the world. But many don't know what the underlying obstacles are that continue to stand in our way.

More than 90% of funding for public education comes from state and local governments. An analysis of 30 years of trends in all 50 states shows that state and local tax structures have become increasingly unfair and inequitable.

Responsibility for financing public services and infrastructure has been transferred to those least able to pay.

State and local governments have given away the store in the name of economic development – from call centers to Wal-Mart stores.

Despite gross underfunding, public schools are being held accountable for results when they don't have the capacity to deliver. Adequate and equitable funding is the necessary first step toward building such capacity. Without it our public schools will continue to suffer from serious underlying obstacles.

Holding schools accountable for results and not providing the means to

achieve them can only serve one purpose – to dismantle American public education – an unspoken goal of a majority of Republican legislators in Oklahoma.

Instead of holding schools accountable for narrowly focused results and then punishing them when test scores don't improve, education policy should be targeting the underlying obstacles.

There is a national price tag of \$5 billion a year in teacher turnover costs, according to the nonpartisan Alliance for Excellent Education.

Nationally, school infrastructure is practically falling apart. Many buildings are unfit for teaching and learning. It will take more than \$200 billion to modernize our national school infrastructure.

A survey by the Government Accountability Office reported that a third of school buildings are labeled

"inadequate" to "dangerous."

Do future income and working conditions have something to do with teacher turnover? Of course.

America can't address the underlying obstacles only by holding schools accountable for test scores.

With respect to state and local tax structures, they haven't changed much in 30 years. Taxes as a percentage of personal income have remained more or less the same since 1975 – about 10%.

But they have become increasingly unfair. For example, when you add up all the taxes people pay [property, excise, income, gasoline, cigarette, etc.] the poorest 20% of Americans pay approximately \$11 for every \$100 of their income.

In comparison, the richest 1% of Americans pay less than half that – about \$5.40 for every \$100 of their income.

In the meantime, corporate share of state and local revenues as a percentage of profits has declined by more than 50%.

State and local governments waste \$50 billion in the name of so-called "economic development."

Oklahoma taxpayers are stuck with nearly \$100 million to bring an NBA team to Oklahoma City – a team owned by fabulously wealthy businessmen.

Until the Quality Jobs Act was passed, Oklahomans were paying huge subsidies for jobs that paid little more than the minimum wage. Now a prospect must pay employees at least \$25,000 per year to qualify.

Oklahoma is presently on the hook for billions more in economic "incentives" to private businesses and industries.

Oklahoma is not as bad off as Florida, which gave an economic development subsidy of \$1 million that ended up creating exactly one new job.

Is it government's job to pick winners over losers by giving subsidies to big business, like Wal-Mart, and forcing small entrepreneurs to close their doors?

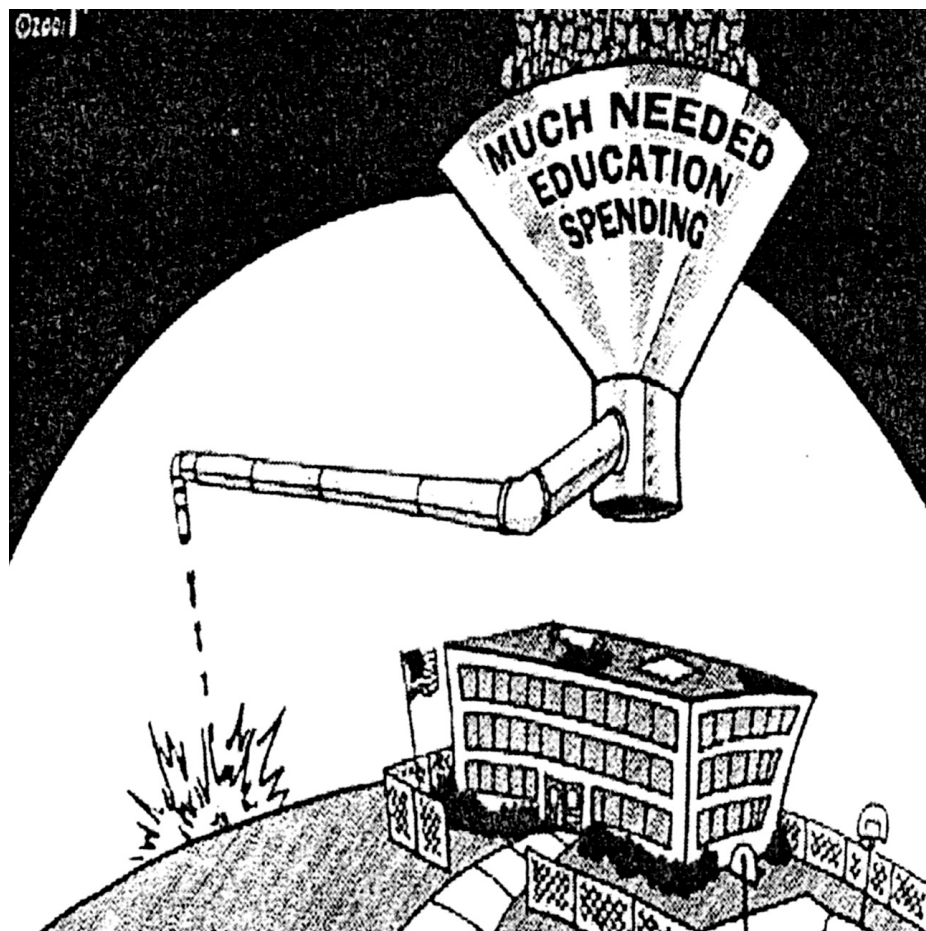
Good government should level the playing field. All businesses, large and small, deserve a fair chance to succeed in the new global economy.

Instead of concentrating on failed federal policies such as A Nation At Risk, Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind, Americans need to wake up to the need for a redefined education system.

It should encompass the true, overarching purpose of public education – creating a prosperous and civilized society.

To succeed in the new global, knowledge and information economy, this country must have fair tax policies that support and sustain adequate funding to address the underlying obstacles to excellent, globally-competitive public and higher education.

Oklahoma and the nation need an economic development policy that places investment in public education at the top of the economic growth agenda.



Observations

What They Want

Generation Y teachers are clamoring for creative freedom, the power to make a difference, professional opportunities to grow, rewards for a job well done and an end to one-size-fits-all instruction.

This is according to a survey of 865 first-year teachers. Teaching is a labor of love, and that will not change for the next generation of educators as 79% of them would choose more supportive administrators over significant salary increases.

The survey also finds that of the 16% of teachers who plan to leave the profession within the next five years, 54% came from schools of education and currently serve high needs schools.

When looking at alternatively trained teachers, 79% in high-needs schools said that the lack of administrative support is a drawback. Of this group, only 16% see teaching as a lifelong career, but another 48% anticipate staying in the education field in some capacity.

To improve teacher quality, 90% of Generation Y teachers say there needs to be more professional learning opportunities and particularly better preparation to meet the needs of a diverse classroom.

As teacher candidate pools in Oklahoma and elsewhere dwindle, it becomes increasingly important to take the advice of those drawn to the profession.

Bye Bye Arts?

No Child Left Behind has led to a marked decrease in arts education across the country.

As more instruction time is spent on the big two – math and reading – focus groups with parents, teachers, principals and superintendents reveal that arts education is valued because it uniquely addresses the whole child and provides a well rounded education.

NCLB was intended “to increase the accountability of school districts to ensure the progress of every child,”

yet children from high-minority and high-poverty schools lack access to a comprehensive education.

With the re-authorization of NCLB potentially on the way, arts education advocates all over the country are looking for ways to keep arts in schools by attending and advocating at school board meetings, writing letters to the editor and other actions.

Imagine an America without the arts.

Mom's Worth

If the typical stay-at-home mother in the United States were paid for her work, she would earn \$138,095 a year, according to new research

This reflected a 3% raise from last year's \$134,121, according to Salary.com, a Waltham, MA-based compensation agency.

The 10 jobs comprising a mother's work were housekeeper, cook, day care center teacher, laundry machine operator, van driver, facilities manager, janitor, computer operator, chief executive officer and psychologist.

The study indicated the typical mother puts in a 92-hour work week, working 40 hours at base pay and 52 hours overtime.

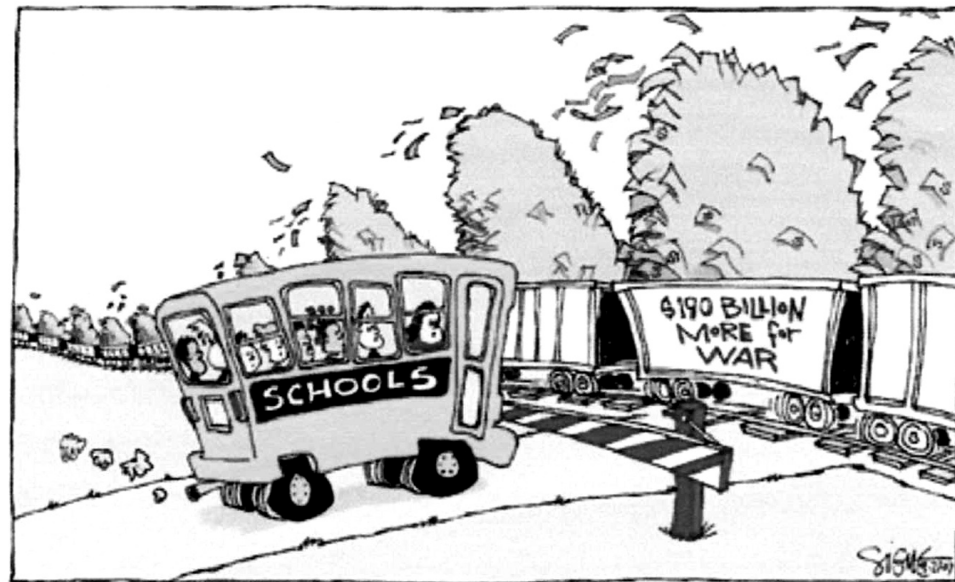
A mother who holds a full-time job outside the home would earn an additional \$85,939 for the work she does at home.

Salary.com compiled the online responses of 26,000 stay-at-home mothers and 14,000 mothers who also work outside the home.

Blame Game

One way to describe a new study on student learning is by saying, “It's the parents, stupid!”

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study is the first nationally representative study that assesses early mental and physical development, the quality of early care and education settings and the contributions of



parents to the lives of children in the years leading up to school.

Oklahoma leads the nation in early childhood education, thanks in large part to First Lady Kim Henry who traveled the state with her pitch for it.

The report, which provides information on children when they were about four, finds that children with two-parent families scored higher than children with single-parent families on the overall literacy scale score.

This is a pattern repeated in the results of letter recognition and phonological awareness.

In addition, while 65% of children demonstrated proficiency in numbers and shapes, only 40% of children with lower socioeconomic status [SES] demonstrated proficiency, whereas 87% of children in higher SES families were able to do so.

To simplify the message: Poor parenting and poverty are the leading causes of school failure.

Condemned

We read the heartbreaking story about Deamonte Driver, a seventh grader in Prince George's County, MD, who died because he didn't have health insurance to cover an \$80 tooth extraction and his mother couldn't find a dentist to treat him.

What happened to Deamonte is a Dickensian horror story that, sadly, is not unique in our rich nation.

More than nine million children try to live without health insurance, nearly 90% of them in working families that don't qualify for the CHIP program.

So how does President Bush react to this tragedy? He threatened to veto a bill guaranteeing health and mental health coverage to all children.

The United States provides health care to all senior citizens, although children are the least expensive and most cost-effective group to cover.

Virtually all major, industrialized nations provide universal health care to children. Why do we lag so far behind? Children are too young to vote.

Health coverage for all children is a moral and practical obligation and now is the time to get it done.

Remember the words of Hubert Humphrey?

“The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”

Poor People

States, including Oklahoma, are feeling the impact of hard economic times as more people turn to food stamps to put meals on the table.

The Congressional Budget Office predicts that 28 million people will be using food stamps by October – highest level since the program's inception more than 40 years ago.

Food stamp benefits have not kept pace with the rising price of food. They average \$1 a person per meal and the minimum monthly food stamp benefit has remained at \$10 for 30 years.

Households with more than \$3,000 in assets – such as cash or savings – might not qualify.

The new farm bill increases spending on nutrition programs by more than \$10 billion over 10 years.

Those who whistle past the cemetery about Oklahoma's “good” economy have no idea that one out of four children lives in poverty and 650,000 Oklahomans are without health insurance.

Oklahoma leads the nation in zero health care for persons 65 and younger. Oklahoma family income is less than 80% of the national average.

But our “leaders” in both parties managed to cut taxes more than \$720 million.

Gasbag

He's baaaack! Silly Billy Bennett, sorriest education secretary in the history of that office, is back on the stump.

You remember him don't you? He went on a rampage against public education, having never spent a day in a public school classroom. Almost all his accusations were debunked in Congress. He sought to totally defund public education but wanted to keep the federal mandates. Duh!

Nothing was too foul, too odious for this extreme rightwinger to say. He often lectured on ethics, yet he went on to lose a fortune in one night in Las Vegas. End of career.

Like Newt Gingrich, who put his mistress on the U.S. House payroll, Bennett has been given a new life by the far right.

In a C-Span appearance, Bennett declared public education a failure and he blamed the teachers' unions.

In fact, the AFT and the NEA are the only reason why public education hasn't already been sunk by George Bush's vouchers.

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OUR MOTTO: To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

OUR CREDO: So then to all their chance, to all their shining golden opportunity. To all the right to love, to live, to work, to be themselves, and to become whatever thing their vision and humanity can combine to make them. This seeker, is the promise of America.

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

Observerscope

More than 633,000 Oklahoma students are answering the school bell in 429 K-12 districts and 111 K-8 districts. There are 1,020 elementary schools, 293 middle/junior high schools and 54 CareerTech centers. There are 48,244 teachers at an average instructional salary of \$42,124.

Dart: To the Washington crowd, squandering our treasury in Iraq while one in six here has no health insurance, one in four do not graduate from high school, one in five children lives in abject poverty. America ranks 12th in human development. – From *The Measure of America*

Pray that Democrat Ron Marlett of Warr Acres defeats the Oklahoma House's No. 1 loon, GOP Rep. Sally Kern. Is she here alone or did the circus come with her?

Laurel: To Rep. Sue Tibbs, R-Tulsa, and Rep. Danny Morgan, D-Prague, teaming up against cell phones and text messaging while driving. It's more than teens – any legislation should include all drivers.

The far right homeschool advocate Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs is continuing its attack on early childhood education. Gee, don't you wish we'd had special education when Brandon Dutcher was a boy?

Dart: To Republican legislators attacking an initiative petition drive to let voters decide whether to fund public education at the regional level. If they'd kept their promise, no petition drive would be necessary.

Mandated abstinence-only is taking its toll – Oklahoma has the eighth highest birthrate for females 15-17. In 2005, 78.7% of teen births were to unmarried teen mothers. Trust the kids with the whole truth.

Laurel: To the Dear Abby nationally syndicated column for pointing out that widespread cheating in public schools is a direct result of the test mania ushered in by Bush's sorry No Child Left Behind law.

It's hilarious when Republican legislators – owned body and soul by the insurance industry – call for Democrats to return donations from workers comp lawyers.

Dart: To Rep. Tad Jones, R-Claremore, posing in his fall campaign as a supporter of public education. As chairman of the House Education Committee, he helped gut public school funding this year. We hope Democrat Bill Sawyer gives him a stiff race.

As expected: Now that Democrat Andrew Rice is on the airwaves, the U.S. Senate race is tightening. Latest Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee poll shows Rice trailing incumbent Jim Inhofe by single digits.

