

The True Meaning of Patriotism

By Lawrence W. Reed



Lawrence Reed

Patriotism these days is like Christmas—lots of people caught up in a festive atmosphere replete with lights and spectacles. We hear reminders about “the true meaning” of the occasion—and we may even mutter a few guilt-

ridden words to that effect ourselves—but like most people, each of us spends more time and thought in parties, gift-giving, and the other paraphernalia of a secularized holiday than we do deepening our devotion to the “true meaning.” The attention some pay the fictional Santa Claus rivals that which they pay the One whose name the holiday is meant to hallow.

So it is with patriotism, especially on Memorial Day, Flag Day in June, and Independence Day in July. Walk down Main Street America and ask one citizen after another what it means and with few exceptions, you’ll get a passel of the most self-righteous but superficial and often dead-wrong answers. America’s Founders, the men and women who gave us reason to be patriotic in the first place, would think we’ve lost our way if they could see us now.

Since the infamous attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans in near unanimity have been “feeling” patriotic. For most, that sadly suffices to make one a solid patriot. But if I’m right, and the Grinch has stolen patriotism, it’s time for Americans to take a refresher course to get it back.

Patriotism is not love of country, if by “country” you mean scenery—amber waves of grain, purple mountains’ majesty, and the like. Almost every country has pretty collections of rocks, water, and stuff that people grow and eat. If that’s what patriotism is all about, then Americans have precious little for which we can claim any special or unique love. And surely, patriotism cannot mean giving one’s life for a river or a mountain range.

Pioneering female anarchist Emma Goldman, in a 1911 essay, rightly disparaged this parochial, location-based concept. That kind of patriotism, she said, “assumes that our globe is divided into little spots, each one surrounded by an iron gate.

Those who have had the fortune of being born on some particular spot, consider themselves better, nobler, grander, more intelligent than the living beings inhabiting any other spot. It is, therefore, the duty of everyone living on that chosen spot to fight, kill, and die in the attempt to impose his superiority upon all the others.” I’d like to think there’s something about being a patriotic American that’s far removed from the young Nazi soldier who marched into battle for “the Fatherland.” After all, he thought he was patriotic too.

Patriotism is not blind trust in anything our leaders tell us or do. That’s just stupidity, and it replaces some very lofty concepts about the true meaning of the word with the mindless goose-stepping of cowardly sycophants.

Patriotism is not simply showing up to vote. You need to know a lot more about what motivates a voter before you judge his patriotism. He might be casting a ballot because he just wants something at someone else’s expense. Remember Dr. Johnson’s wisdom: “Patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels.”

Waving the flag can be an outward sign of patriotism, but let’s not cheapen the term by ever suggesting that it’s anything more than a sign. And while it’s always fitting to mourn those who lost their lives simply because they resided on American soil, that too does not define patriotism.

People in every country and in all times have expressed feelings of something we flippantly call “patriotism” but that just begs the question. What is this anyway? Can it be so cheap and meaningless that a few gestures make you patriotic?

Not in my book.

I subscribe to a patriotism rooted in ideas that in turn gave birth to a country, but it’s the ideas that I think of when I’m feeling patriotic. I’m a patriotic American because I revere the ideas that motivated the Founders and compelled them, in many

instances, to put their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor on the line.

What ideas? Read the Declaration of Independence again. Or, if you’re like most Americans these days, read it for the very first time. It’s all there. All men are created equal. They are endowed not by government but by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Premier among those rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Government must be limited to protecting the peace and preserving our liberties, and doing so through the consent of the governed. It’s the right of a free people to rid themselves of a government that becomes destructive of those ends, as our Founders did in a supreme act of courage and defiance more than two hundred years ago.

Call it freedom. Call it liberty. Call it whatever you want, but it’s the bedrock on which this nation was founded and from

which we stray at our peril. It’s what has defined us as Americans. It’s what almost everyone who has ever lived on this planet has yearned for, though only a few have ever risen above selfishness, ignorance, or barbarism to attain it. It makes life worth living, which means it’s worth fighting and dying for.

I know that this concept of patriotism puts an “American” spin on the term. But I don’t know how to be patriotic for Uganda or Paraguay. I hope the Ugandans and Paraguayans

have lofty ideals they celebrate when they feel patriotic, but whether they do is a question you’ll have to ask them.

