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NATIONAL

1. Christian Science Monitor

May 21, 1997

Do Standards Push Yoshi To Whip Johnny in Math?

Scott Baldauf

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

BOSTON — Johnny may whoop and holler about the A he got in mathematics. But when he finds out what it takes to get by in Japan, Germany, and France, he may suddenly grow quiet.

A comparison of each country's college-entrance exams offers a new way of ranking the educational systems of the United States and its economic competitors. Indeed, these tests, which serve as the stern gatekeepers of higher education, may offer the clearest look yet at how the world's industrial powers prepare their students for college.

An examination of American tests such as the SAT and the entrance exams of France, Germany, and Japan shows a huge gap in expectations, performance, and consequences.

Japanese students are expected to know higher levels of math, including calculus; American students can stick to ninth-grade algebra and geometry. French students must explain their answers in depth; Americans can guess at multiple choice. Germans who fail their exams don't go to college; Americans who do poorly on the SAT just choose to attend a less choosy school.

In a new study, "What Students Abroad Are Expected to Know About Mathematics," the American Federation of Teachers suggests that a single set of academic standards may be the reason students from the world's industrial powers are prepared to tackle tougher math tests.

"The difference is that these other countries all have ... a common curriculum, tests based on the curriculum, and incentives for students to work hard in school," says Sandra Feldman, the new AFT president. "There is no parallel in the United States, so it's no surprise that our students don't perform as well."

Study authors say the findings add weight to President Clinton's argument that the US needs higher academic standards and rigorous national tests. He links improved education performance to America's ability to power an Information Age economy.

"Other countries have national standards, and they're very demanding," says Matthew Gandal, an AFT official in Washington and author of the study. "Here in the US, we have 50 different standards, and they are pretty weak. We're hoping people in the various states will take a close look at these standards [from France, Germany, and Japan] and make sure their own measure up."

THE differences are striking between the US and the educational expectations of its competitors:

- * French, German, and Japanese students are at least a year ahead of American students, studying algebra and geometry in eighth grade while Americans are lingering over rational numbers, fractions, and exponents.

- * In France, Germany, and Japan, up to half of all students take rigorous

nationwide college-entrance exams in math. About 41 percent of American high school seniors took the SAT last year, but the AFT study finds the math section to be only at the ninth-grade level. Only 4 percent take the Advanced Placement test, which comes closest to matching the rigor of foreign entrance exams.

- * Tests in France, Germany, and Japan have clear consequences, determining whether a student will go to college. In the US, tests have few consequences, and students can usually find a college to accept them.

Raising academic expectations may be the best hope for turning around poorly performing schools, both in the suburbs and in the inner cities, advocates for standards say.

But other educators say there are no simple answers to the nation's educational problems, and standards make up only one part of the equation.

"The assumption is that if we put these systems into place, we'll have motivated students because there will be consequences," says Charles Abelman, an education professor at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass. But not all teachers will be able to teach the material, not all schools will have the resources or the capacity to boost their curricula, and not all students will arrive in the building ready to learn, he says.

■

2. Forbes

June 2, 1997

Trustbusters

Do it yourself: State governments for choice

By Susan Lee and Christine Foster

PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION is like the weather: Everybody complains

about it, but nobody does anything. They figure that there's no way they can buck the monopoly held by the teachers' unions and the educational establishment.

Not quite right.

Say hello to Virginia Gilder, who is about to liberate 153 kids from the atrocious Giffen Memorial Elementary

School in Albany, N.Y. Gilder, a New York City investor, is offering their parents vouchers to pay for 90% of the cost of private school, up to \$2,000 a year for each student, for a minimum of three years and a max of six years. Parents will pay the rest from their own funds or from money raised by churches or neighborhood groups.

Giffen, with 458 eligible kids, is one of the worst public schools in New York State—and that's quite a claim. Over the last five years, on average, only half of its third-grade students were able to read at the state's minimum standards. It's also within spitting distance of the State House, where last year the Board of Regents refused to recommend a voucher plan using public funds.