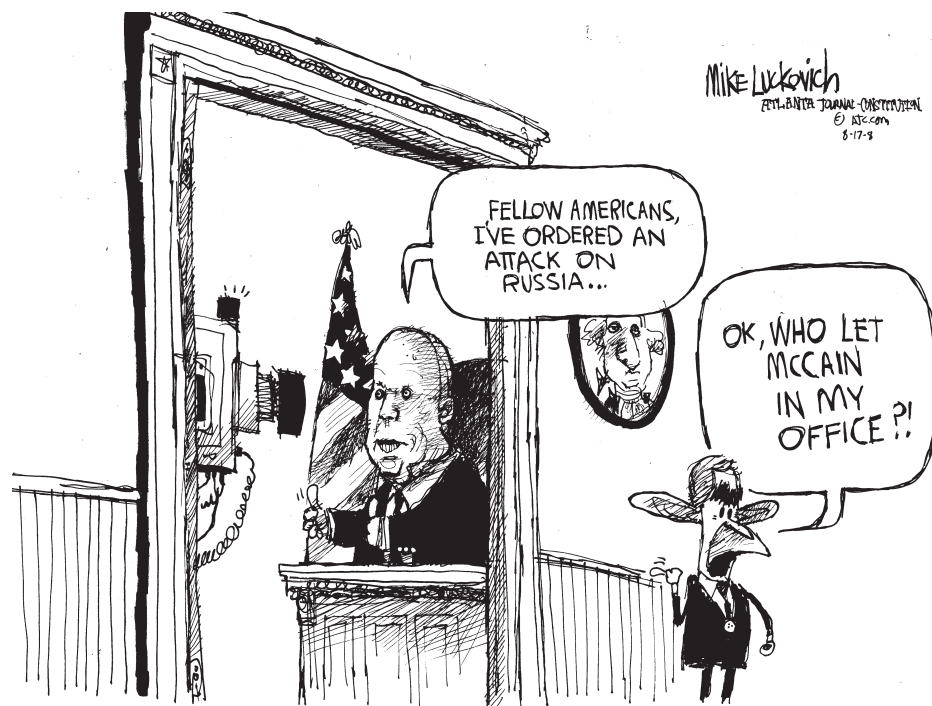
Laurel: To OEA President Roy Bishop for telling it like it is on sorry public education funding [ranking 48th per pupil]. Naturally it brought wrath from the sloping skulls on the Daily Disappointment editorial page.

Shame on KFC, Taco Bell, Sonic, Chick-Fil-A and Jack in the Box for so-called kids meals that are desperately bad for them due to the high calorie count. – Center for Science in the Public Interest

Dart: To Oklahoma's junior GOP senator, Tom Coburn, for a wholly false attack on Barack Obama for his visit to the war zone. Will the OKC Rotary Club hear the other side of that sorry Bush war which has killed more than 4,100 of our young men and women?

Region Five [Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas] Indian casinos had a 20% growth from \$2.1 billion in 2006 to \$2.6 billion in 2007 in gaming revenue.

Laurel: To the U.S. Conference of Mayors, calling for a single-payer health system providing care for every American – rich or poor. Too bad the press failed miserably to cover this story.



Just when you thought Wal-Mart had straightened up and was flying right, they tell their managers that pro-union Barack Obama would be bad for business. Their denial was disputed by managers who heard it. – *The Wall Street Journal*

Dart: To the incessant critics of the Department of Human Services – especially the Daily Disappointment. The agency is grossly underfunded and understaffed. Sorry parenting has resulted in 7,600 kids in foster care.

The Tulsa Board of Education has picked a real winner in Dr. Keith Ballard as superintendent. He did a fine job in Claremore and an equally good job at the Oklahoma State School Boards Association.

Laurel: To Corporation Commissioner Bob Anthony, elected chairman of the board of directors of the National Regulatory Research Institute which provides technical assistance, research and training to regulatory commissions.

Thanks to Ivan Holmes & Co., Oklahoma Democrats are challenging Lazarus for best comeback. Two years ago, Dems failed to challenge dozens of House seats. This year, only 13 GOP seats went uncontested. More impressive: 21 Democratic seats did not draw a Republican challenge.

Dart: To the critics who say teachers have it soft – the summer off. In fact, a teacher's week consists of 36.3 hours teaching, 6.2 hours in related duties, 11.2 hours in preparation, grading, etc. That equals 53.7 hours a week.

Children under 12 are increasingly diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD]. Of the 50 million tested between 1997-2006 more than four million had ADHD. – U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Laurel: To Dr. Sanjaya Kumar for his documented book *Fatal Care: Survive in the U.S. Health Care System*. Preventable hospital medical errors kill 277 people a day. If you have to go, get in and out as soon as possible and question the tests proposed for you.

What was the Tulsa World goofy editorial writer smoking when the paper came out against an initiative petition to guarantee education would be funded at the regional average? Any logic was lost in the mumbling piece.

Dart: To the usual trash – slanted voter's guides that pop up in any election year. None is worse than James Dobson's Focus on the Family. It's how we found out that tort reform is a "family value."

More than 300,000 Oklahomans have diabetes, costing the state's economy \$2 billion a year, including more than \$600 million a year in lost productivity. – State Health Department

Laurel: To the IRS for going after more than \$58 billion in withheld payroll taxes by 1.6 million businesses that have failed to remit it.

Sure big of that federal judge to award Indian tribes \$465 million as a result of federal mismanagement of their assets when the minimum estimate is \$47 billion.

Dart: To Rep. Dave Dank, R-OKC, for a grossly inaccurate op-ed piece in the Daily Disappointment. If he had bothered to read the OEA initiative on funding he would have learned how to calculate regional average teacher salaries.

The Radio Hall of Fame has inducted James Dobson's Focus on the Family radio show. We didn't know the Hall of Fame had a category for political bigotry.

Oklahoma has lost more than 26,100 manufacturing jobs since 2001 due to the fanny-kissing Bush trade policies – especially with China, which took 15,400 Oklahoma jobs. – Economic Policy Institute study

How many more unfair licks is Oklahoma County Sheriff John Whetsel going to have to take before something is done about the disgracefully inadequate county jail? The latest is a year-old federal report on sorry jail conditions.

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:
Four Basic Questions:

As a stockholder in Bank of America do you support loaning bankrupt Semgroup \$150 million?

As a taxpayer do you support bailing out the private mortgage companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac?

As a voter are you confident that the Bush administration can "back down" Russia in the Republic of Georgia?

As their parties national candidates for President which would make you tremble with fear if summoned to the Oval Office?

Answer Block [use each only once]:

[A] This is the Fox Guarding the Hen House syndrome.

[B] Wall Street has always bullied Main Street.

[C] Only if Blackwater "goes public" with an IPO.

[D] Hillary Clinton.

Larry D. Dobie
Claremore

Editor, The Observer:

It's the beginning of the end, and it's a surprise ending.

All the cowboy tough talk seems to be over. It's not George W. Bush in charge. He's the one listening and his handlers are burning the midnight oil trying to find a face-saving way out for him.

On July 21st the Associated Press published another story in the fast breaking story of the end to Bush's needless war in Iraq. Two specific paragraphs are particularly revealing: "Let's squeeze them," Al-Maliki was quoted by the Associated Press as telling his advisers. Bush then decided to reverse course and agree to set a "general time horizon" for bringing home more U.S. troops, based on Iraq's ability to take care of its own security.

"The key issue," Perino [White Press Secretary Dana Perino] said, "is that they understand it will not be arbitrary; it will not be a date that you just pluck out of thin air; it will not be something that Americans say, 'we're going to do, we're just going to leave at this date', which is what some have suggested," she said.

She's probably absolutely correct in her claim it won't be arbitrary, and plucked out of thin air. The overwhelming likelihood is the date will be set by the Iraqis, transmitted to George W. Bush and he'll quietly accept what they've dictated.

The bus has a new driver and his name is Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Kenny Belford
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

I encountered a love it or leave it-er recently. I told her that I do love my country. She said then show it. I have shown my patriotism; during the Vietnam War I voluntarily entered the military service for six years and served a year in Vietnam as a volunteer! Most of Bush's chicken hawks dodged the military. And God bless all of you left-wingers and right-wingers who did serve and are serving.

What's more, true patriots show their patriotism by speaking up when something is wrong; and something is wrong. I won't go into it all but our Constitution is being violated left and right.

Over 4,100 men and women have lost their lives and 28,000 have been wounded in a war based on four lies, a war with the very few getting very rich, a war which professional economists say is going to cost us \$3 trillion in actual costs, a war we can't afford.

In the meantime, over 438,000 people have lost their jobs here since the first of the year.

The Labor Department says that if we count people who have given up looking for jobs and those who have had to take part-time jobs, the unemployment rate would be 9.9%, not 5.5%.

Top FDA officials give themselves \$35 million bonuses while protecting us less.

The summer Arctic ice may disappear, not 20 years from now as earlier predicted, but this summer as heat absorbing surfaces uncover.

Jim Stodola
Denton, TX

Editor, The Observer:

Recently, there was major public outrage about the state of Alaska's "bridge to nowhere."

For decades Oklahoma has had its "turnpikes to nowhere." How and why?

Almost immediately after the successful Oklahoma City to Tulsa turnpike was authorized in 1959 and to be a "free road" in 20 years, the Legislature thereafter authorized other turnpike locations. Some of these turnpikes would not be profitable!

We will call these "deadbeat turnpikes," "turnpikes to nowhere" or "turnpike welfare!"

Originally, each turnpike was to have its own "bond issue" and when paid off a free road. Now, with the creation of a "turnpike to nowhere" not being able to pay off its debt, all the pikes were consolidated into one bond debt. None would be "free roads" until all bonds are paid off. Now, over

MIKE LUCKVICH
REFLECTOR JOURNAL COMMENTARY
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\$1 billion bond debt.

To assist the "turnpikes to nowhere" debt to be paid off, the Legislature approved Title 69 O.S. 2001 [sections 1727, 1729 and 1730] for a subsidy of the state's gasoline tax money collected at filling stations on the turnpikes to go to the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority [OTA] for payments of its debt. This subsidy is now over \$40 million per year.

The question is, who knew or should have known about the state's gasoline tax subsidy to the OTA and never said anything about it, and then allowed HB 2272 to be passed while \$40 million per year could have easily been transferred to the Department of Transportation for free road maintenance without a tax increase of \$300 million in new debt?

Jerry R. Fent
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

First, Barack Obama is being treated as a celebrity, but has never been one as celebrities go. He has never been an astronaut, an actor or a professional athlete. People, especially young people, like him. None of us had ever heard of him before 2004.

As far as my memory goes, the only celebrities elected as Democrats were John Glenn, a former astronaut, and Bill Bradley, a former NBA star whose peripheral vision is 192 degrees. Both were senators.

The only Independent celebrity that comes to mind is Jesse Ventura, a wrestler elected governor of Minnesota.

How many Republicans were celebrities before running for office?

Ronald Reagan, a B actor, governor of California and president. Union president became a union buster.

Sonny Bono, who ran for mayor of Palm Springs because he had problems opening a restaurant. Qualifications for office? None that I am aware of. No college. He was married and divorced four times.

Fred Thompson, actor, but he was a lawyer, he didn't just play one on TV. He was assistant minority counsel during Watergate.

Fred Grandy, Gofer on the Love Boat, was a prep school grad and English major who spoke three languages, including Arabic. According to his on-line bio his interest in politics preceded his acting career. He was David Eisenhower's roommate at Exeter and his best man. I can't see where that is a qualification for office. He was never on the front line.

We might as well include Dwight Eisenhower as a celebrity. I have

heard that he had never voted. He was raised an anti-militarist Jehovah's Witness and was buried as one. His parents home was the meeting place. He was baptized a Presbyterian 12 days before his inauguration. He had never even been interested in politics. Both parties had to try to draft him and he finally decided on Republican.

Arnie ... we can't leave out Arnie, who had zero qualifications.

Athletics as qualifications is a real winner for Republicans: Jim Ryun, an Olympic miler. Jack Kemp, a quarterback. Steve Largent a right-wing lunatic of a wide receiver. Jim Bunning, a pro-pitcher.

I have no idea when the GOP became so down on celebrity as the primary qualification for elective office.

By the way, Barack Obama has more education than most of these and had more experience at something other than being cheered than most.

Karen Webb
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

We won a victory for vets in June. We can win more victories in every facet of government if we all work in unison and keep up the clamor for honest representations of the public's views and not the "insiders, lobbyists and money bags."

Keep up the clamor for the end of illegal aggressions against countries that have not harmed us. Keep up the clamor for decent medical care and coverage for every citizen of our land. Keep up the pressure for ethical behavior by our elected personnel.

We, the people, must stay involved if we wish to return to the rule of constitutional law.

The consequences of being uninformed and uninvolved lead to anarchy and dictatorships!

Save America by educating yourselves regarding the propaganda bombarding us from the corporate media and corporate businesses. Read at least one respectable news journal from outside of the United States as an aid to understanding more fully what is being done behind our backs by the unscrupulous within our country and our government.

If you truly love and value the doctrines which founded our nation and if you truly wish your future heirs to inherit the rights and freedoms our grandparents enjoyed and protected for us, you must not remain ignorant of what is being done across this planet by the corrupted acting in our names.

Darla Reynolds-Sparks
Yukon

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Frosty's Notebook

Politics Of Fear

The Oklahoma Education Association is backing the Helping Oklahoma Public Education [HOPE] initiative to amend the State Constitution to mandate no less than the regional average per pupil funding – \$6,944 vs. \$8,300.

Rep. Tad Jones, R-Claremore, went on a vicious attack with the usual Republican blather, saying that “nearly 50 cents of every Oklahoma state tax dollar already goes to education.”

He didn't note that the 50 cents represents all of education – not just public schools. He also fails to note that the percentage of the budget going to public schools has dropped under the so-called Republican leadership.

He also failed to tell voters the truth – it will be a minimum of six years before the funding would be effective – if voters approve it.

In the cheapest shot, he said Oklahoma spends about \$6,944 per student – “That's more than the cost of a year's tuition at OU or OSU.”

Nothing like comparing apples to oranges, or comparing a prevaricator to somebody who tells the truth. He didn't explain that woefully low teacher salaries are only a portion of the needs addressed by the initiative.

Another assertion: “The National Science Board found that Oklahoma ranks 17th in the nation in public school expenditures as a share of gross state product, so Oklahomans actually devote a larger share of their available dollars to schools than most states.”

What he didn't tell Oklahomans is that the state ranks 48th in per pupil spending and is dead last in the region – even behind Arkansas.

His diatribe continued: “Oklahoma students achieved an average composite score of 20.7 on the 2007 ACT tests, outperforming students in Texas, Arkansas, Colorado and New Mexico, even though those states spent 'more' per pupil [at least on paper].”

Somebody ought to give Jones an ACT test. It is a well known fact that Oklahoma teachers are paid lower but perform higher. Compare that to Jones and his pals – 10th highest paid Legislature in America while Oklahoma teachers rank 48th in pay.

Jones is one of those Republicans visited upon public education by the rise of three corrupt Republican House Speakers in a row.

Check his record: He voted for every one of the \$700 million in tax cuts – mostly for the rich. That results in a \$1 billion budget hit next year, according to the Oklahoma Tax Commission.

More Hand-Wringing

When the National Academies released the report “Rising Above The Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future,” a flurry of hand-wringing at the national and state level followed.

Alarmed by the stark picture the report painted of America's ability to remain a world leader in science and technology, federal and state policy-makers began to intensify their moaning about the lack of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

Following are some of the indicators the National Academies identified:

- Fewer than one-third of U.S. 4th and 8th graders performed at or above a level called “proficient.”
- In mathematics, about one-third of 4th graders and one-fifth of 8th graders were unable to perform basic mathematical computations.
- U.S. 12th graders performed below the international average for 21 countries on a test of general knowledge in mathematics and science.

Why I Will Continue

I have been asked many times why I keep on keeping on – continue traveling when it has become a real nightmare. I qualified for retirement 10 years ago. I could explain myself in 10,000 words but a letter I received from a teacher says it all. As long as I can inspire teachers such as Cindy Garrett, I will stay the course.

I am a Pre-K teacher at a Title I elementary school in Bartlesville, OK. You spoke to the teachers in Bartlesville at our beginning of the year gathering.

Your words were inspiring. I jotted many of your thoughts down on the program that morning. I kept them near my computer throughout this school year. I read many of those comments again and again.

Little did I know that I was in for the most challenging year of my teaching career when the school year began. I have a variety of teaching experiences [all in early childhood education].

The last seven years have been in public schools. I had a new assistant this year, Mrs. Alexander, and she is wonderful.

I will tell you that the behavioral challenges that came packaged in the form of 4-, 5- and 6-year-old children had my assistant and me wondering if working with Pre-K students was anything more than serving as a bodyguard.

The anger and aggression that I witnessed in my students this year exceeded anything that I have ever experienced [more than 20 years of working in this field].

I spent countless hours documenting behaviors to ensure proper channeling for these students. I am hoping what I experienced/survived this year was a



Jones deliberately fear-mongers, claiming adoption of HOPE would force the release of prisoners and stop road programs. Gee, you think he missed that part of the proposal that requires a three-year time frame – if the people vote for it.

Every poll on the subject criticizes the Legislature for not adequately funding public education. Jones hides his pathetic leadership behind wild accusations rather than tell Oklahomans the hard truth – by their actions Republican legislators don't like public education.

“Or,” he said, “the state could eliminate all programs helping abused children and battered women and still not generate the money the OEA wants.”

His statement is beneath contempt – a new low. Republicans are writing one of the sorriest chapters in state history. It is Jones and his cronies who have failed to adequately fund corrections.