I can only tell you what patriotism means to me as an American.

I understand that America has often fallen short of the superlative ideas expressed in the Declaration. That hasn’t diminished my reverence for them, nor has it dimmed my hope that future generations of Americans will be re-inspired by them.

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My patriotism is never affected by any politician’s failures, or any shortcoming of some government policy, or any slump in the economy or stock market.

Continued on page 7
See “The True Meaning of Patriotism”

Lack of Incentives Not the Real Problem

Dear AAE,

In response to the article "Lack of Incentives a Fundamental Problem in Education?"—I would like to emphasize several problems with the perspective from which the researcher, Dr. Eric A. Hanushek, approaches this sensitive and important issue for all teachers.

I agree that monetary incentives tend to influence less-motivated teachers more than those who are truly committed to this challenging and fulfilling profession that makes a difference in the lives and futures of the future voting and influential citizens of our country. I agree that the educational preparation with which the teacher enters this profession has less to do with their ability to be a good or excellent teacher, than their personal commitment to excellence and innate talent for working with students.

Referring to the issue of class size, I partially disagree that size is unimportant in the high school setting. At least in California, where learning to read by phonics was officially dropped years ago, the effect has been depressing and predictable as we receive fourteen-year-old students at as low as third-grade reading level! How can one teach a virtual third-grader the information in a textbook written at a ninth-grade level? There is a similar problem in math as well. I have classes with not only over forty students, but also those with around 25. It is almost impossible for me to get around to each and every student in the larger classes to be sure they are understanding the day's work. In the smaller classes it is not only possible but also I am able to assist those students with the greater needs on a daily basis.

Dr. Hanushek says, "Education output has essentially been constant for twenty-five years." Is he aware that, at least in California, teachers have been increasingly required to be responsible for more and more bureaucratic paperwork, to the extent that it takes up time from lesson planning (an extremely important element in the end result of how well a lesson is presented and taught), tutoring after school, and thoroughly reviewing student work? Over twenty years ago, in my first years of teaching, all I was expected to do was plan well, teach well, and give proper and thorough feedback to my students so they and I could implement means to achieve their progress and success. Now, I feel one-third of my job is secretarial and insignificant to the core concern of TEACHING!

The article refers to incentives to increase student performance. Dr. Hanushek seems to have completely ignored or overlooked two essential and fundamental elements to the equation: What about the parents'/guardians' responsibility? What about the individual student's responsibility? It is not the teacher who is in charge of the student's after-school life. The teacher can't go home with each student to make sure he/she has a proper place to study, studies in an atmosphere that allows concentration, gets tutoring when necessary, is conscientious in producing his/her best, and is on time. I have spoken countless times with countless students, who, by the way, are all completely capable of higher achievement, and countless parents about these issues—unfortunately, almost always to no avail. As the teacher I am responsible for presenting the material as clearly, as often, and with a variety of instructional practices as possible so that I can reach every student. I can offer after-school tutoring, I can allow for retesting under certain circumstances, I can call home and explain the needs of the student, and so forth. But I can neither MAKE the student learn nor the parent monitor his child's study habits. Conversely, Dr. Hanushek has also

overlooked the fact that self-motivated family-supported students do well in spite of poor teachers!

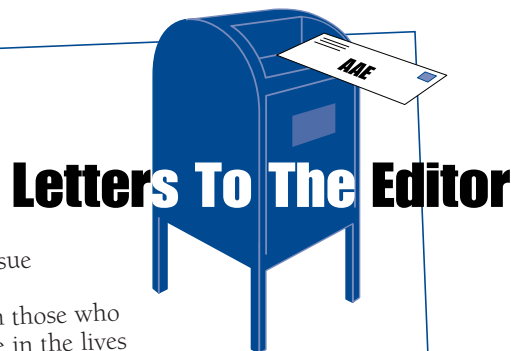
I agree that educational tax moneys are not always properly spent, but that is more a political interference than poor judgment on the part of school districts. I could teach with only a blackboard and some pictures, but the students need a textbook to take home from which to study the information. Having enough money to provide each student with a copy of each necessary text is essential. Of course, I can produce more interesting and stimulating lessons with transparencies, videos, cassettes, and games, but the highly motivated students, although they enjoy the variety, will learn without the extras.