Gilder comes from a blue-collar family and neither parent went to college. From personal experience she believes that education is the only path to a competent, productive life in modern society. "Maybe I didn't make the best of my college education, but I was exposed to bigger possibilities because of it," she says.

Like other privately funded voucher programs, Gilder's is aimed at low-income students—about 96% of the kids at Giffen are eligible for the federal school lunch program. (Gilder's program is run under the auspices of A Better Choice, based in Albany.)

Unlike other programs, however, which offer private-school tuition for students in an entire district through a lottery, Gilder decided to focus on one school. She thought it was fairer—everybody in the school could choose to leave—and it would have more impact. "If four or five students fade out of a public school, nobody notices and it's easier for the school to go about its business as usual; but if a big bunch leaves, the message can't be ignored," she says.

Virginia Gilder's offer attracted 33% of the Giffen student body. Yep, one-third of Giffen parents—given the choice—decided to switch. Not even the uncaring state legislators could ignore that signal.

Those parents, like Deborah Wilson, mother of Tiara Kennedy, 7, feel that Giffen just wasn't doing the job. "Giffen didn't really expect much," says Wilson. "Tiara got five spelling words each week. I felt she should have been exposed to more words. Then, later in the year, the same words were given again. That really bothered me."

For sure, Virginia Gilder's project is dramatic, and it's politically embarrassing to the New York State legislators who go about their business nearby while ignoring the plight of Giffen's students. But will it work?

Like gangbusters.

Look at what happened in Milwaukee, Wis., which started a publicly funded school-choice program in 1990. The experiment involved 1,000 eligible kids with vouchers worth \$2,446 apiece to pay for private schools.

Jay P. Greene, of the University of Houston, and Paul E. Peterson, of Harvard, studied the Milwaukee program. They found that after three or four years reading scores of low-income minority students were on average 3 to 6 percentage points higher and math scores were 5 to 11 points higher than those of comparable public-school students. "This is no small accomplishment," says Peterson. "If one extrapolated these results over 12 years, the difference between white and minority math scores would disappear entirely, and the difference between reading scores would be almost eliminated."

Virginia Gilder is not alone, either. In the past several years private voucher programs have been springing up across the country. Fritz Steiger of CEO America, a clearinghouse for private voucher programs in Bentonville, Ark., knows of 30 programs in 18 states. These include Texas, Indiana, Arkansas and Arizona, with other programs to start soon in San Francisco, Miami, St. Louis, Chicago, Baltimore, Dayton and Columbia, S.C.

Nationwide, 13,500 kids are using privately funded vouchers to escape from dismal public schools, and there are 40,000 on waiting lists. Steiger estimates that since 1991 more than \$40 million has been spent or pledged. This, of course, is only a drop in the bucket in a nation that spends almost \$300 billion a year on public elementary and secondary education, but it has already created a valuable demonstration project. A nation that has strongly opposed monopoly in industry is finally catching on to the danger of monopoly in education. Virginia Gilder and people like her are modern trustbusters.

The largest private voucher program is Partners Advancing Values in Education (PAVE) in Milwaukee, which began in 1992, two years after that city's publicly funded school-choice experiment started. This year PAVE is spending \$4.2 million

to give scholarships to 4,300 kids for mostly Catholic and Lutheran schools, but also Jewish and Muslim—as well as secular ones. Vouchers average \$821 for elementary and \$1,450 for high school.

Sorry record The second-largest private voucher program is School Choice Scholarships Foundation in New York City. It was the idea of Bruce Kovner, chairperson of Caxton Corp. When it began last year, the foundation had a war chest of \$6 million, but additional donations have pushed the sum past \$7 million; and Kovner expects to hit \$10 million soon, which will, most likely, be used to extend the number of scholarships.

The foundation has received about 23,000 requests for scholarships, and 1,300 kids were selected by lottery in May. The vouchers will pay up to \$1,400 a year for three years to kids in grades one through five stuck in the worst-performing New York City public schools. The kids then apply to private schools. "The participating private schools are mostly Catholic, Lutheran, Jewish and African-American, but almost no private school has refused," says Kovner.