It was a court order, not teachers, that forced Arkansas to face up to the state's sorry funding of public education. It took \$400 million in new revenue. Arkansas is now recruiting Oklahoma teachers.

Fifty-seven Arkansas school districts were not closed – they were joined with others. That is precisely the route Oklahoma politicians have been afraid to take – consolidating the tiniest school districts.

Of course the Daily Disappointment editorial page belched its usual anti-public education garbage.

I suggest Tad Jones wash his mouth out with soap. There may be a bigger prevaricator in Oklahoma, but if there is, we haven't met him.

- Only 41% of U.S. 8th grade students received instruction from a teacher who specialized in mathematics; the international average is 71%.
 - In Germany, 36% of undergraduates receive their degrees in science and engineering. In China, the figure is 59%, and in Japan 66%. In the United States, the figure is 32%.
 - In 2004, China graduated about 500,000 engineers, India 200,000 and America 70,000.
 - For the cost of one chemist or one engineer in the United States, a company can hire five chemists in China or 11 engineers in India.
- What the statistics don't tell you is that America is the only major nation in the world where a higher education is a cost, not an investment.
- Instead of wasting multiplied billions on the Bush war in Iraq, that money should be redirected to education at all levels in America. That won't happen if John McCain wins in November.

fluke.

I'm going to be optimistic. This past school year was filled with so many moments that took my breath away. My assistant and I came to understand just how critical we are to each of our students. We were most definitely critical lifelines. We were their flag every single day.

We are re-energizing for next year so we can continue to be life changers because I am going to “be a teacher all my life.”

Thank you, Mr. Troy, for your words and thoughts.

How To Help

Oklahoma schools can do more to help troubled immigrant students by changing how they teach in regular classrooms. To help these struggling students, teachers should provide almost twice as much help in English and be trained in how to work with complex learners.

According to a survey of research, crystal-clear lessons delivered in smaller chunks along with almost minute-to-minute checks to see if children understand paired with immediate re-teaching if they do not will help all children at risk.

The proper plan is to go into each class and reorganize the way every student is taught instead of restructuring the whole school to satisfy pockets of struggling learners.

America's Last Best Hope: Public Schools

By Frosty Troy

Do we still need public schools? In 1758 President John Quincy Adams said: "The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expense of it."

Recognizing the importance of education to the national well-being, early American leaders created publicly funded schools to educate children from all walks of life.

They would be ashamed today to note that American teachers are the 22nd lowest paid in the Western world, that overall funding ranks eighth, and so-called patriots are trying to shut down public education.

Schools today are burdened by billions in unfunded mandates, mired in mindless high-stakes testing caused by the No Child Left Behind law, and new teachers staying only an average of five years.

MORE THAN JUST THE THREE R'S

The founders of public education were seeking to achieve more than merely teaching young people to read, write, and cipher. They believed that a system of publicly supported schools ought to prepare people to become responsible citizens.

Today when discussion turns to the quality of education, it is not uncommon for a friend or neighbor to suggest that the problems of the public schools could be solved by school choice, education vouchers, privatization, home schooling, or some other plan to shift funding and responsibility for education to the private sector.

A Stanford University study revealed that vouchers would suck \$73 billion out of already poorly funded public schools – including \$33 billion to finance Catholic schools.

In an age when rightwing politicians have begun to question one of the most fundamental elements of society, the public schools, it is useful – indeed necessary – to review why those schools were created.

AN EGALITARIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Shortly after the Revolution, some early leaders of the new United States proposed a new system of schooling to go along with their emerging philosophy of democratic governance.

Public schools would be organized and financed by the states, and they would be open to rich and poor children alike.

Despite this early support from influential leaders, public schools would not become widely established for another 75 years. From Colonial times through the early 19th Century, before common schools took hold, American children were educated in a hodgepodge of institutions and arrangements.

An unsystematic approach to schooling resulted in many inequities. For example, large groups of children – African-Americans, Native Americans, many girls, and many poor white children who did not belong to a church – were excluded from schools by law or by custom. Some states made it a crime to teach a slave to read.

CHANGING RATIONALE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

After the Civil War, public schools were created for African-American children. Although these schools were segregated and generally substandard, they provided schooling for children who previously had little, if any, access to education.

The United States has changed dramatically since the early Americans first debated the rationale for public schools more than 200 years ago.

Today, it is necessary to ask whether the reasons for creating public education are still valid. Thinking Americans need to consider whether certain national needs still exist.

At a time when cynicism and ignorance about government are rampant, preparing young people to become knowledgeable and responsible citizens is more important than ever.

BETTER EDUCATED, BETTER CITIZENS

Better educated people have higher voting rates. In the last presidential election, only 27% of high school dropouts voted, compared to 60% of high school

Voters Want More Investment In Kids

To determine public opinion on the presidential election and issues facing children and families, the Every Child Matters Education Fund commissioned a nationwide telephone survey of 800 registered voters, representing a cross-section of the voting public who say they are likely to vote in the 2008 general election.

The poll, conducted July 7-10, strongly indicated that voters want the next U.S. president to make children a priority.

Some key findings from the survey:

- Voters are pessimistic about the future of the nation's children – 45%.
- Voters of both parties are deeply concerned about a variety of problems facing America's children and find it important for the candidates for president to address them with specific proposals in their platforms.
- When given choices about how to construct the federal budget, increasing spending to provide health care to uninsured children soars to the top of the list for both supporters of Obama [93%] and McCain [60%].
- Large numbers of swing voters would increase funding for a variety of children's programs.



J. Lea Lansaw

graduates and 79% of college graduates.

Students enrolled in civics courses are more knowledgeable and more active citizens. Students who participated in a nationwide civics education program called "We the People" did better than their peers in every realm of a test of civics knowledge and had much higher voter registration rates.

People lack basic knowledge about government. More than half of American adults questioned in a recent survey could not name a single Supreme Court justice. Half don't read a daily newspaper.

Crime, violence, and delinquency continue to affect American society, and education remains the best strategy for preventing crime and violence.

THE COST OF DROPOUTS

In addition, many citizens are looking to the public schools to address a range of other social problems, such as drug abuse. Half of the people in prison today are high school dropouts.

In a recent survey, 20.9% of 12th graders and 5.7% of junior high students reported smoking marijuana within the past month, and 40.6% of 12th graders and 11.8% of junior high students reported drinking beer during the past month.

About 13 million immigrants have entered the U.S. illegally since 2000 – almost a million more than arrived during the great decade of immigration from 1900 to 1910.

They have become an enormous educational challenge and economic burden for public schools that are required by federal law to accept them until the legal status of their parents is determined.

NEARLY ONE-QUARTER WILL BE IMMIGRANTS

These new immigrants are diverse, coming from Mexico, the Philippines, China, Korea, Vietnam, and elsewhere. By the year 2010, an estimated 22% of school-age children will be children of immigrants.

Almost 10% of the children in public schools have limited English proficiency. Twenty percent of the students in the nation's largest cities had limited proficiency in English.

Other nations are catching up with or exceeding America's once unrivaled graduation rate. The U.S. secondary school completion rate is 87% among 25- to 34-year-olds, while Japan's rate is 91%, Germany's is 89%, and the United Kingdom's is 81%.

Gross disparities exist between the wealthiest and the poorest school districts in the amounts spent on education. Even if the lowest 5% and the highest 5% of districts are omitted from spending comparisons, the gaps between the poor-

See **SCHOOLS** Page 19

• The most ardent partisans find common ground in panning the performance of the nation's news media in addressing and highlighting the needs facing America's children and families.

• Both candidates for president have a long way to go in giving voters specific information about how their agenda will benefit America's children and families.

• When presented with the many big budget options the next president will face voters find making greater investments in the health, education, and safety of all children a higher priority than tax cuts or balancing the federal budget.

Voters believe greater attention needs to be focused on the unacceptable number of children killed each year, addressing the fact that the United States ranks near the bottom of the world's wealthy countries when it comes to child well-being, and they would be willing to pay higher taxes to address how poorly children in some states compare to other ones.

This election remains highly volatile with 14% of voters undecided and 40% of the electorate saying that there is at least a little chance they would vote for either candidate.

Kids Today Learning In A Vast New World

By Sandy Garrett

When Oklahoma public schools open their doors this fall, not only will school leaders face tough financial times, they must also step up efforts to raise student achievement as well as raise graduation rates.

I addressed this conundrum in my annual State of Education Address, "Teach the Children Well – Give Them Time to Learn."

This dilemma facing schools requires a greater focus on protecting instructional time from interruptions and better engaging students by using the digital tools they use in day-to-day life.

Oklahoma requires fewer days of classroom instruction [175 days] than surrounding states and the national average [180 days]. Yet, more and more is expected of students, teachers, and school leaders each year.

STATE AND FEDERAL MANDATES

New state and federal mandates take additional time and require educators to make the most of every minute available to them.

My vision of time reform in Oklahoma is about increasing the quality and, eventually, the quantity of instructional time. School staff members should examine their use of time in order to de-clutter the day to allow increased time for teaching and learning.

The State Board of Education is requiring all schools to undertake a time analysis this school year and report their findings and plans in a public meeting of their local board of education to help our schools meet the goals.

CREATED A TIME ANALYSIS

State Department of Education staff and members of the Time Reform Task Force have worked with the National Center on Time and Learning in Boston to create an electronic Time Analysis Tool that is being provided to school leaders at no cost as a means of opening faculty discussions of how interruptions can best be eliminated.

One of our task force members, Cathy Williams, elementary school principal with Vinita Public Schools, is helping her peers use the Time Analysis Tool. Over the last several years, she has led time analysis assessments with her faculty and significantly increased the amount of time students in Vinita are engaged in learning.

USING TECHNOLOGY

The other part of the conundrum facing schools – improving student achievement while increasing the numbers who graduate – has to do with using technology to better engage students.

Providing a world-class education for every student means we must also address how each student learns best.

State Leads In Early Childhood Education

By Brad Henry

Oklahoma is a leader in early childhood education. We were the first state to provide voluntary pre-kindergarten for every 4-year-old, and the quality of our program has drawn worldwide attention and praise.

The most recent accolades come from a study conducted by researchers from Georgetown University and published in the journal *Science*.

That study looked at the effectiveness of such programs in preparing at-risk students for the demands of school.

The results were astonishing. The at-risk Tulsa students who were involved in the study reaped significant benefits from the Pre-K program.

BOOSTS READING AND PRE-MATH SKILLS

Students entering kindergarten from the Pre-K program show reading skills nine months more advanced, pre-writing skills seven months more advanced and pre-math skills six months more advanced than students of similar backgrounds who lacked early childhood education experiences.

When students start kindergarten already behind their peers, they may never catch up. School becomes a burden and these students are less likely to succeed. Early childhood education gives every student the knowledge and the skills they need to excel in the classroom.

Teachers Leave Over Condition, Not Pay

Every day, workplace conditions in public school classrooms are sometimes so surreal they make leaving the profession the best option for a teacher – and Oklahoma is no exception.

Nationally, the average turnover for all teachers is 20%, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future has starker numbers, estimating that one-third of all new teachers leave after three years, and 46% are gone within five years.

Their departure through what researchers call the "revolving door" that's spinning ever faster – the commission estimates teacher attrition has grown by 50% over the past 15 years – costs roughly \$7 billion a year, as districts and states recruit, hire, and try to retain new teachers.

Constant classroom interruptions were deplored by State Superintendent Sandy Garrett in her State of Public Education address. It certainly contributes to



Children and teenagers today are digital natives. They are growing up surrounded by the light of technology: a TV screen, a Gameboy screen, a portable DVD player.

Boys and girls are connected to each other by text messaging and e-mailing photos at the click of "send." They have access to the Internet showing them 24/7 what's happening around the world and across the street.

THE WORLD IS THEIR BACKYARD

When we were children, our world was in our backyard. For our children, their backyard is the world. Today's students will learn and be more engaged by using the tools with which they are the most familiar.

And today's teachers shouldn't have to struggle to make the most of minutes that are too few and far between. If we want more students to stay in school, then we must make it a journey, not a treadmill.

The clock is still ticking toward the future of Oklahoma and the United States of America, and defining what our place will be in the current global economy.

As I reminded school leaders in my address, we can continue to be bound by the time constraints of the past, or we can lead the way to doing a better job with the time we have now.

Read to a child – the benefits last a lifetime!

– The author is state Superintendent of Public Instruction

Studies have long shown that most brain development occurs before age six. By providing great early childhood education opportunities for interested parents, we can ensure Oklahoma's children are ready to start school and succeed.

PROUD OKLAHOMA TAKES THE LEAD

I am proud of the leadership Oklahoma has shown on this issue. The results from this study and others are encouraging.

Children who participate in early childhood education typically perform better in school, have fewer disciplinary problems and are more likely to graduate from high school.

One study has even estimated that, for every dollar invested in preschool, taxpayers save another \$7 in welfare, special education and other costs.

More important, our Pre-K programs are giving a generation of Oklahomans the opportunity to pursue their dreams. That's great news for today's students and for Oklahoma's future.

If you have questions or comments, please write me at the Office of the Governor, Room 212, Oklahoma City OK 73105 or visit the "Contact the Governor" section of my website, www.governor.ok.gov.

– The author is governor of Oklahoma

teacher unrest.

"There is this idea that America can solve the teaching shortage with recruitment," says Commission President Tom Carroll. "What we have is a retention crisis."

Likening it to continually dumping sand into a bucket with holes in the bottom, Carroll says, "as fast as [the districts] are moving teachers into schools, they're leaving."

Teachers complain about crowded classrooms, lack of aides and the obsessive focus on cramming for standardized tests. This breeds an atmosphere of constant stress.

The result?

U.S. Department of Education reports show that in 2005 30% of teachers left because of retirement, but 56% left citing job dissatisfaction serious enough to warrant a career change.

New Graduation Standards Tough

By Sandy Garrett

Our goal when students earn a high school diploma is to ensure all students are prepared for college and the world of work.

In support of that goal, a new state law makes graduating high school in Oklahoma even tougher beginning with this school year with incoming freshman, the class of 2012.

The Achieving Classroom Excellence Act, often called Oklahoma's "ACE Law," first made Oklahoma's diploma more meaningful by requiring 9th graders beginning in 2006-07 to take the state's college-preparatory/work-ready curriculum.

PARENTS CAN OPT OUT THEIR STUDENTS

The law allows parents to formally opt their children out of that curriculum and take the previous requirements in law but less than 11% have done so.

Beginning with the 2008-09 9th graders, all students must pass four of seven end-of-instruction [EOI] tests in order to receive a diploma, even those who have opted out of the program.

While Oklahoma high school students' EOI test scores have been noted on their official transcripts since 2003, now students will have to pass the EOI tests covering the state's academic standards in Algebra I and English II, and two of five other high school exams – Algebra II, Biology I, English III, Geometry and United States History.

TOUGH STANDARDS THIS FALL

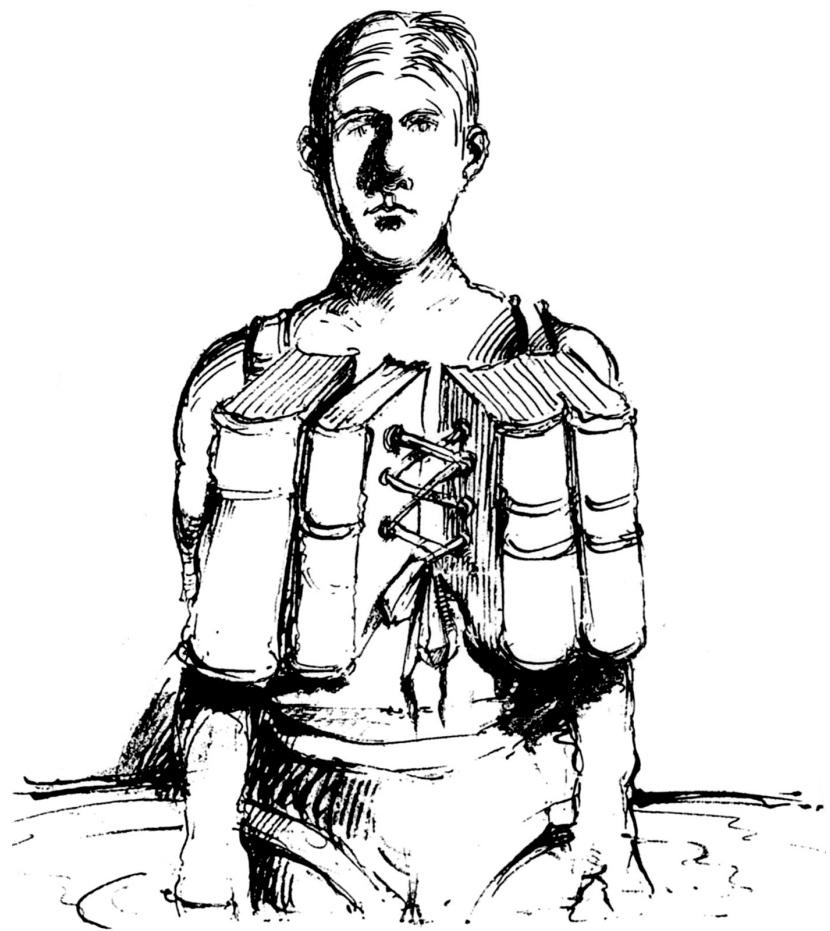
Also, starting with 9th graders this fall, all students must take three units of math between 9th and 12th grades, in order to better develop mathematics skills before heading to college or work.