Dr. Hanushek states, "The fundamental problem in education is that there aren't any incentives to increase student performance." I completely disagree. The incentives are not necessary for teachers. The incentives are necessary for students and their parents. They need to be shown how achievement, or the lack thereof, is completely linked to one's achievement in one's future career. Each student at every level gets out of a class what he/she puts into it. This fundamental truth is even more important than the performance of the teacher. I have had numerous students coming from dysfunctional families, having some classes with less-than-terrific teachers, who work diligently and take on the responsibility for their own achievement. And they DO achieve—sometimes at the top of their class!

I agree that teacher preparation [different from the credentialing programs] is of utmost importance. California has a wonderful and successful program called Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment. I happen to be one of my district's Support Providers in this program. Teachers new to California or just exiting a credentialing program MUST be in this program for two years. It is excellent in every way, giving hands-on support and guidance to those new to the profession. Being in BTSA has increased teacher retention and the quality of beginning teacher instructional and disciplinary practices.

Perhaps Dr. Hanushek should conduct studies on how student self-responsibility and parent involvement affect student achievement!

—Karen Anne Donner, Foreign Language Dept. Chair
Western High School, Anaheim Union High School District, California



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This fundamental truth
is even more important
than the performance
of the teacher.

California Textbook Controversy - More Border Patrol Needed?

A Word From Our Executive Director, Gary Beckner



Gary Beckner

A couple of months ago I was interviewed by radio talk show host, Phillip Duncan, on his “Crux of the Matter” broadcast out of Phoenix, Arizona. The subject was the most recent controversial educational issue emanating from California—at issue was the California textbook review process that appears to have run amuck. By the end of the broadcast, Phillip and I agreed that the best thing President Bush could do for public education was to beef up our border patrol—not between the U.S. and Mexico or Canada, but between California and the rest of the nation! We must find a way to keep California’s loopy ideas confined within the state. Unfortunately, most of California’s educational fads infect the rest of the nation just about the time Californians are figuring out they don’t work.

Fox Television news broke this story back in May and soon news sources all across America jumped on it. It is an unabashed example of just how politically correct California has become. It was accurately reported that the state textbook review committee had arbitrarily changed or eliminated references in public school textbooks that encompassed everything from the Founding Fathers to hotdogs. In an effort to choose alternative terminology that would not be offensive to particular subgroups, the committee ended up offending the majority of Californians and became the joke of the week on many national talk shows.

As Fox News reported, “The laundry list of words and images banned or considered offensive is not a short one.” As an example, the word “jungle” has been replaced with “rain forest,” which would make it difficult to refer to one of Ruyard Kipling’s best works! Another example of the committee’s misguided good intentions is that the word “devil” has been exorcised entirely, with no word to replace it. I personally think this will please the Devil very much. This is a classic “only in Hollywood” scenario. Hollywood film studios are making tons of money featuring the “Devil” in all his ignominious glory, yet kids can’t hear his name in our public schools. How ironic!

interviewee. I’d like to see Jay Leno do a skit on that.

Scholar Diane Ravitch said in a Fox News interview that what has happened in California and other states is outright censorship. She added, “It dumbs down our textbooks, makes them bland and far less interesting than anything children might see in the movies – even G-rated movies or TV.” (see book review on page 8)

The sad part of this “story of the month” is that it will become just that to the media. However, most of you who are reading this article know that this is not an isolated aberration unique to California and that it has been going on for a long time and will only continue to grow. In fact, NCTAF, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (emphasis added), constantly emphasizes the necessity for teacher trainers and future teachers to exhibit the “correct dispositions” with regard to diversity. What does that mean? At one of NCTAF’s conferences, a presenter made it clear.

G. Pritchey Smith, an education professor at the University of North Florida, declared, “We should hire people who are antiracists and encourage them to create a new world order.” Smith added, “Many do not have the requisite attitudes and lifestyle diversity.”