This is in addition to any other secondary-level math courses they may have taken in middle school or junior high.

Students in the 7th grade this fall will also see changes related to new laws. In order to graduate from a public high school in Oklahoma they must fulfill the requirements of a Personal Financial Literacy Passport between 7th and 12th grades.

NEW FINANCIAL LITERACY MANDATE

The Personal Financial Literacy Education Act requires 14 areas of instruction, including earning an income; understanding state and federal taxes; interest, credit card debt, and online commerce; rights and responsibilities of renting



or buying a home; saving and investing; balancing a checkbook; understanding loans and borrowing money; understanding insurance; identity fraud and theft; charitable giving; and the financial impact and consequences of gambling.

Complete details of the new standards are in the "Earning Skills for SUCCESS" brochure that can be found on the State Department of Education's Web site [<http://www.sde.state.ok.us>] under "Graduation Requirements."

School districts may have graduation requirements in addition to the state minimum, and career and technical education schools provide additional opportunities.

Parents should work closely with their local school counselor or principal to make certain their children are taking the courses that will best prepare them for college and the workplace of today and tomorrow.

– The author is State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Teachers Lament: Lack Of Discipline

While many of the students in Tammy McCartney's Broken Arrow middle school classroom were attentive, more than a handful preferred to horseplay and wander the room.

Administrators signed off on her plan to place troublesome students at an isolated desk in the corner, but that became a pipedream in a room so crammed with students that one needed to turn sideways to walk the aisles.

Administrators discouraged sending students to the office. When one absolutely needed to be sent, the teacher had to first stop and fill out a referral form, and even then the student was usually sent right back to the classroom, his or her behavior unchanged.

Compounding the problem were phone calls to parents that yielded indifference or blatant animosity.

McCartney's breaking point came the day that a boy put a sweatshirt on as a pair of pants and waddled around the classroom, creating havoc.

When she called his house, his mother said he must have just been cold, and

hung up. "I said, 'I think I've had enough,'" McCartney, 29, says. She quit last spring.

Unmanageable discipline problems mean more than a headache in the classroom. For teachers like McCartney, they erode desire to invest time and energy in lesson plans that make the content come alive for students.

Preservice training is often of little help, too.

"We spent very little, if any, time on discipline," McCartney says of the training she received the summer before entering the classroom.

"I entered the profession completely unprepared for discipline problems."

Deciding to leave devastated McCartney, a once optimistic and enthusiastic young teacher.

"It was a really big defeat," she says, letting out a deep breath. "Teaching is important, but I got to the point where I wasn't willing to sacrifice so much anymore."

– neatoday

Seven Truths Dispel Tax-Cutting Myths

According to research by the Oklahoma Policy Institute:

• **Recent tax cuts have NOT significantly contributed to Oklahoma's economic growth.**

Oklahoma – like the nation, including states that did not cut their taxes – has been in an economic expansion that began well before state tax cuts took effect.

After reviewing hundreds of economic studies, economist Robert Lynch found that state tax cuts have only a minor impact on growth and may have a negative impact if they are accompanied by a decline in public services.

• **Tax cuts do NOT encourage Oklahoma businesses to invest further or out-of-state firms to locate here.**

Investment decisions are based on maximizing profits.

Since state taxes don't contribute much to the cost of doing business, they don't factor heavily in investment decisions.

NUMEROUS STUDIES ARE CITED

In numerous studies on business site selection, the Corporation for Enterprise Development [CFED] has consistently found that level of taxation is of little significance.

• **Tax cuts do NOT increase tax revenue.**

No economist – conservative or liberal – believes that tax cuts increase revenues. President Bush's former chief economic advisor and Harvard economics professor Gregory Mankiw called any economist that said tax cuts pay for them-

selves a "snake oil salesman trying to sell a miracle cure."

• **Tax cuts do NOT keep Oklahoma competitive.**

Oklahoma is already a low tax state. The Tax Foundation ranks Oklahoma as having the fourth lowest combined taxation in the nation. Quality public services and a skilled workforce are what will keep Oklahoma competitive.

MIGRATION IS NOT ENCOURAGED

• **Tax cuts do NOT encourage migration to the state.**

In his numerous studies on labor migration, Harvard economist Edward Glaeser finds that the primary factors affecting migration are those that directly affect quality of life: health, safety, education and life amenities.

• **Tax cuts do NOT encourage new spending.**

Since Oklahoma cannot run a deficit, tax cuts do not create new dollars to be spent. In fact, tax cuts may actually lower in-state expenditures since there is no guarantee that taxpayers will invest or spend the tax cut in Oklahoma.

• **Tax cuts do NOT expand opportunities to increase investments.**

Additional revenues are expected in years of strong economic growth. The bountiful years give the state an opportunity to invest in Oklahomans' common prosperity and prepare for the inevitable lean years by further stoking the economic coals with proven fiscal tools: investment in public education, health, technology and infrastructure.

For further information on the impact of tax cuts on Oklahoma's economy, visit www.okpolicy.org.

Legislator Nails Petition Critics

By Ed Cannaday

As a former government teacher, I have been skeptical of government by petition and referendum in that it is often used by legislators to defer their constitutional responsibility to govern through legislation.

Submitting an issue to a vote of the people to amend the Constitution provides the lawmakers with “plausible deniability” rather than “legislative accountability.” However, I have found that this has become the pattern in Oklahoma lawmaking practices on major controversial issues.

An example of this is the restriction placed on the ability of the Legislature to raise revenue and put tax cuts in place in a manner that will ensure their continued existence and growth.

THE CRITICS ARE MET WITH IRONY

It is therefore ironic that those who have supported this type of governing are now opposed to the Oklahoma Education Association’s petition drive to have a constitutional question put before the vote of the citizens.

This is referred to as HOPE or Helping Oklahoma Public Education, which will ensure that the state funds public schools at the regional average.

If it were to become part of our Constitution, it would put into reality positions taken by both our governor and Legislature. Specifically, I refer to the commitment to “fund education first” and to “provide funding for our state’s students at a level equal to that of our six neighboring states.”

REGIONAL GAP STANDS AT \$1,400

Currently Oklahoma funds the education of each of its public school students at a rate of \$1,400 less than the regional average.

I have yet to hear a person in or out of government state: “I want our student’s education to be fiscally inferior to those in neighboring states.”

The Legislature refuses to correct this morally indefensible position by providing the funds needed while voting sweetheart tax incentives to professional athletes, deep well gas drilling operations, and those purchasing rare metals.

This is worsened by the cumulative effects of the escalating tax cut programs for the most wealthy individuals and corporations.

CRITICISM RAISES THREE ISSUES

The current criticism of this petition drive seems to focus on three issues.

First, if passed it is alleged that it will result in rural school consolidations. That does not make sense! If a school is consolidated with another, the students do not disappear. Thus, the funding per student would not be altered by consolidation.

Secondly, we are told that if passed it will result in massive tax increases. This has been restricted by their previous constitutional petition initiatives.

Sooner ACT Scores Held Some Surprises

The number of Oklahoma ACT test-takers not only soared, Sooner students scored higher than every other ACT state except North Carolina and Virginia.

Considering public schools in Oklahoma are funded at the 48th lowest in the nation, and teachers rank 48th in pay, test results were surprisingly good.

Scores were no sooner released than the Daily Disappointment was badmouthing. That’s the same newspaper that was a cheerleader for massive Republican tax cuts while education funding was gutted.

Oklahoma had the highest number of students [27,131] take the college-entrance exam in seven years.

The class of ‘08 has matched the national average in reading, and its black, Hispanic and American Indian students outscored their peers nationally.

SCORES MATCHED THOSE OF 2007

Oklahoma’s Class of 2008 achieved the same composite score on the exam as the class of 2007.

Green Schools Offer Healthy Classrooms

By Samantha Cleaver

Every day, 20% of Americans wake up, eat breakfast and walk, bike, or drive to school. Once there, many students and teachers spend their days in classrooms with walls covered in toxic paint, breathing congested air and squinting from inadequate lighting.

But as baby boomer-era school buildings become more and more outdated, many districts are building green schools to replace energy guzzling, polluted learning environments.

School construction is big business – it makes up 27% of the U.S. construction market.

Building a school that complies with LEED standards costs 2% [or \$3 per square foot] more upfront, but it’s worth it – green schools use up to 30% less energy, 30% to 50% less water, and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 40% compared to traditionally built schools.

BIG MONEY SAVINGS IN GOING GREEN

In Fort Collins, CO, Fossil Ridge High School saves the district \$100,000 each year in energy costs because of its green design, says Principal Dierdre Cook.

There’s also evidence that green schools help educators teach and students



If passed this may cause the legislative leadership to stop expanding their tax cut agenda as we have witnessed in the past several years.

LEGISLATIVE LEADER IS HYPOCRITICAL

After providing massive tax cuts to the wealthiest individuals and corporations of Oklahoma, it is a sad commentary to have a legislative leader quoted to suggest that if this becomes constitutional, the Legislature will “raise taxes on working families.”

Two years ago, several legislators were calling for “Honesty in Funding Education” and all we have had in response is the antithesis of this.

Third, we are told that this will result in reductions in state services. After seven years of ignoring the payroll needs of our state employees and being required to pass a \$300 million bond issue for maintaining our state roads and bridges, we are currently in need of reassessing our funding priorities.

The fundamental question that must be asked is, “Do we want our children’s education to continue to be funded below the regional average or 48th in the nation?”

If you want this, then merely don’t sign the petition or vote against it in 2010 when it may be submitted to a vote of the citizens of Oklahoma.

Above all, admit that your opposition is based on your true desire that our students’ education should be “fiscally inferior” to that of our neighboring states’ children.

– The author, a Porum Democrat, represents District 15 in the House of Representatives

State Superintendent Sandy Garrett and Chancellor Glen D. Johnson of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education said while it may be a year of decline for the nation, there is good news in the 2008 results for Oklahoma.

“We’re very pleased about the high number of test-takers this year and their high interest in attending college,” Garrett said.

“Since the Achieving Classroom Excellence [ACE] Act was signed into law in 2005, Oklahoma’s gains on the exam have outpaced the nation and minority students are closing achievement gaps.”

Both Garrett and Johnson believe ACE mandates will result in better course selection on the part of high school students and more rigor in the courses themselves.

“Our emphasis is on academics and we will continue to challenge students, teachers and parents to not shy from rigor and sound preparation and to set high expectations for success,” Garrett said.

learn. In a 2005 survey of executives that planned and built green K-12 schools, 71% said that students performed better and 72% said that there was less absenteeism compared to other schools.

A report put out by the American Federation of Teachers and the U.S. Green Building Council noted that Washington state saw absenteeism decrease by 15% in its first green school.

The 1,400 students at Forest Hills High School in Ada, MI, eat lunch in the Great Hall, a common area with a floor-to-ceiling, elliptical south-facing glass window that floods the room with natural light. The sun’s rays shine into the classrooms as well.

THE PROOF ABOUT NATURAL LIGHT

“Students learn better in natural light,” says Cook.

At least one study shows that to be true. In a 1999 study, Hershong Mahone Group, a building-efficiency consulting company, evaluated 2,000 classrooms in Oakland, CA; Seattle, WA, and Fort Collins.

They found that students with the most daylight progressed 20% faster in

See GREEN SCHOOLS Page 10

BOOKS

Free Market Goal: Rich Get Richer

By Kelley Smith

THE PREDATOR STATE

How Conservatives Abandoned the Free Market and Why Liberals Should Too

By James K. Galbraith

Free Press

240 pages, \$25.00

James K. Galbraith introduces this timely book with words that cut like a knife, comparing the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which dominated national news at the time of the writing, with the disaster left in the wake of the Chernobyl meltdown.

His claim is that both catastrophes “laid bare the fallacies” of the systems in which they took place. He then explains the purpose of the book – an explanation of the failures in our nation as a result of the pursuit of a free-market ideology.

He maintains that this ideology has been hijacked by operatives who use the mythology of a free market to conceal the use of state power for private gain.

He writes for a general audience rather than a scholarly one, but this does not diminish the power or clarity of his analysis.

FREE-MARKET FALLACIES

The book has three parts. The first, *Another God that Failed*, details the implosion of free-market theory. Topics range from free trade to budget deficits to the Federal Reserve’s battle against inflation.

In the second part, *The Simple Economics of Predators and Prey*, Galbraith outlines his interpretation of economic history in light of his Keynesian persuasion.

The final section, *Dealing with Predators*, gives us Galbraith’s prescription for getting the country [and the world] back on track. He defends ideas that are seen as outlandish by today’s economic establishment.

RETHINKING WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS

Wage and price controls and planning in the public interest may seem like an

How Wingnuts Torpedoed The Liberal State

By Matt Love

THE WRECKING CREW

How Conservatives Rule

By Thomas Frank

Henry Holt & Co.

384 pages, \$25.00

In 2004 Thomas Frank wrote a revelatory book on the recent Republican domination of cultural politics in America’s heartland.

What’s the Matter With Kansas? earned rave reviews, became an unlikely best-seller, established its author as an original voice in political commentary and led to influential op-ed gigs with *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

It was a personal, witty and scrupulously documented account of how the Republican Party manipulates lower income [white] citizens to consistently vote against their own economic interests in the name of defending evangelical “Christian family values.”

Four years later, Frank returns with this superb follow-up. Thanks to his thorough reporting and incisive historical analysis, we now learn how Republican Party conservatives govern in Washington, and how they enrich others through their methods. We also learn why they govern this way.

EXECUTING PLAN IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

In short, they govern brilliantly. In plain view of the American people and the news media, conservatives successfully implemented their ideology of wrecking the federal government.

As Frank put it, “All this wreckage ... from the perspective of the right [is] this is not a disaster; this is a triumph.”

Frank opens with a short history of the modern conservative movement that coalesced around the hatred of the New Deal/Post-World War II liberal state.

For a generation the conservative movement was marginalized, largely viewed as crackpot by the established Republican Party characterized by the likes of Dwight Eisenhower, Nelson Rockefeller, even Richard Nixon.

It reared its angry head in 1964 only to have Lyndon Johnson lop it off in the form of Barry Goldwater’s presidential bid.

CONSERVATISM’S EXTREME MAKEOVER

In the 1970s, the movement utterly reinvented itself as an aggrieved and activist party built on the bedrock principle that all government was bad [unless through privatization it could turn a profit for a friend].

Shortly thereafter, using direct mail, a system of fundraising conservatives pioneered and perfected, oceans of cash started pouring in and the reactionary wing captured the soul of the Republican Party.

Their indefatigable efforts eventually led to control of every branch of the federal government and a built-in self-fulfilling prophecy: Say government is bad, wreck government, government is bad, win elections.

How Conservatives
Abandoned the Free Market
and Why Liberals Should Too

The Predator State

James K. Galbraith

Author of *Created Unequal*



AUTHOR OF
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS?

THOMAS FRANK



THE WRECKING CREW

HOW CONSERVATIVES RULE

anachronism to many, but Galbraith’s searing criticism of the theoretical weaknesses of free-market theory and the hypocrisy he exposes in current public policy makes them seem like ideas whose time has come.

He closes with a chapter on paying for his proposed solutions.

His style is quite readable. He draws on the work of many earlier economists in making his points, but none so much as his father, John Kenneth Galbraith. For readers who are unfamiliar with the elder Galbraith’s work, there may be some difficulty in following some portions of the book.

Nonetheless, this is a book that will fascinate all who are interested in economics and politics.

– *The author lives in Oklahoma City*

Ronald Reagan was their champion, of course, but men like anti-tax zealot Howard Phillips, Grover Norquist, Ralph Reed, Newt Gingrich, Tom DeLay and lobbyist Jack Abramoff were the real and malevolent powers behind the takeover and were connected to one another in personal and financial ways that would impress any garden variety Mafia family.

Abramoff, in particular, as Frank profiles him, exists as nothing less than one of the most sinister characters in all of American history. It really is no comfort that he’s currently in jail.

MOURNING THE LOST LIBERAL STATE

Although occasionally colored with genuine outrage and blasts of polemic, Frank never allows *The Wrecking Crew* to become just another seething right- or left-wing political tract preaching to the choir.

Instead of anger, Frank sometimes comes across as almost mournful when analyzing how conservatives destroyed the efficient and internationally acclaimed liberal state that led to expanded opportunities for minorities and women, the unprecedented growth of the middle class and a serious dilution of concentrated wealth.

It was an expansion, Frank reminds us, that his family directly enjoyed. It created the highest living standard in the world.

Frank makes us think: Once upon a time, was the federal government really the incompetent hulk that conservatives made [make] it out to be? Before they took over all the three branches and began contracting out services [including national security] and running up staggering debt? While still winning elections campaigning against incompetent “big” government?

No, the federal government was not incompetent. But after “conservatives pushed its pillars apart and sent it crashing to the ground,” as Frank describes what happened, it is now.

– *The author lives in Portland, OR*

GREEN SCHOOLS

From Page 9

math, and 26% faster in reading than students in classrooms with poor lighting.

Indoor air pollution is another challenge. As many as 15,000 schools have poor indoor air quality that triggers asthma, causes headaches, and spreads airborne illness, especially among children, who breathe more air, proportionally, than adults.

Forest Hills’ has 30% fresh air re-circulating in the classrooms, says Tom Walters, director of energy and construction management for Forest Hills, “to keep the kids healthier.”

Critics Are Dead Wrong

Five Myths About Public Education

By Paul Farhi

The usual hand-wringing accompanied the Department of Education's release of new statistics on how U.S. students performed on international tests.

How will the United States compete in the global economy, went the lament, when our students lag behind the likes of Singapore and Hong Kong in math and science?

American 4th-graders ranked 12th in the world on one international math test, and 8th-graders were 14th. Is this further evidence of the failure of the nation's schools?

MYTHS ABOUT PUBLIC EDUCATION

Not exactly. In fact, a closer look at how our kids perform against the international competition suggests that this story line may contain more than a few myths:

Myth: U.S. students rate poorly compared with those in the rest of the world.

This is true only if you cherry-pick the results. University of Pennsylvania researchers Erling E. Boe and Sujie Shin looked at six major international tests in reading, math, science and civics conducted from 1991 through 2001.

Their conclusion: Americans are above average when compared with 22 other industrialized nations. In civics, no nation scored significantly higher than the United States; in reading, only 13% did.

HARDLY A CRISIS IN MATH, SCIENCE

Even in math and science – the two subjects considered vital to future technological competitiveness – the United States fell in roughly the middle of the pack. No gold star, but hardly a crisis, either.

More interesting, when compared with students in the world's most industrialized countries, U.S. students were on par with the others in every subject [and outperformed everyone in civics].

Every Western country, not just the United States, lagged behind Japan in math and science, suggesting that the achievement gap in these subjects is an East-West phenomenon rather than an American one.

AMERICAN KIDS IMPROVING OR HOLDING THEIR OWN

Myth: U.S. students are falling behind. Actually, American students are mostly improving, or at worst holding their own. As the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study [TIMSS] shows, American 8th graders improved their math and science scores in 1995, 1999 and 2003.

Only students in Hong Kong, Latvia and Lithuania – three relatively tiny and homogenous entities – improved more than the United States did.

Indeed, no nation included in the major international rankings educates as many poor students or as ethnically diverse a population as does the United States.



Yet even as the percentage of historically low-achieving students has increased, our test scores have risen. Unfortunately, news accounts focus on the relative position of American students [are we No. 1 or No. 12?] rather than on their absolute performance [did they improve, regardless of what others did?].

THIS MYTH HAS BEEN REPEATED FOR DECADES

Myth: U.S. students won't be well prepared for the modern workforce.

This myth has been banded around since at least the turn of the century – the 19th Century – by business leaders who blame schools for inadequately preparing workers. It's part of the never-ending notion that U.S. schools are in crisis.

Education researcher Gerald W. Bracey cites a March 1957 cover story in Life magazine – at the height of post-Sputnik paranoia over Soviet scientific prowess – that contrasts the stern rigorous education of a Moscow teenager [complicated physics and chemistry courses] with the carefree lifestyle of a Chicago youth [rehearsals for his high school musical]. The cover headline: Crisis in Education.

GUESS WHO RULES THE ROOST TODAY?

In the 1980s, when Japan seemed to be an unstoppable economic juggernaut, the seminal policy manifesto A Nation at Risk, written by a rigged panel at the behest of the Department of Education, warned that deficiencies in high school graduates come at a time when the demand for highly skilled workers in new fields is accelerating rapidly.

Despite these doomsday cases, the United States survived and, by many measures, bested the competition. Today with the Soviet Union a memory and Japan facing its own economic and demographic problems, the anxieties have shifted to China and other Asian rivals.

See MYTHS Page 18

The Myths About Private Vs. Public Education

By Greg Toppo

Whether low-income, urban students attend a public or private high school matters less to their academic success than whether their parents take part in their education, earn enough money to offer enriching experiences and have high aspirations for their kids, a study from an education advocacy group suggests.

The findings, by the Center on Education Policy [CEP], examine 12 years of data on more than 1,000 young people and find that they didn't get much of an advantage by attending private schools.

Though the SAT scores of students in private schools were higher than the scores of their public-school peers, their overall performance in math, reading, science and history was no better.

COLLEGE ATTENDANCE IS THE SAME

They were no more likely to go to college or be more satisfied with their job at age 26 – they weren't even more likely to be civic-minded as adults.

"This certainly will challenge people in the presumptions that private schools are superior to public schools," says Jack Jennings, the center's president.

The study backs up findings saying that the differences between urban public

and private schools are small – and often too small to measure. It also suggests that forcing public and private schools to compete through taxpayer-financed vouchers is merely a "diversion" from a more substantial education debate, Jennings says.

PARENTS ARE THE KEY TO SUCCESS

In the end, the biggest factors were how much money parents earned, whether they were involved in day-to-day schoolwork and what their long-term expectations were.

"There may be ways to improve schools," he says, "but we have to be very conscious of what parents bring to schools."

Pat Bassett, president of the National Association of Independent Schools, which represents private schools, says they foster parental involvement.

"Indeed, many parents choose independent schools because they know the cultural capital of their family will be reinforced and enriched by the school," Bassett said.

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Facts And Figures On School Boards

An estimated 95,000 members serve on the United States' roughly 15,000 school boards.

A majority of school board members are white men, and nearly 55% are 50 or older.

The largest share of board members – 46% – come from business or professional backgrounds.

While almost all board members are parents, only about half had children in school at the time of the survey. Board members are better educated and have higher incomes than most Americans.

The mean length of service for school board members was 6.7 years; 41% had been in the post for two to five years.

Two-thirds of board members receive no salary for their service. [National

School Boards Association]

Board members spend an average of 25 hours a month on board business, roughly one-third of that time in board meetings. The time commitment is heavier in large districts, where nearly a fifth of board members report spending more than 70 hours a month on the job.

More than three-quarters of school board members spent less than \$1,000 on their most recent elections. The biggest share of the money came from the candidates and their families.

While school board members said employees' unions paid for a little more than 1% of their campaign costs, more than half – and more than three-quarters of board members in large districts – said teachers' unions were "active" or "very active" in their elections.

Merit Pay: Can It Be Made To Work?

Who can forget the great teachers who imbued us with a deeper understanding or an enduring passion, opening doors, altering our lives.

Remember the teacher who said from the outset that the goal was not to prepare us for the AP biology exam; it was to teach us how to think like scientists, which the teacher proceeded to do with a quiet passion, mainly in the laboratory.

Every student had the stern teacher, devoted to the subject – a tough taskmaster on the art of writing essays and an avid guide to the pleasures of great literature.

GUIDING US TO A CAREER PATH

Looking back, can't we all credit inspirational teachers for putting us on the road that led us to our careers?

It would be wonderful if we knew more about teachers such as these and how to multiply their number. How do they come by their craft? What qualities and capacities do they possess? Can these abilities be measured? Can they be taught?

Perhaps above all: How should excellent teaching be rewarded so that the best teachers – the most competent, caring and compelling – remain in a profession known for low pay, low status and soul-crushing bureaucracy?

2.8 MILLION TEACHERS NEEDED

Such questions have become critical to public schools. According to projections by economist William Hussar at the National Center for Education Statistics, the nation will need to recruit an additional 2.8 million teachers over the next eight years owing to baby-boomer retirement, growing student enrollment and staff turnover – which is especially rapid among new teachers.

Finding and keeping high-quality teachers is key to America's competitiveness as a nation. Recent test results show that U.S. 10th-graders ranked just 17th in science among peers from 30 nations, while in math they placed in the bottom five.

THE TEACHER IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Research suggests that a good teacher is the single most important factor in boosting achievement, more important than class size, the dollars spent per student or the quality of textbooks and materials.

Across the country, hundreds of school districts are experimenting with new ways to attract, reward and keep good teachers. Many of these efforts borrow ideas from business.

They include signing bonuses in hard-to-fill jobs like teaching high school chemistry, housing allowances [\$15,000 in New York City] and what might be called combat pay for teachers who commit to working in the most distressed schools.

NBCT TEACHERS EARN MONEY

In Oklahoma National Board Certified Teachers are rewarded with cold, hard cash – something every teacher can use.

The idea gaining the most momentum – and controversy – is merit pay, which attempts to measure the quality of teachers' work and pay teachers accordingly.

Traditionally, public school salaries are based on years spent on the job and college credits earned, a system favored by unions because it treats all teachers equally.

Bullying Epidemic Requires Solutions

By Corinne Gregory

Unless you've been living in a cave, you have no doubt been bombarded with the horrific images of the recent rash of violent school-based incidents.

Teens luring a cheerleader classmate to a home and beating her repeatedly while the video camera rolls.

There's the teacher being assaulted in her classroom by students; a high-schooler throwing a metal chair at another in class knocking the victim unconscious; a 13-year-old middle schooler who admits that he planned to shoot up his school because he was being bullied.

Even more appalling than these animalistic acts themselves seems to be the general lack of outrage about them!

THE SHALLOW MEDIA ARE NO HELP

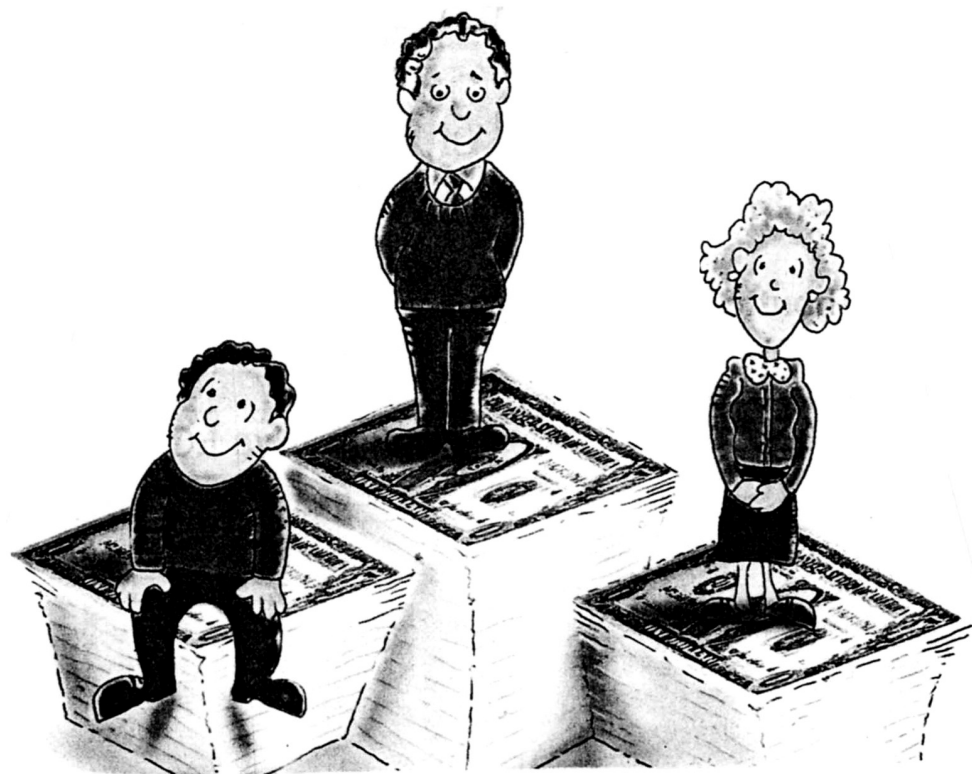
A few choice "oh my gosh-es" and we seem to be done for the day. The media are more interested in post-game quarterbacking, trying to decide if these children should be tried as juveniles or adults, or whether a well known comedian's mother's book would be the answer to these ills, than it is in actually analyzing the root cause and investigating solutions.

What's wrong with this picture? We as a country spend millions of dollars annually on anti-bullying programs in our schools, yet the incidents not only continue, they appear to be getting worse in severity and frequency, and occur in increasingly younger students.

ONE IN FOUR LIKELY VICTIM OF BULLYING

Today, our kids stand a one-in-four chance of becoming victims of some form of school-based violence before they reach high school. News flash: what we're doing isn't working!

So, the knee-jerk reaction is to play the blame game: it's YouTube, it's the Internet, it's broken homes, it's our global lifestyle. But blaming isn't fixing.



Of course, everyone knows that not all teachers are equal. Just witness how parents lobby to get their kids into the best classrooms.

COMPETENT TEACHER CAN'T BE MEASURED

There is no universally accepted way to measure competence, much less the ineffable magnetism of a truly brilliant educator. In its absence, policy-makers have focused on that current measure of all things educational – student test scores.

In districts across the country, administrators are devising systems that track student scores back to the teachers who taught them in an attempt to apportion credit and blame and, in some cases, target help to teachers who need it.

Offering bonuses to teachers who raise student achievement, the theory goes, will improve the overall quality of instruction, retain those who get the job done and attract more highly qualified candidates to the profession – while lifting those all-important test scores.

HOW TO IMPROVE NCLB LAW

Merit pay has also become part of the debate in Congress over how to improve the 2000 No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], triggering an outcry from teachers' unions, which oppose federal intrusion into how teachers get paid and evaluated.

The subject is a touchy one for Democrats, who count on support from the powerful teachers' unions.

Last summer, Barack Obama endorsed merit pay at a meeting of the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers' union, so long as the measure of merit is "developed with teachers, not imposed on them and not based on some arbitrary test score."

John McCain is a strong backer of the No Child Left Behind law that he voted for in 2001. He favors merit pay and vouchers to take money from public education to finance private and parochial schools.

It's hard to argue against the notion of rewarding the best teachers for doing a good job. But merit pay has a long, checkered history in the U.S., and new programs to pay teachers according to test scores have already backfired in Florida and Houston.

We have to accept that instead of trying to minimize or manage the existing problem of bullying and school-based violence, we have to focus on preventing it in the first place.

Some of today's children are not coming to school and into life equipped with adequate social skills and character development that helps them understand that this kind of behavior is simply not OK.

THEY ARE NOT TAUGHT REAL VALUES

They are not taught at home to respect and value differences among people, in opinions, in actions. "It's all about me!" is the mantra of some of our youth today, and the behavior we see splattered all over the Internet is the result.

People may argue that social skills education belongs in the home, not in the schools, and I'd be the first to agree.

Our schools have become a war zone, where teachers spend more time disciplining students and trying to keep order than they do teaching!

Is it any wonder our schools under-perform? If you were losing 20% to 50% of your average educational time because of behavior issues, how effective do you think you could be?

YES, THERE IS A BETTER WAY

The good news is that there is a better way. Social skills education works, when properly implemented. Bullying is not just reduced – it's eliminated.

It is not because there are more "enforcers" around, in the form of extra administrators, counselors, or police, but because the students won't stand for it.

A comprehensive social skills program, integrated into the core curriculum, can restore order, sanity, and productivity to the schools. It raises student and teacher morale – it even contributes to better test scores. It helps produce not

See BULLYING Page 15

AFT Leader: A New Vision For Schools

By Sam Dillon

Randi Weingarten, 50, elected to the presidency of the American Federation of Teachers, criticized the No Child Left Behind law as "too badly broken to be fixed," and outlined "a new vision of schools for the 21st Century."

"Can you imagine a federal law that promoted community schools – schools that serve the neediest children by bringing together under one roof all the services and activities they and their families need?" she asked in the speech.