I would agree that we should attempt to hire people who are not racists. But how would we determine whether a teaching candidate is a racist? That could even be a comical endeavor if we are not allowed to use any so-called politically incorrect and/or possibly inflammatory words in questioning the

The most ominous part of Professor Smith’s statement, however, is the bit about “requisite attitudes and lifestyle diversity.” These politically popular phrases trickle easily from the tongues of those who have embraced the decades-old philosophies of the education elitists of this nation.

In July 1934, at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the NEA held in Washington, D.C., in a report titled “Education for the New America,” Willard Givens (who was to become executive secretary of the NEA in 1935 and serve for 17 years) said:

A dying laissez-faire must be completely destroyed and all of us, including the ‘owners,’ must be subjected to a large degree of social control. ... An equitable distribution of income will be sought. ... [And] the major function of the

school is the social orientation of the individual. It must seek to give him understanding of the transition to a new social order.

In 1940 the NEA began promoting its “Building America” social studies texts, which quite ironically, a California Senate Investigating Committee on Education later condemned for its not-so-subtle “support for Marxism contrary to prevailing American values.”

In 1946 the NEA printed “National Education in an International World,” which reads, in part, “The establishment of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization [sic] marks the culmination of a movement for the creation of an international agency for education which began with a comity of nations.... Nations that become members of UNESCO accordingly assume an obligation to revise the textbooks used in their schools.... Each member nation, if it is to carry out the obligations of its membership, has a duty to see to it that nothing in its curriculum, courses of study, and textbooks is contrary to UNESCO’s aims.”

I could give you a year-by-year account of the seemingly inexorable march toward a one-world education system, but Dr. Dennis Cuddy at the University of North Carolina has done it best in a 200-year chronology of education, re-released in an abbreviated book entitled *NEA: The Grab for Power: A Chronology of the National Education Association*.

Suffice to say we did not arrive at this state of political correctness in our public schools by accident. California is leading the way, but it is by no means alone. **EM**

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Quote of the Month

“We are going back into the membership business.”
—National Education Association President Reg Weaver, during his keynote speech opening the 2003 NEA Representative Assembly

Editor’s note—

That begs the question, “What business has the NEA been in for the past forty years?”



America's Best Public Schools?

During June and July, both the reading and writing scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests were released. Widely considered to be the most reliable evaluation of the status of America's students, the NAEP tests also provide crucial information on achievement among various subgroups—in particular racial/ethnic minorities and the poor.

One set of public schools consistently show high achievement on the NAEP tests, and did so again in the latest reading and writing assessments. The Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) and the Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) serve the children of military members overseas and at home, respectively. Ranked against the fifty states and the District of Columbia, DoDDS schools ranked no lower than fifth in reading and writing among fourth- and eighth-graders. DDESS schools ranked no lower than fourth on the same tests.

Even more striking were the results for minority students when compared to their peers of the same racial/ethnic group, African-American and Hispanic students who attend Department of Defense schools ranked first, second, or third on each test. **EM**

Source—*The Education Intelligence Agency's (EIA) Communiqué*. EIA web-site: www.eiaonline.com.

Department of Ed Issues Second Annual NCLB Teacher Report

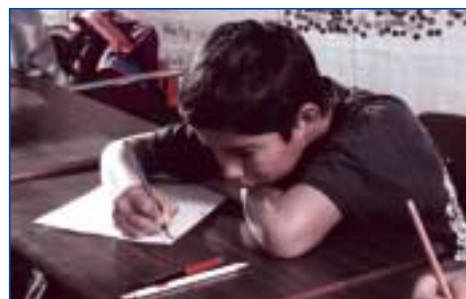
Many organizations have claimed confusion—some are actually confused, some are merely kicking up dust to obstruct the law—with regard to the Highly Qualified Teacher provision of No Child Left Behind. Last month, the Department of Education took aim at that confusion by issuing the Secretary's Second Annual Report on "Teacher Quality: Meeting the Highly Qualified Teacher Challenge." Written clearly and to the point, the report reflects

the Department's eagerness to support alternative teacher programs. It provides helpful and much-needed examples of innovative training programs that cut red tape for teacher candidates while simultaneously holding prospective educators to the highest standards.