"Imagine schools that are open all day and offer after-school and evening recreational activities and homework assistance," she said. "And suppose the schools included child care and dental, medical and counseling clinics."

OBAMA SPOKE TO THE CONVENTION

By laying out that expansive vision of government's role in the public schools, Weingarten waded into a fierce debate among Democrats seeking to influence the educational program of Sen. Barack Obama, their party's presidential nominee.

In her 10 years of service as president of the United Federation of Teachers, which represents New York City teachers, Weingarten has defended teachers' economic interests, raising her members' salaries by 43% in the last five years.

She has also proved willing to accommodate the city's ideas on improving schools. She has embraced charter schools, and last year negotiated an arrangement in New York that gives bonuses to teachers in schools whose poor children show broad gains in test scores.

SHE GAINS A BROADER PLATFORM

With her move to the presidency of the national union, with 1.4 million members, she gains a broader platform from which to influence the nation's education debates.

Although the federation is smaller than the country's other teachers union, the National Education Association, with its 3.2 million members, AFT presidents have had an equal or larger political profile because presidential tenures in the bigger union are restricted by term limits.

Obama spoke to the convention by satellite from California, mixing criticism of the NCLB law with praise for teachers' contributions and an exhortation to Americans to meet the nation's responsibility to educate all children.

EDUCATION IS AMERICA'S RESPONSIBILITY

He quoted a young Chicago teacher as telling him that she had been annoyed by a tendency "to explain away the shortcomings and failures of our education system by saying, 'These kids can't learn.'"

"These children are our children," Obama said. "It's time we understood that their education is our responsibility."

"I am running for president to guarantee that all of our children have the best possible chance in life," he said, "and I am tired of hearing you, the teachers who work so hard, blamed for our problems."

Weingarten takes national office with robust support of the rank and file.



"The last eight years of the Republican presidency have really been a threat to the middle class and to public education," said William Gallagher, a high school social studies teacher in Philadelphia for 33 years.

Weingarten, he said, would "work hard to make sure the new president, whoever he is, puts education on the forefront of issues in this country."

Weingarten praised the ideas of a group of Democrats led by Tom Payzant, former schools superintendent in Boston and Oklahoma City.

Payzant argues that schools alone cannot close achievement gaps rooted in larger economic inequalities, and that "broader, bolder" measures are needed, like publicly financed early childhood education and health services for the poor.

FINALLY CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Weingarten said the nation needs a new vision for schools "that truly commits America to closing the achievement gap once and for all."

"Imagine if schools had the educational resources we have long advocated, like quality Pre-K, smaller classes, up-to-date materials and technology and a nurturing atmosphere, so no child feels anonymous," she said.

Weingarten, whose mother was a teacher in Nyack, NY, is a lawyer who was union counsel during the 1980s and 1990s. In the last decade, Weingarten taught high school history for six years in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn.

"We all have to work tenaciously to eliminate the achievement gap and to turn around low-performing schools. But the folks who believe that this can all be done on teachers' shoulders, which is what No Child tries to do, are doing a huge disservice to America."

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College Students Turn To Food Bank

Just blocks from the University of Washington, a line of people shuffle toward a food pantry, awaiting handouts such as milk and bread.

For years, the small University District pantry has offered help to the working poor and single parents in this neighborhood of campus rentals.

Now rising food prices are bringing another group: Struggling college students.

"Right now, with things the way they are, a lot of students just can't afford to eat," said Terry Capleton, who started a Facebook group called "I Ain't Afraid to be on Food Stamps" when he was a student at Benedict College in South Carolina.

Some of the students are working their way through college with grants, loans and part-time jobs. Others are just reluctant to ask parents for more money.

"More and more, it's just the typical traditional student, about 18 to 22, that's feeling this crunch," said Larry Brickner-Wood, director of the Cornucopia Food Pantry at the University of New Hampshire.

"There's definitely been an increase in usage and demand. We're seeing more and more students that have never used the pantry before."

In the past year, the price of groceries has jumped nearly 5%, the highest increase in nearly two decades. The cost of some staples is up more than 30%.

At the University District pantry in Seattle, demand has risen roughly 25% this year. About 150 students visit each week during the school year.

Membership in Capleton's Facebook group has steadily climbed, too, and sparked other online groups with names such as "I'm in College and I got on Food Stamps."

A LOT OF STUDENTS ARE ON THEIR OWN

"A lot of students can't call their Mom every day to ask for that extra \$50," said Capleton, 24. "They're on their own."

Qualifying for aid at community food banks is usually easy. Most of the charities just require users to show identification proving they live in the area.

The Community College of Denver runs its own food-assistance program, which has seen demand double in the past year.

"It's the highest I've ever seen," said Jerry Mason, the school's director of student life. "Our assumption is it's because of the high price of food."

In response to demand, the school doubled the pantry's \$3,000 annual budget.

Food stamps are distributed through a Department of Agriculture program administered by the states. The agency does not track whether applicants are enrolled in college, so the number of students is unknown.

Students generally are eligible for food stamps if they qualify for a state or federally funded work-study program; work at least 20 hours per week; have a child under the age of 12; or are taking employer-sponsored job training classes.

Deirdre Wilson, a junior at Francis Marion University in Florence, SC, applied for food stamps in November because her paycheck from a work-study job didn't stretch far enough to cover her expanding grocery bill.

APARTMENT DWELLER HAS TO HAVE HELP

"Before, when I lived in the dorms, I was on the meal plan," the 20-year-old said. "Now that I'm in the apartment, I have to pay for food, and I have to pay my cell phone bill. I don't make enough to pay for both."

John Camp, lead analyst for Washington state's food stamp program, said the requirements for assistance disqualify many students and dissuade others from applying. People ages 18 to 25 make up roughly 8% of the state's food stamp users.

In New Hampshire, some students are reluctant to apply for government aid.

"There is a stereotype that, well, if they're in college, they can afford to eat," said Brickner-Wood, the food pantry director. "But there are some students who have hardly any disposable income, and because of that, the food budget suffers. They either eat really badly, or they just don't eat enough."

Standing outside a campus market, University of Washington junior Doug McManaway wonders how he will afford to pay for groceries through the summer term.

"I'm already really poor and on a really tight budget," he said. "I have to pay rent, and after that there isn't much left over."

With just \$100 left to last him through the end of the month, the 20-year-old said a food bank might be his best option.

"It kind of grosses me out," McManaway said. "But if my parents say, 'No, we're not going to give you any more money,' it may be a last resort."

Who Will Think In America Tomorrow?

By Ola Mae Hendricks

"Teacher, I ain't got a pencil!" This student knows, and the teacher knows, the implied need and its solution. However, the "pencil" statement sums up an educational conundrum which I have come to understand after 20 years of study, observation, and wonder.

This child's simple declaration echoes the more sophisticated inquiries into public education. Not only educators, but also the business world, state legislators and now even the federal government continue in a loud and ever more frightening debate over what is wrong with public education.

REAL CAUSE IS OVERLOOKED

Everyone has become so entangled in discussions of test scores, basics, attitudes, abilities, methods, TV, motivation, performance, management techniques, ad infinitum, that the simplicity of the actual cause for this very real problem has been overlooked.

A common fundamental factor must be responsible for the trend in educational standards which the student voices so clearly with, "Teacher, I ain't got a pencil."

I find the educational implications even more distressing than the obvious explanation of simple rudeness, unpreparedness, or poor grammar.

The child has expressed a real need, but waits for the adult in charge to take care of this need, or at least to tell him what to do. The basic factor that I am suggesting is so simple that it has been overlooked.

LET THE CHILD FIND THE SOLUTION

He has no pencil? So what? Is this the responsibility of the teacher, to provide all things for all children? No, but most teachers are too overburdened to find the time to assess the situation accurately. It is simpler to hand over a pencil than to insist that the child find a solution for himself.

What then happens to the entire learning process when the child does not find a solution for himself? As long as any student is allowed to shift responsibility from himself to the teacher, where is the learning? The thinking?

Children no longer know how to think. That is all. Today's child is bombarded all day, everyday, with the word "think," but no one is insisting that he actually "think." Like the scarecrow in Oz, he has a brain but he does not think.

HER STUDENTS COULD LEARN

As a Reading Specialist in a small rural school system, I worked daily with 35 children of various ages. All were having individual reading problems, although they could learn.

My responsibility was to help each child discover and overcome his or her unique handicap and either repair or compensate for the defective foundation.

The "why" a handicap has developed is always interesting and beneficial, but the setting of broken bones does not wait for an explanation of why the child climbed the tree. The explanation and review comes later – much later, after the diagnosis and treatment are in progress.

IN SEARCH OF A COMMON FACTOR

As I worked with these children over the years, I began searching for a common factor. That common factor had to exist, because the declining achievement



scores came from all parts of the country.

Surely, somewhere, good schools, good teachers, and good curriculum had to exist – a particular environment that would make its students stand out.

Everyone could then rush to that school, that curriculum, those teachers for that magic solution. But where were these students who were so far above the others in the nation? We were never able to find them. The declining scores were national.

FACTOR AFFECTING ALL CHILDREN

As is normal in a small school, I was usually assigned one "regular" classroom period a day. This was to prove beneficial as the common factor for which I was searching had to be one affecting all students, regular as well as those identified as having problems.

Over the years, I realized the commonly discussed "reasons" were actually symptoms. Finally, the answer came. There was no real dilemma, only a misinterpretation of the obvious.

The angle must be changed to perceive the real issue. Stop the argument to hear the question. The actual issue is not learning, or school, or basics, or test scores, or attitudes, or methods, or TV, or teachers or motivation.

The issue is the inability to think.

NO WAY TO MEASURE THINKING ABILITY

The issue is simple, but unfortunately, the solution is not. First, no tool to measure thinking ability is available.

Second, from toys to teaching tools, our society programs our children not to think.

My first clue to this programming dawned on me as I tried to buy my granddaughter a doll. I found dolls that burped, wet, drank, rolled over and performed other amazing feats, but a doll that did nothing but be a doll simply did not exist.

There were dolls with hugging arms, dolls with voices that cried, sang and talked, and dolls with real life details such as external sexual organs in both infant and adult versions.

See THINKING Page 18

Monster Parents Are Emerging In Japan

By Leo Lewis

The stage was set, the lights went down and in a suburban Japanese primary school everyone prepared to enjoy a performance of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The only snag? The entire cast was playing the part of Snow White.

For the audience of menacing mothers and feisty fathers, though, the sight of 25 Snow Whites – no dwarfs and no wicked witch – was a triumph: a clear victory for Japan's emerging new class of "Monster Parents."

For they had taken on the system and won. After a relentless campaign of bullying, hectoring and nuisance phone calls, the monster parents had cowed the teachers into submission, forcing the school to admit to the injustice of selecting just one girl to play the title role.

AN ASTONISHING CHANGE IS REPORTED

Across Japan teachers are reporting an astonishing change in the character of parents, who, after decades of respectful silence, have become a super-aggressive army of complainers.

Japan's mass media opted to demonize them: a lavish television drama presents the monster parents as a vile symptom of a society that has lost all respect for its traditions and decorum.

The parents believe that they are champions of basic consumer rights, rights that Japanese society has supposedly long trampled over in the name of conformity and order.

A SHIFT IN PARENTAL ATTITUDE

Either way, few deny that mothers and fathers have shifted from being staunch supporters of Japan's vaunted education system to its most ardent assailants.

Previously, when a child was in trouble the parents apologized profusely to the teacher. Nowadays, they try to have the teacher sacked.

Where previously schools were trusted and respected, they are now the targets of concerted activism. Dozens of educators have been forced to resign in the face

of the blazing fury of parents who no longer tolerate anything that appears to disadvantage their offspring.

HUNDREDS OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In a new book on the phenomenon, Yoshihiko Morotomi, of Meiji University, lists hundreds of incidents that illustrate it.

There are parents who have secretly placed recording devices in their children's classrooms, and others who have demanded that the results of sports events be changed to reflect expectations rather than the reality on the field.

In one case the mother of a child who was injured in the playground demanded that the child who accidentally caused the injury be suspended from school for as long as it took her son to recuperate – so that he would not benefit from the lessons her boy was missing.

In the category of monster parent, Morotomi identifies the most potent strain – "teacher hunters" – who conspire to ensure that a particular teacher is dismissed.

© London Times

The Word From On High

I had been teaching my 3-year-old daughter, Caitlin, The Lord's Prayer. For several evenings at bedtime, she would repeat after me the lines from the prayer.

Finally, she decided to go solo.

I listened with pride as she carefully enunciated each word, right up to the end of the prayer.

"Lead us not into temptation," she prayed, "but deliver us some e-mail. Amen."

Math Gap Closing Between Girls, Boys

By Amanda Cuda

Growing up, Elizabeth Steeves had no qualms about math. As a kid, it never would have occurred to her that boys were supposed to be better at math than girls. After all, her mother was an engineering technician and used math all the time.

"I had a role model of a woman who could do math," said Steeves, now an associate professor of chemistry at Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, CT.

When she got older, she learned that not everyone was so lucky. Math is a big part of chemistry, Steeves said, and she still sees many female students who have hang-ups about their aptitude for arithmetic.

THEY TEND TO BELIEVE BOYS ARE BETTER

More than the males, they tend to believe that they're bad at math – so much so that Steeves has had to retrain them. "I get them to say 'I used to be bad at math and I'm not anymore,'" she said.

The women in her class have no doubt been influenced by the stereotype that women aren't as good at math as the guys are.

That's a mindset that's been reinforced over the years by the relative lack of women at the highest level of math, science and engineering fields.

But a new study turns that stereotype on its ear and provides hope that Steeves's future female students will be a bit more confident around numbers.

BOYS AND GIRLS PERFORM ROUGHLY THE SAME

According to the study, published in the journal *Science*, male and female students in grades 2 through 11 perform roughly the same on standardized math tests.

Researchers, led by psychologist Janet Hyde of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, came to that conclusion after analyzing the scores of 7.2 million students in 10 states.

The Connecticut Department of Education Spokesman Tom Murphy backed up the idea that girls in the state are doing as well as the boys on math tests, though, he said, he still sees a slight gap at the high school level.

For instance, on the 2008 Connecticut Academic Performance Test, a standardized test given to the state's 10th graders, 78.7% of girls scored at or above the proficiency level, compared with 80.6% of boys.

A DECADE AGO IT WAS DOUBLE DIGITS

But that gap is relatively small, Murphy said. "About 10 years ago, it was a stark contrast," he said. "Boys were performing better than girls by double digits."

He also said he expects the difference to be completely eliminated in a few years. "This is just the tail end of the gap closing," Murphy said.

The past gap was partly attributable to negative stereotypes about girls and math, Murphy said.

"There was a bias over the years that has not been intentional," he said. "Teach-



ers, parents, even the students themselves, make assumptions that boys are better at math than girls."

In recent years, educators and others have taken steps to increase girls' confidence in math, science and technology.

GIRLS TECHNOLOGY EXPO

For instance, Housatonic holds an annual Girls and Technology Expo for 7th-grade girls.

The program, which Steeves has worked on several times, features various workshops on technology-related fields, including web design and forensics.

The goal is to get girls excited about careers requiring math and science skills.

SHE THINKS IT'S WONDERFUL

Given the expansion of programs like this, Steeves said it's not surprising that girls are more confident and achieving better. "I think it is wonderful," she said.

Jill Shahverdian, assistant professor of math at Quinnipiac University, in Hamden, CT, also finds the data positive, if not surprising.

"There are many possible reasons that girls are achieving better," Shahverdian said. "For example, on the high school level, more girls are taking advanced math classes, which might help them score better on standardized tests."