Of most interest to the press, the Department calculates that only 54 percent of the nation's current secondary teachers meet the definition of "highly qualified." Moreover, seven states have more than 10 percent of their teachers on provisional waivers. While these numbers look daunting, they are all part of a concerted Department strategy to preempt bad news being announced by critics of No Child Left Behind, and more importantly, to prod states into revising arcane laws and regulations on teacher preparation and licensure.

For more information see "Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge: The Secretary's Second Annual Report on Teacher Quality" at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/News/teacherprep/Title-II-Report.pdf>. **EM**

Source—*The Teacher Quality Bulletin is a weekly e-mail newsletter by the National Council on Teacher Quality*. Web-site: www.nctq.org.



NAEP Writing Results

Like reading tests before it, results from the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing assessment offer optimism for young students but concern for high school seniors. Among the findings:

The average score of fourth-graders increased from 150 in 1998 (when the test was first administered) to 154 in 2002. Of NAEP's three achievement levels—Basic, Proficient, and Advanced—the percentage of fourth-graders reaching Basic rose from 84 percent to 86 percent, while the percentage reaching Proficient rose from 23 percent to 28 percent.

The average score of eighth-graders increased from 150 in 1998 to 153 in 2002. The percentage reaching Basic was unchanged (85 percent), while the percentage reaching Proficient rose from 27 percent to 31 percent.

The average score of twelfth-graders decreased from 150 in 1998 to 148 in 2002. The percentage of seniors reaching Basic fell from 78 percent to 74 percent, while the percentage reaching Proficient was unchanged (24 percent).

From 1998 to 2002, the average scores of white, black, and Hispanic students increased in both fourth- and eighth-grades, while the averages for all three groups were unchanged in twelfth-grade. The racial/ethnic gaps in average scores remained about the same, but for a significant decrease in the white-black gap in fourth-grade.

State-by-state results show variations in average scores, the proportion of students reaching the different achievement levels, and the achievement of particular groups of students, like those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

For more information, please go to <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/writing/results2002/>. **EM**

Ready to Rumble over Ready to Teach

By an overwhelming margin, the U.S. House of Representatives has raised the stakes on teacher preparation. The Ready to Teach Act, passed last month by a 404-17 vote, would make the passage rate of graduates of teacher training colleges a factor in awarding federal dollars to those institutions. More importantly, it would allow the achievement gains of a teacher's students to be one way of determining whether that teacher is "highly qualified." The bill would also encourage alternative certification, the easing of barriers to removing ineffective teachers, and merit pay system based on student achievement gains. After all, what's important is not whether teachers pass tests, but whether their pupils do.

To sweeten the deal, a companion bill, the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act, more than triples the current education loan forgiveness for math, science, and special ed teachers in Title I schools, from \$5,000 to \$17,500. The National Education Association and the American Council on Education both say they're in favor—while calling for excision of the offending section on test passage, merit pay, etc. ACE president David Ward worried somewhat vaguely that the bill "will create a misleading perception of the quality of teacher education programs." But the NEA flatly urged the House committee to "strike provisions referring to merit pay, teacher advancement, and teacher removal;...to address the incongruities associated with the current law's references to highly

qualified teachers; and to reduce cumbersome reporting requirements”—essentially, to gut the bill of anything but federal handouts. Look for this issue to heat up in the Senate this fall. **EM**

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

KIPP: Breaking the Mold

What would you say if your school district had just hired several new principals with an average age of 27, none of whom had majored in education, and weren't even certified to teach? Not a problem in Atlanta apparently. This week, the city is celebrating the opening of three new KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) schools. The schools are based on a program that includes an extended school day, bimonthly Saturday classes, and performance contracts from students. To enact its demanding program, KIPP makes frequent use of some very fresh young blood to run its schools. And how are the results? Well, rather spectacular: KIPP schools routinely outperform other urban schools on standardized achievement tests. **EM**

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

Continuing Questions for and Answers from the U.S. Department of Education on NCLB—

Question: What happens when a state identifies a school as in need of improvement?
USDOE Answer—

When a state identifies a school as in need of improvement, school officials are required to work with parents, school staff, the local education agency, and outside experts to develop a plan to help the school get back on track. Here's a quick look at some of the activities that are part of that process:

LEA Provides Technical Assistance: The local education agency (LEA) must ensure that the school receives needed technical assistance as it develops and implements its improvement plan. Examples of technical assistance can include everything from help identifying problems in instruction or curriculum, to help analyzing and revising the school's budget so that resources are more effectively targeted to activities most likely to help students learn.

Develop Strategies to Strengthen Core Academic Subjects: The school's improvement plan must incorporate strategies, relying on scientifically based research, that will strengthen core academic subjects, especially the subject areas that resulted in the school's being deemed in need of improvement.

Help Teachers Improve Their Skills: A school in need of improvement must spend at least 10 percent of its Title I funds to improve the skills of teachers. Schools also are expected to incorporate a teacher mentoring program.

Increasing Parental Involvement: The school's improvement plan must include strategies to promote effective parental involvement in the school. **EM**

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Student (?) Aid in Higher Education

By David W. Kirkpatrick



David Kirkpatrick

Derek Bok's recently published *Universities in the Marketplace* expressed the former Harvard president's concern about the commercialization of higher education. In passing, he noted Harvard's endow-

ment of about \$20 billion. Because that wasn't part of his major thesis, he didn't pursue some of the implications of that fact. While other institutions don't enjoy Harvard's financial bounty, many have sizeable endowments and incomes of their own. So what is true of Harvard has proportional relevance elsewhere.

For example, at a modest 5 percent—and the stock market does better than that over time—Harvard's endowment would earn about \$1 billion a year. That should go a long way to funding the university and provide low- or no-tuition for most, if not all, students. Instead, Harvard's tuition is well into five figures and it still seeks to increase its endowment fund. It is the ultimate example of educators claim that they never have enough money.

Even when tuition started going up, increases were modest until the 1970s, a few years after the federal government, as well as the states and other sources, started providing financial aid to students. That two events happen in sequence isn't proof that there is a direct cause and effect but, at the very least, a rapid increase in college tuition following growing financial assistance to students is cause for suspicion. In the 1980s alone charges at public institutions rose at six times the rate of growth in family income. That was bad enough. However, at private institutions like Harvard, they grew at nine times the rate of family income, and it continues.

It's long been forgotten that Harvard went from 1928-1948 without raising tuition. In 1948 tuition was \$425. In 1958 it was still only \$1,250. Today? Don't ask.

Howard Bowen, a college professor and university president, had it right in his 1980 book *The Costs of Higher Education*, when two of his five rules for funding higher education were: Rule 3, each institution raises all the money it can; and Rule 4, each institution spends all it raises. Those rules likely apply to tuition as well.

Sadly, the public has bought into this. After all, unlike basic education, no one has to go to college. If they do go, they are not assigned to a specific campus or program against their will. Taxpayers who cry foul when a school district spends \$8,000 per pupil per year accept the fact that college tuition may be several times that amount. Even then, tuition rarely equals total per-pupil costs.

Perhaps the major example of this acceptance of being fleeced came when it was reported that a major university hired outside experts to review the institution and make suggestions for improvements. The final report said the university was already an excellent institution and included only one major recommendation: they should charge a higher tuition. Not because the money was needed but because the public thought they were not up to the standard of more expensive institutions. So raise it they did.

Basic education is subject to much criticism, and not without cause. But post-secondary education, which is both more expensive and less efficient, tends to get a free ride. Public school teachers put in a longer work week and 180 or more days per year, may have more than 100-150 students a day, or 25 students all day at the elementary level, plus numerous nonteaching duties such as home rooms, proctoring study halls, cafeteria or bus duty, etc. At the

collegiate level, the academic year is often 160 days or less (few notice it's been declining for years), and a professor's prestige is often in inverse proportion to the number of students the professor has with the most prestigious not teaching any classes. To assign them some of the duties of a public school teacher would start a revolt. Even the postsecondary teachers of education courses don't have to be certified to prepare their students for certification.

Where is the educational sense of that? Not to defend the certification process, but if certification is not needed for the teachers

of teachers, why is it needed for teachers? The answer, apparently, as seems to be true for most of the schooling process at all levels, is that it is done this way because it is done this way.