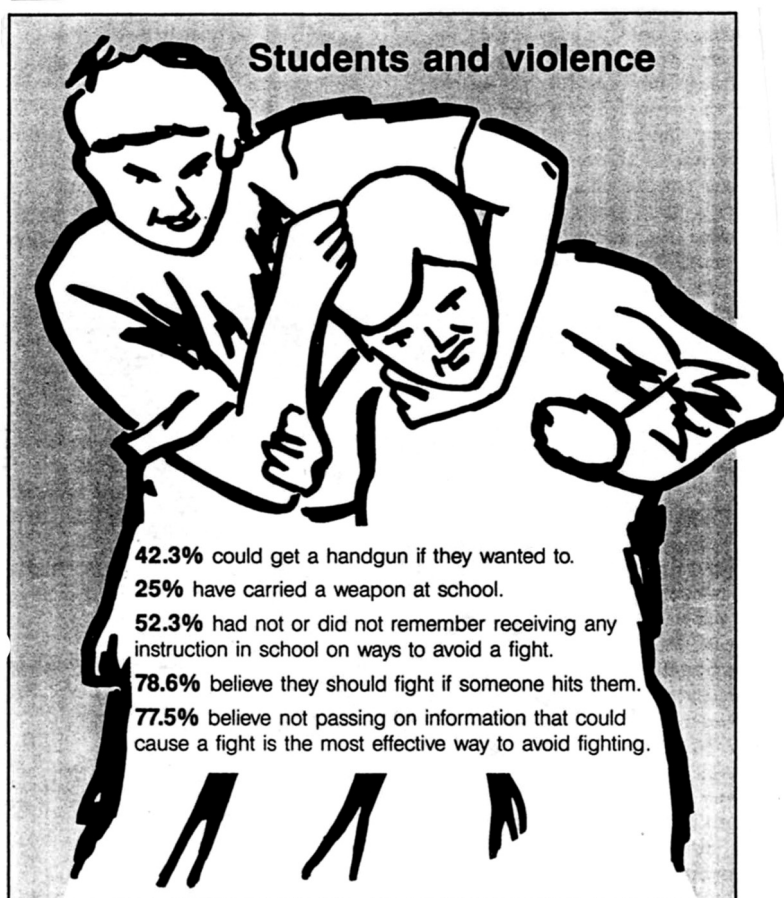
Whatever the reason, she said she hopes the study will break down stereotypes people have about girls and numbers.

"I think it's promising, if for no other reason than it makes people think 'Oh! Maybe boys aren't better at math than girls.'"

© Truthout

BULLYING

From Page 12



only good students, but good people.

WHEN WILL IT BE IMPORTANT ENOUGH?

How many more of our kids must be intimidated, hurt, or killed before it becomes important enough to do something about instead of just talk about it around the water cooler the next morning?

Our children deserve to feel safe, to feel valued when they leave our homes to go to school. We as parents and as taxpayers must insist that the increasing cycle of school violence be stopped.

Instead of just shaking our heads and saying what a shame it all is, let's ask ourselves the tough questions about why it happened, and actually be willing to be honest with the answer. Then we can start doing something to fix it.

- The author is founder of Social Smarts

© Huffington Post

Children Of Alcoholics Bear Burden

According to statistics, one out of every four Americans is the child of an alcoholic. And here's the legacy those alcoholic parent leave behind:

Children of alcoholics are three to four times more likely to become alcoholics themselves.

Children of alcoholics run a much higher risk of becoming addicted to prescription and illegal drugs, such as painkillers, cocaine, meth or marijuana.

Children of alcoholics have a much greater risk of mental, emotional and physical health problems. Because of this higher risk they're admitted to hospitals 24% more often than other people, and their hospital stays are an average of 29% longer.

Children of alcoholics have triple the rate of inpatient hospital/clinic admissions for substance abuse than others. Their inpatient admission rate for mental problems also is double that of other people, while their in-patient admission for injuries and poisonings – including alcohol poisoning – is one-and-a-half times greater.

Children of alcoholics are less likely to get married and more likely to continue abusing alcohol when they do marry.

Oil's Future? Slim Pickens

Energy Is Sweeping Down The Plain

By Edwin E. Vineyard

While candidate John McCain is ranting and raving about drilling "right here, right now," some responsible persons are making what appear to be solid, reasonable proposals for long-range solutions to our dependence on foreign oil.

One of these who knows what he is talking about is T. Boone Pickens.

From polls of American citizens, it would appear that most of us favor careful exploration of off-shore oil deposits. Candidate Obama has come around to that view – if such an enactment is combined with other more effective programs to develop long range alternative energy sources.

Nevertheless, it is clear that off-shore drilling will NOT solve our oil import problem, and that it will take 10 years for that to make even an insignificant contribution to oil supplies.

Why, then, is this being made a big political issue by candidate McCain? Obviously, it is a part of an effort to frighten the voters about it, and an attempt to discredit his opponent.

PROCEED WITH CAUTION

But we probably ought to go ahead and allow a cautious start with off-shore drilling, and consider some other locations as well. Oil companies must first show they are actually drilling in presently available locations.

And no tax breaks and no subsidies please. Get rid of those now in the law.

T. Boone Pickens declares, "We cannot drill our way out of this crisis!" That sounds truthful and honest to this writer.

If T. Boone is right, and we think he is, then we ought to give immediate, serious consideration to his positive proposals. His acceleration in investing personally in wind energy production is part of an encouraged nationwide movement.

It is already working in generating electricity. It will continue to work in the future.

GETTING WIND POWER TO MARKET

Moving electricity generated in the wind belt to high consumption areas is another problem, however.

Pickens calls for all governmental bodies to step out now to acquire the right-of-way for transmission corridors and build the infrastructure. Failing to actually build transmission lines and facilities, he asks government to clear the legal path and provide incentives for private companies to do so.

This writer has not necessarily been a fan of T. Boone Pickens, but when he is right – he is right!

Pickens ideas for making compressed natural gas available at service stations,

McCain's Drilling Plan Full Of Holes

By Joe Conason

Touring America's oil rigs and nuclear plants, John McCain sometimes sounds as if he'll produce enough wind to power the nation all by himself. So strongly does his current rhetoric smell of methane – the gas emanating from manure – that he might even qualify for an alternative energy tax incentive.

The former straight talker, who once could not help but tell the truth, has found the voice of the demagogue within.

As McCain seeks to exploit public anger over the price of gasoline, first with his dubious "gas tax holiday" and now with his campaign for offshore oil drilling, the thoughtful legislator who defied his own party on global warming and Alaskan oil leasing has been replaced by that much more familiar Congressional figure – a rented mouthpiece for the energy industry.

SUDDENLY AVOIDING HIS MEDIA BASE

Not surprisingly, this new McCain is not quite as accessible to the press as the earlier version, partly because he resents the media attention devoted to his Democratic opponent and partly because he no longer is so eager to answer every question a reporter might pose.

He prefers to listen to the cheers of eager boobs who believe him when he says, "We're not going to pay \$4 a gallon for gas because we are going to drill here, and we are going to drill now!"

But should he ever stop yelling and start thinking again, there will be plenty of questions awaiting him, including these:

Senator, if you truly think we should be doing "all of the above" to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, why have you voted against every recent Congressional measure to encourage renewable energy sources?

NO MORE WORRIES ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

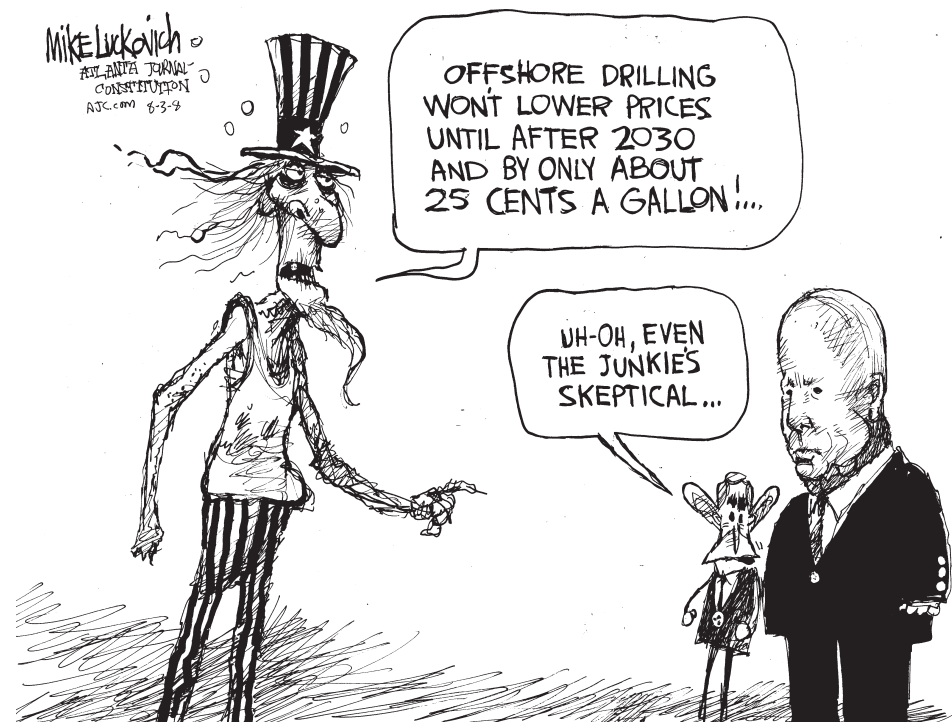
If you still worry about the effects of climate change, then why do you now emphasize drilling for additional oil offshore rather than energy sources that don't create greenhouse gases?

And why do you continue to talk about so-called "clean coal," which doesn't actually exist?

Why do you say that offshore drilling will cut gasoline prices when the Energy Information Administration predicts that will not happen for a decade and will make little difference even then?

According to your best estimate, when will "drilling here and drilling now" reduce the price of gasoline in the United States?

Please explain why you no longer believe in the data supplied by the Energy Information Administration, which you asked to provide the economic analysis



and conversion kits ready for automobiles to use it, seem sound as well. Enough progress could be made on this approach to bring some relief to the gasoline market within three to five years.

A REALISTIC BRIDGE TO FUTURE

If presently plentiful natural gas could fill a gap in oil for a couple of decades, then other technologies could take over for a more permanent solution.

But if it is not government mandated, then neither the oil companies nor the car companies will get it done. They seem to like things the way they are.

There are, of course, other methods and other technologies for bringing renewable energy to the market. Most of these take a while. Some, like ethanol, have backlashes on food prices or on the economy.

An obvious method for conserving millions of gallons of gasoline immediately is lowering of the speed limits for fuel economy. Some experts say this would save more fuel per year now than all the proposed offshore and Alaska drilling could produce annually 10 years hence.

DO WE REALLY WANT TO SOLVE CRISIS?

This immediate action seems to be entirely off the political planning tables.

Do you suppose that is because it is not popular with voters? How badly do we really want to solve this problem?

We should do right now what we can do. Boone Pickens has some good ideas. There are other good ideas.

Let's get on with it.

– The author, AKA *The Militant Moderate*, lives in Enid

for the climate-change bill that you co-sponsored with Sen. Joseph Lieberman.

HOW ABOUT STRAIGHT TALK ON SOURCES?

When you assure audiences that drilling offshore will produce more oil within a matter of months, as you did in Bakersfield, CA, recently, are you relying on sources other than the Energy Information Administration?

Please identify the person or persons who told you that the oil industry can produce more petroleum within the next several months if we start offshore leasing today.

Did you learn of that miraculous capacity from one of the many oil company lobbyists who have advised and raised money for your campaign?

When you said that there was no significant oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico even during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, were you aware that at least seven million gallons were spilled as a result of Katrina?

How much oil must leak from a damaged offshore rig or barge before you would consider the spillage to be "significant?"

EXACTLY WHERE WOULD YOU DRILL?

By the way, where will all that new offshore drilling occur if the states of Florida and California continue to oppose offshore leasing, as their governors have vowed to do?

Do you still support the right of those states to prevent drilling in their coastal waters, as you promised last year?

Doesn't that promise conflict with your claim that offshore wells will produce enough new oil to lower gasoline prices?

Finally, what is so funny about checking tire pressure to save energy? Are you aware that auto and tire maintenance – like other conservation and efficiency measures – can save far more oil than offshore leasing will ever produce?

Did you know that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has urged the people of California to pump up their tires? Is it really prudent to mock him?

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The Tenth Commandment, Revised

A Sunday School class was studying the Ten Commandments. They were ready to discuss the last one. The teacher asked if anyone could tell her what it was. Susie raised her hand, stood tall, and quoted, "Thou shall not take the covers off the neighbor's wife."

Follow The Money

Mother's Milk Of Politics Turns Sour

By Bill Moyers

Once again we're closing the barn door after the horse is out and gone. In Washington, the Federal Reserve has finally acted to stop some of the predatory lending that exploited people's need for money.

Like Rip Van Winkle, Congress is finally waking up from a long doze under the warm sun of laissez-faire economics. That's French for turning off the alarm until the burglars have made their getaway.

It's no wonder that Congress and the White House have been looking the other way as the predators picked the pockets of unsuspecting debtors.

Mega banking and investment firms have been some of the biggest providers of the cash vital to keeping incumbents in office. There isn't much appetite for biting – or regulating – the manicured hand that feeds them.

GUESS WHO GAVE THE MOST MONEY?

Guess who gave the most money to candidates in this 2007-08 federal election cycle? That's right, the financial services and real estate industries. They stuffed nearly \$250 million into candidate coffers.

The bailed-out Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac together are responsible for about half the country's \$12 trillion mortgage debt.

Over the past decade, the two financial giants with the down-home names have spent nearly \$200 million on campaign contributions and lobbying.

They've stacked their payrolls with top Washington power brokers of all political stripes, including Republican John McCain's presidential campaign manager.

The New York Times put it as bluntly as anyone ever has: "In Washington, Fannie and Freddie's sprawling lobbying machine hired family and friends of politicians in their efforts to quickly sideline any regulations that might slow their growth or invite greater oversight of their business practices. Indeed, their rapid expansion was, at least in part, the result of such artful lobbying over the years."

CLIMATE BILL KILLED

We're spending more than 6% of our salaries on gasoline, and global warming keeps temperatures rising, but recently the climate bill was killed and President Bush got rid of his daddy's longtime ban on offshore drilling.

Only in a fairy tale would anyone believe it's just coincidence that the oil and gas industries have donated more than \$18 million to federal candidates this year, three-quarters of it going to Republicans.

They've spent more than \$26 million lobbying this year – that's seven times more than environmental groups have.

Follow the money. It goes from your gas tank to the wine bars and steak houses of DC, where the payoffs happen.

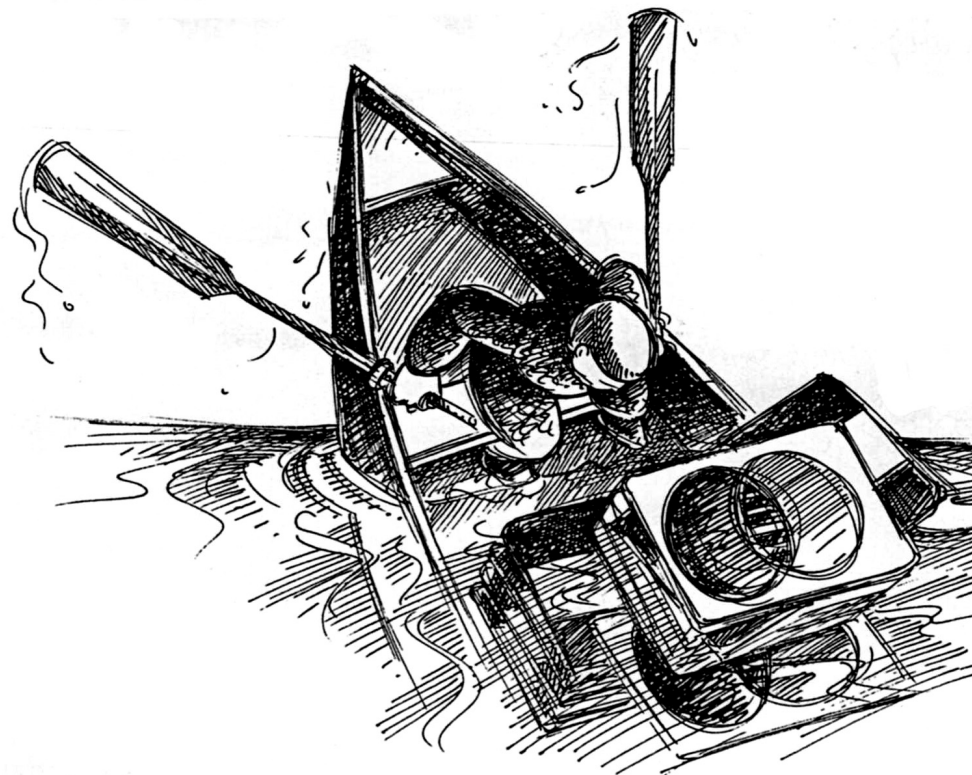
Or ponder that FISA surveillance legislation that passed the Senate. [Oklahoma Sens. Jim Inhofe and Tom Coburn voted for it.]

OFF THE HOOK FOR SPYING ON CITIZENS

It let the big telecommunications companies off the hook for helping the government wiretap our phones and laptops without warrants. Over the years those telecom companies have given Republicans in the House and Senate \$63 million and Democrats \$49 million.

The late journalist Meg Greenfield once wrote that trying to get money out of politics is akin to the quest for a squirrel-proof birdfeeder. No matter how clever and ingenious the design, the squirrels are always one mouthful ahead of you.

Here's an example. Corporations are limited in how much they can contribute



to candidates' campaigns, right? But someone's always figuring out how to open another back door.