Among other questions never asked of higher education is why, with few exceptions, does an undergraduate degree take four years? Clearly it's an institutional rather than educa-

tional requirement. Even if a four-year program can be justified, why must every student take four years regardless of their knowledge, intelligence, and other factors?

It couldn't be because it's a professorial jobs program, could it?

In fact, why a four-year program at all? That answer is known.

Harvard originally adopted a four-year program because that was the sequence in British universities at the time. As other American colleges and universities came

along, they merely copied Harvard's format. The irony is that the British universities long ago went to a three-year program and their graduates seem to have no problem being accepted. Yet, as other American colleges and universities came along, they copied Harvard, clearly a carefully thought-out and research-based approach.

Education is essential. Some schooling is not. **EM**

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

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Give Charter Schools a Fair Evaluation

By Jay P. Greene and Greg Forster

For years the defenders of the education status quo have bashed charter schools by claiming their test scores don't measure up to those of regular public schools. But comparing charter schools to regular public schools is like comparing apples to zebras, since many charter schools target disadvantaged student populations. A new study by the Manhattan Institute, "Apples to Apples: An Evaluation of Charter Schools Serving General Student Populations," the first-ever national empirical evaluation of charter schools, shows that when we compare apples to apples, charter schools produce moderately better test score improvements.

Charter schools are public schools that are schools of choice (rather than having assigned students). They are also exempt from many of the procedural regulations that apply to regular public schools. There are now nearly 2,700 charter schools across the country, educating more than 684,000 students.

Until now little has been known about their academic performance. That's because in most states the process by which charter schools are created gives preference to schools for disadvantaged populations like at-risk youth and disabled students. While it is understandable that school reforms would target underserved populations, this makes it problematic to accurately measure charter schools' performance. Since charter schools tend to have many more educationally disadvantaged students, drawing a simplistic comparison between all charter schools and regular public schools is unfair.

Not that this has stopped the education establishment from drawing such comparisons. They trumpet charter schools' lower test scores without saying much about the demographic realities that underlie those scores. For example, Francis X. Clines pointed out in a recent *New York Times* article that nearly two-thirds of Texas schools rated as low-performing are charter schools. Clines made no mention of the enormous number of Texas charter schools that are targeted to at-risk youth and other educationally disadvantaged populations. His readers were left with the impression that charter schools have lower scores because they provide an inadequate education.

A new study by the Manhattan Institute shows just how unfair such comparisons are. Unlike previous national studies of

charter schools, we exclude all schools that are targeted to educationally disadvantaged (or, much less frequently, educationally advantaged) populations. Our study includes only charter schools that serve student populations that are comparable to those found in regular public schools. To further ensure that we are comparing apples to apples, we matched each charter school with its nearest regular public school.

We find that charter schools show test score improvements over a one-year period that are moderately better than those of regular public schools serving similar populations. Charter school improvements were better than those of regular public schools by the equivalent of 3 percentile points in math and 2 percentile points in reading for students starting at the 50th percentile. The difference is modest, to be sure, but it is statistically significant.

There are several possible explanations for the greater gains in charter schools. With

fewer burdensome regulations, charter schools may be able to teach students better. As schools of choice, charter schools may also allow more efficient matching of particular students' needs with particular schools' capabilities.

But the modest size of the charter-school benefit suggests that charter schools still face significant obstacles to more effective reform. Charter schools, although exempt from many regulations, are still subject to significant regulatory burdens. Another

possibility is that curriculum innovation may be limited in states where charter schools are required to give a high-stakes test geared to a state curriculum. Finally, the most important factor limiting the performance of charter schools may well be their newness. As charter schools get older, their advantage over regular public schools may grow.

In any case, the teacher unions and their allies should stop using raw test scores to claim that charter schools provide an inferior education. When we compare only the test score improvements from schools that serve similar populations, charter schools are not only just as good as regular public schools, they're better. **EM**

For a copy of "Apples to Apples: An Evaluation of Charter Schools Serving General Student Populations," please go to: http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_01.htm.