Democrats have turned to Steve Farber. He's using the resources of his big K Street law and lobbying factory to help raise \$40 million for the Democratic National Convention.

FAT CATS LINE UP TO WIN ACCESS

Half a dozen of his clients have signed up, including AT&T, Comcast, Western Union and Google. Their presence at the convention will offer lots of opportunities to curry favors at private parties while ordinary delegates wander Denver looking for the nearest Wendy's.

By the way, just as you pay at the gas pump for those energy lobbyists to wine and dine your representatives in Washington, you'll pay on April 15 for Denver – corporations can deduct their contributions.

Once George W. is out of the White House, he, too, plans what one newspaper described as a "legacy polishing" institute – a presidential library and think tank at Southern Methodist University in Dallas costing half a billion dollars.

NEWSPAPER ARRANGED FOR A STING

The Times of London released a remarkable video of one of the president's buddies and fundraisers – Stephen Payne, a political appointee named to the Homeland Security Advisory Council.

The Times set him up in a video sting, and taped a conversation in which Payne offers an exiled leader of Kyrgyzstan meetings with such White House luminaries as Vice President Cheney and Condoleezza Rice – provided he makes a whopping contribution to the Bush Library, and an even bigger payment to Payne's lobbying firm.

Payne tells him, "It will be somewhere between \$600,000 and \$750,000, with about a third of it going directly to the Bush Library ... That's gonna be a show of 'we're interested, we're your friends, we're still your friends.'"

Payne, who is supporting John McCain, says he has done nothing wrong.

– The author is managing editor of PBS' Bill Moyers Journal

Will Broadcasters Hijack Digital TV?

By Bruce Dioxin

The switch to digital TV is essentially a \$70 billion gift from taxpayers to broadcasters. So, what will we get in return?

On Feb. 17, 2009, a massive corporate theft of the public airwaves will be consummated as U.S. analog TV stations switch to digital TV [DTV] broadcasting.

Digital broadcast technology enables three, four and sometimes more separate channels to be compressed into the space formerly occupied by a single old-fashioned analog TV channel.

So when the transition from analog to digital TV occurs nationwide, each of the nation's more than 1,700 broadcast TV license holders will suddenly have two, three or more additional channels, a gift from the taxpayers worth an estimated \$70 billion.

THEY PROMISED WHAT DTV WOULD MEAN

Back in the mid-1990s, the owners of TV stations promised Congress that the advent of DTV would bring with it a wide selection of new programming, educational and children's shows, frequently updated local newscasts and interactive content, all free, over the new digital broadcast airwaves. Of course, they lied.

"Broadcasters have no idea how they will fill the extra channels they'll get," Communications Workers of America's Carrie Biggs-Adams told Black Agenda Report [BAR].

"They don't have the content, and they don't have a clue. There are only so many reruns, reality shows and home shopping networks."

An article by David Hatch in the National Journal confirms this: "With the Feb. THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, AUGUST 25, 2008, PAGE 17

17 shift to digital broadcasting just ... months away, broadcasters are finding that the business model for multiple channels is not panning out."

SOME STATIONS ARE MULTICASTING

The National Association of Broadcasters cited statistics from BIA Financial, a Chantilly, VA-based research firm, indicating that 351 television stations are multicasting.

But that figure includes public broadcasters, which have invested heavily in extra stations and account for a large chunk of the ones available – compared with their commercial counterparts.

When commercial outlets do multicast, it is often to transmit redundant weather maps, which involves minimal investment and little or no on-air talent.

SATURATING THE AIRWAVES

These radar scopes are so widespread that they've saturated the airwaves in some markets, including Washington, where viewers have three to choose from.

Commercial broadcasters "can say that they do have some content on there," the FCC source said derisively.

The airwaves are public property under U.S. law, and broadcasters receive their licenses from the FCC only on the condition that they serve the public interest.

Neither Congress nor the FCC have attached any public service or public interest requirement to the thousands of new DTV channels that current broadcasters will receive.

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Teaching Children To Be Responsible

By Bill Cirone

Parents and educators alike want children to grow up to be responsible adults. We also want children to feel and act with respect for others and for themselves. These are acquired skills and parents can help.

According to a publication entitled *It Starts on the Frontline*, learning to be responsible includes the following actions:

- Showing respect and compassion for others.
- Practicing honesty.
- Showing courage by standing up for what one believes.
- Developing self-control out of consideration for others.
- Maintaining self-respect.

ACTIONS PARENTS CAN TAKE

Here are some actions parents can take that can help in these areas:

Watch for the chance to teach children responsible behavior through everyday situations. Be sure to share your moral and religious values with them.

Show compassion and concern with others who are suffering. You are always a role model for your children, whether you wish to be or not. Be aware that children look to you and will copy what they see.

Read stories with your children that teach lessons. *The Little Engine That Could* is a good example. Also, talk about complicated decisions. Help children understand how the choices they make can affect them and others.

Visit with teachers to discuss ways you and the school can reinforce the same lessons about good character, good decisions, good behavior.

TALK WITH OTHER PARENTS

Talk with other parents and agree on acceptable behavior for children's play and parties. Take turns supervising to show children that all the parents agree on the standards of behavior.

Always make clear to your children that prejudice is wrong and that all of us

MYTHS

From Page 11

Myth: Bad schooling has undermined America's competitiveness.

This canard – perhaps the biggest of them all – was given a boost by the recent World Economic Forum survey of international economies.

AMERICAN ECONOMY FIRST IN THE WORLD

Typically this annual survey ranks the U.S. economy as the most competitive in the world, but last year it put the United States in sixth place. However, the drop had nothing to do with test scores or school performance.

Rather, the forum cited U.S. trade and budget deficits, a low savings rate, tax cuts and the federal government's increased spending on defense and homeland security.

Another recent survey, by the Council on Competitiveness, a Washington-based business advisory group, found that over the past two decades the U.S. economy grew faster than that of any other advanced nation, and generated a third of the world's economic growth.

WHAT NATION AT RISK?

This performance followed a period in which the authors of *A Nation at Risk* were warning that "a rising tide of educational mediocrity ... threatens our very future as a nation." That was in 1983.

Those high school mediocrities are now turning 40, and presumably have been playing a part in helping the U.S. economy grow faster than any other advanced economy over the past two decades.

A dynamic economy is much more than the sum of its test scores. It is part of a culture that rewards innovation and risk-taking, and values unconventional problem-solving. Much of this is nurtured in our schools, even if it can't be quantified on a test.

U.S. A TALENT MERITOCRACY

America's "is a talent meritocracy, ours is an exam meritocracy," said Singapore's education minister, Tharman Shanmugaratnam. "There are some parts of the intellect that we are not able to test well – like creativity, curiosity, a sense of adventure, ambition.

"Most of all, America has a culture of learning that challenges conventional wisdom, even if it means challenging authority. These are the areas where Singapore must learn from America."

Our current [and past] economic success suggests something that educational alarmists and their sky-is-falling friends in the news media seem reluctant to admit: American schools may have a lot to fix, but they may be doing a few things right, too.

Myth: How we stack up on international tests matters, if only for national pride.

Yes, we're a nation of strivers and self-improvers; the American drive to be the biggest and the best in everything seems part of our national character.

If being No. 1 in education is our goal, shouldn't we also want to be No. 1 in all the things closely linked to academic achievement, such as quality of childhood health care and reduction of childhood poverty?

National pride can be a destructive concept, especially when it views learning as a zero sum game [their gains are our losses, and vice versa].

Continuous improvement should be our goal, regardless of whether we're No. 1 in the test-score Olympics.

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THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, AUGUST 25, 2008, PAGE 18

are equal, no matter what our color, gender, beliefs, or background.

Show an interest in learning about others – neighbors and relatives, and also from books about our own culture and other civilizations.

Most of all, listen carefully when your children want to tell you things they have discovered about history, geography, religions, art, and ways of life.

Reinforce all their good instincts and actions. Parents are always the first and best teachers children will ever have.

– The author is Santa Barbara County, CA, superintendent of schools. This is from his newsletter.

THINKING

From Page 14

Where was the opportunity for the child to create that world of "make-believe," which is so important for a developing mind?

Children need to develop their minds, to spend time in "make-believe," to create situations that need solutions and endings and, finally, to create these solutions and endings.

This societal preprogramming of students is no excuse for the schools not teaching children to think. By insisting my students begin to think for themselves, I literally "forced" the responsibility back upon the learner.

Many times I have explained to a student, "Since you have a problem learning to read, and since it is your responsibility to learn, you must identify the problem, then we will find the needed tools to allow you to function in spite of any problem you may have."

CREATING THE PROPER ENVIRONMENT

My role was to create the proper environment and to guide the student by lending a helping hand when asked, but not by interfering when the student was involved in the process of learning. An example might be:

Child: "I forgot what 'y' says at the end of a word."

Teacher: "Here are the tools we use to find the answer to your question and this is how we use them."

Eventually, the child learned to go directly to available resources without asking for outside help. He had begun thinking; he had identified his problem and applied his knowledge to use accessible information to get his answer.

The old genetically programmed excitement of learning returned and provided its own motivation.

PROVIDING ITS OWN MOTIVATION

Then the statement, "I ain't got a pencil," became "May I borrow a pencil?" A small, but significant difference. The first statement indicates a condition in which the student, like an infant, waits for the world to care for his needs. The second statement is a question seeking aid for a recognized need and offering a solution.

This principle becomes more sophisticated as the age of the child increases, until by the time he reaches high school, the student should never voice such a problem; he would see and remedy it on his own.

At this level, no teacher should have to care for such infantile needs of students as pencils, paper, books, etc. When the adults apply this simple principle to all educational processes, the implications are staggering.

EACH RESUMES RESPONSIBILITY

The teacher's responsibility is returned to the proper perspective, and the student resumes his own responsibility, which society had programmed him to shift to others.

Teachers, parents, administrators, anyone can apply this "old-fashioned" educational concept: Help our children to think. Take away the societal programming and insist that each child learn to think for himself.

Whether the non-thinking symptom is in terms of an inability to use logic, to calculate numbers, to apply facts already known, or to express thoughts verbally or in written form, the solution is to have the student think – really think for himself.

I find a bit unnerving the idea of all these programmed children becoming non-thinking adults. Who will solve everyday problems for them? Who will think for our nation? For our world? For our future?

– The author, who lives in Alva, was a Reading Specialist in Waynoka Public School before retiring

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Foreign Banks Recruiting U.S. Tax Cheats

By Jim Hightower

Business stories can be arcane and boring, but here's one that could've come straight out of a crime thriller about an international bank heist. All of the classic plot elements are present: a Swiss bank, \$18 billion in loot, code names, yachts, diamond smuggling, Caribbean hideaways, the royal family of Liechtenstein, shredded files, rat finks and, of course, the witness protection program.

Standard stuff. Only, these thieves are bankers.

In particular, they are senior executives at Geneva-based UBS, the world's largest manager of rich people's wealth. The bank specializes in confidentiality, creativity ... and tax cheating.

In a recent report, a Senate subcommittee details how UBS dispatched its bankers to zip codes of wealth all across our country, aggressively marketing secret Swiss bank accounts.

As a special service to such special clients, the bank promised that these accounts would be "undeclared" – meaning that all deposits would be a little secret between depositor and banker, with no reporting of the stash to those bothersome IRS agents back in the United States.

19,000 AMERICANS OPENED "SECRET" ACCOUNTS

Subcommittee investigators calculate that 19,000 of America's upright citizens of wealth jumped at the deal, quietly depositing \$17.9 billion.

How did these tax cheats avoid detection?

It turns out that UBS truly is a full-service bank: It created fake corporations in the Bahamas and other tax havens for these clients, fraudulently claiming that the sham corporations owned the Swiss accounts, not the clients.

The bankers gave code names to their rich depositors to conceal their identity, and clients were issued Swiss credit cards that were untraceable by U.S. authorities.

Rather than mailing account statements to customers, the information was held in Switzerland until each client could view them personally, after which the records were taken to "a big shredding room" and destroyed.

And – the biggest service of all – UBS prepared falsified reports to the IRS that effectively shielded its clients' cache of cash from taxation.

Lest you think that this deceit was the work of a few rogue bankers, the Senate report makes clear that it was premeditated, top-down corporate policy.

"This was a massive machine," says Bradley Birkenfeld, a senior UBS banker who has now pled guilty for helping a billionaire real estate mogul in Florida hide \$200 million in the UBS maze [he was also a bit of a dashing banker, having converted money from one American's Swiss account into diamonds, which he then smuggled to him in a tube of toothpaste].

TRAWLING FOR EAGER CHEATERS

Breaking the *omerta* of Swiss banking, Birkenfeld confesses that the trained hustlers that UBS sent to America were "incentivized" – i.e., paid large bonuses – to recruit new clients for the secret accounts.

UBS even sponsored art shows, yacht races and other events to attract rich Americans into its web.

The Swiss giant is not the only one trawling America for eager cheaters. For example, the Senate report also highlights the tax-avoidance finagling done by

LGT, a bank owned by Liechtenstein's royal family.

One of its former employees has revealed so much that the feds have ensconced him in the witness protection program. It seems that Liechtenstein officials want to nail him for violating their secrecy laws.

A top UBS executive has now apologized for "any compliance failures" that might have happened. No, no, no! Sir, this is not a technicality. This is stealing. On a mass scale: The subcommittee estimates that such offshore tax fraud costs our public treasury \$100 billion a year.

As a Woody Guthrie song says of outlaws, "Some'll rob you with a six-gun, some with a fountain pen."

These bankers and billionaires are stealing money we need for health care, schools, infrastructure repairs and other essentials. Instead of letting them off with wrist-slapping fines, the whole gang should be jailed with other cold-blooded criminals.

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SMEAR

From Page One

An analysis using regional economic models shows that a typical state investing \$100 million in public education creates approximately 4,400 new jobs.

The same amount given in economic development subsidies or tax cuts would create only half that many.

A recent study by the Alliance for Excellent Education shows that America's economy would grow by \$309 billion if all high school students graduate.

An analysis conducted by Henry Levin of Columbia University shows that each new high school graduate would contribute an additional \$137,932 in income tax revenues, would reduce health care costs by \$37,388, and would reduce crime costs by \$167,990 over their lifetime.

Art Rolnick and his colleagues at the Federal Reserve Bank show that every \$1 invested in pre-school education provides an economic return of \$7.

In Oklahoma, a Republican-domi-

nated Legislature has spent the past three years pandering to the rich – more than \$720 million in tax cuts while de-funding education.

A misguided governor endorsed the tax cuts, leaving the state facing a \$114 million budget shortfall in the current fiscal year.

What makes this a tragedy, the non-partisan, ultra-conservative Tax Foundation reports that in combined federal, state and local taxes,

Oklahoma was already 50th in the 50 states.

Brace yourself – the Oklahoma Tax Commission predicts that the state budget will take a \$1 billion hit when legislators gather in February to budget for the following year.

If Republicans control the Legislature – and they likely will – it will be like heaven for them, cutting programs.

As one GOP guru put it, they hate government so much they want to shrink it to the point that what is left can be drowned in a bathtub.

SCHOOLS

From Page 6

est and the wealthiest school districts are still wide – \$6,470 per pupil versus \$9,403.

Achievement and educational gaps remain between white and minority students. In the area of high school completion, for example, the rates are 91% for white students, 64% for African-Americans, and 50% for Hispanics.

Facts prove that the reasons for creating public schools are still valid. This is not to say that all public schools are doing a good job or that the status quo should be maintained.

American schools need to improve in math and science, including raising student academic achievement, preparing all students for a competitive world economy, closing gaps between white and minority students, and reducing disparities between wealthy and poor communities.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR CANARD

Some libertarian-leaning foundations are advocated shifting financial support and authority from the public to the private sector, which would mark a radical change in American education.

Even if private school enrollments doubled as a result of instituting vouchers, the vast majority of students [79%] still would attend public schools – a compel-

ling justification for maintaining the public schools and making them better, instead of abandoning them.

Public schools have problems that need to be addressed. But there are ways to improve the schools without undermining the essential concept of a system of public schooling.

As politicians weigh various proposals for education reform, they must not forget that Americans developed public schools to unify our nation – not divide it.

FAILING TO HEED HISTORY?

If we proceed with Republican proposals that are not true to the spirit of this history, then we may lose the very features of public schooling that our early leaders believed were necessary to form a strong, cohesive, and just nation.

It is sad to note that Sen. John McCain supports the NCLB law without change and has endorsed vouchers.

"Solutions" for dismantling public schools would return America to a time when education consisted of a patchwork of grimly unequal arrangements that left many children and families to fend for themselves.

The ideals of American democracy – and the history of American public education – demand that we do better than that.

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