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The True Meaning of Patriotism

(Continued from page 1)

This brand of patriotism, in fact, gets me through the roughest and most cynical of times. My patriotism is never affected by any politician's failures, or any shortcoming of some government policy, or any slump in the economy or stock market. I've never felt my patriotism to be for sale or up for a vote. I never cease to get that "rush" that comes from watching Old Glory flapping in the breeze, no matter how far today's generations have departed from the original meaning of those stars and stripes. No outcome of any election, no matter how adverse, makes me feel any less devoted to the ideals our Founders put to pen in 1776. Indeed, as life's experiences mount, the wisdom of what giants like Jefferson and Madison bestowed upon us becomes ever more apparent to me. I get more fired up than ever to help others come to appreciate the same things.

During a recent visit to the land of my ancestors, Scotland, I came across a few very old words that gave me pause. Although they preceded our Declaration of Independence by 456 years, and come from 3,000 miles away, I can hardly think of anything ever written here that more powerfully stirs in me the patriotism I've defined above. In 1320, in an effort to explain why they had spent the previous thirty years in bloody battle to expel the invading English, Scottish leaders ended their Declaration of Arbroath with this line: "It is not for honor or glory or wealth that we fight, but for freedom alone, which no man gives up except with his life."

Freedom—understanding it, living it, teaching it, and supporting those who are educating others about it. That, my fellow Americans, is what patriotism should mean to each of us today. **EM**

Lawrence W. Reed is president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a research and educational institute headquartered in Midland, Michigan, www.mackinac.org. This essay was originally published for the June 2003 issue of the *Foundation for Economic Education's* journal, *Ideas on Liberty*, for which Mr. Reed writes a monthly column.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
To further ensure that
we are comparing
apples to apples, we
matched each charter
school with its nearest
regular public school.

Historic Partnership to Improve Educational Achievement for Hispanic Americans

The White House Initiative on Education Excellence for Hispanic Americans and some of the nation's leading Hispanic organizations, corporate leaders, and national private entities have formed Partners in Hispanic Education, dedicated to improving education for Hispanics in the United States.

This partnership includes the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC); USHCC Foundation; MANA, A National Latina Organization; Girl Scouts of the USA; Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU); National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP); State Farm Insurance Companies; IQ Solutions; League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR); United States Army; and the National Association of Hispanic Publications (NAHP).

"The partners realize that there is no more significant cause to champion than education," said Adam Chavaria, associate director of the White House Initiative. "No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the most sweeping educational reform in more than three decades and the product of strong bipartisan support, provides the foundation and represents an unprecedented opportunity for all Hispanics—our nation's largest minority group—to attain a quality education."

The goal of this effort is to empower the Hispanic-American community by equipping families with educational tools and informational resources afforded under NCLB to assist them in becoming stronger advocates for their children's education from early childhood to college completion.

The partners will work with local communities to reinforce positive expectations that include educational excellence, academic attainment, parental involvement and awareness, academic preparation, mentorship, engagement of the business community, accountability, and enrollment in college.

To accomplish these goals, partnership participants have committed to host education programs in six pilot cities over the next several months. Each will involve a series of events including town hall meetings; educational workshops for parents, students, educators, and business and community leaders; and a seminar on student financial aid and scholarships.

The first event is scheduled for October 18th in San Diego, California. Additional pilot cities include Miami, Florida; El Paso, Texas; Las Cruces, NM; Tucson, AZ; Detroit, MI; and the Bronx, NY. **EM**



The Language Police— How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn

by Diane Ravitch

Historian and New York University Research Professor of Education Diane Ravitch has done it again. That is, she has managed to identify another major problem with the ability of our public school system to adequately educate America's children.

The author of seven previous books on education, including the critically acclaimed *Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform*, Dr. Ravitch demonstrates in *The Language Police* how powerful political forces dictate what our children are learning. She makes a strong case that efforts to sanitize textbooks do not advance learning or bolster test scores, the very reason given for banning



allegedly insensitive words and topics.

When Diane talks, people listen. It is hard to argue with her conclusions as supported by the data. Diane Ravitch's fair-minded apolitical reputation goes before her. She was assistant secretary in charge of research in the U.S. Department of Education during the George H. Bush administration, and was

appointed to the National Assessment Governing Board by President Clinton.

This book should be required reading for all caring teachers and education reformers. **EM**

The Language Police is available at most major book stores and online services. It is published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York.



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