The idea behind vouchers is simple: Break the lock that public schools have over poor and most middle-income kids. Like any monopoly, the public education trust serves its members rather than its customers. If they don't like the product, too bad. The monopoly position gives public schools little incentive to improve services; both students and tax revenue flow to them regardless of whether they are doing a good job. This absence of incentive is obvious in the numbers: Over the past 30 years test scores and other measures of academic achievement have headed south, while spending on elementary and secondary schools has streaked north.

The alternative, private school, is economically out of reach for most parents. Vouchers give them the financial wherewithal to opt out of the designated public school and put their children in a school of their choosing.

Vouchers—and the threat of losing tax money—are to the teachers' unions and bureaucrats what the Bible is to Satan. Their widespread use would constitute one big kick in the pants for public schools to shape up to compete for students. The educational establishment has fought most voucher plans paid for with taxpayer money. It cannot, however, prevent philanthropists like Gilder or

22. Education Daily

May 21, 1997

65 SCHOOLS JOIN DSL IN PROGRAM'S FOURTH YEAR

Little more than a month before the fourth year of the Direct Student Loan (DSL) program is to begin, the Education Department has 65 new schools signed up to participate, well below ED's ambitious plans.

Of the schools that have signed new participation agreements, 33 had been pre-approved for the third year and deferred to this year. Only 32 new institutions signed on since last year, according to a list released yesterday by the department.

ED has yet to say how many of the 1,290 schools actively participating in DSL will be returning. Most still have students with loans through the competing Family Education Loan (FEL) program.

Hesitant To Name Names

After repeated requests by Education Daily, ED produced a list of participants Tuesday, about 30 days before schools are scheduled to begin drawing down student loan funds.

"We're trying not to put the names out so soon," said Elizabeth Hicks, ED's deputy assistant secretary for student financial assistance, in an interview last week.

Forty-nine of the new schools are

proprietary schools. The General Accounting Office released a study earlier this year showing that out of 1,622 DSL schools it counted, 914 were proprietary schools (ED, Feb. 6).

Since proprietary schools traditionally have higher student loan default rates than traditional two-year and four-year public institutions, critics say the high number of for-profit schools in DSL threatens its stability.

For the first three years of DSL operation, the department updated a list of qualified participants on a monthly basis.

Recently, ED was criticized for producing one large list of eligible schools—giving a misleading picture of the number of schools enrolled in DSL—instead of listing only institutions active in the program.

"We're trying to be more realistic and more helpful," said a department spokeswoman. "They don't want to put out a list of those just intending" to participate.

Sources in the higher education community had predicted the number of schools signing up to participate in the fourth year of the loan program would be

"embarrassingly" small.

ED accepted 104 schools in the first year, 1,495 more in its second year and 408 schools for year three. A number of schools applied, but deferred participation until a later date.

As a trial program, Congress allowed DSL to have only 5 percent of new federal student loan volume in the 1994-1995 academic year, its first year. The maximum volume increased to 40 percent for its second year and 50 percent for its third year (ED, Oct. 15, 1996).

The current combined loan volume for the first three years of the program hovers around 30 percent, and ED hasn't released an estimate for year four.

When the program was launched in 1993, ED predicted DSL would handle 100 percent of student loan volume by the 1998-99 academic year (ED, Feb. 1, 1994).

Despite the relatively low number of DSL newcomers, congressional and higher education leaders support maintaining both loan programs. They agree that DSL's presence has forced FEL lenders and guarantors to beef up services to borrowers and institutions.

—Rebecca S. Weiner■

23. Education Daily

May 21, 1997

CBO PUTS 10 PERCENT TAB ON STRETCHING IDEA CATEGORY

Congress's number-crunchers estimate an upcoming change in how states may identify young children for special education will increase eligibility "by about 10 percent."

But it is unclear whether the Congressional Budget Office counted on all states exercising the authority the new Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will give them to use a "developmental delay" category for

children ages six to nine to qualify for services.

For federal funding to keep pace with the increase in eligibility, CBO says, Congress should spend \$200 million more on special education in fiscal 1998, and \$1.1 billion over the next five years.

A one-year, \$200 million increase would hike IDEA spending for school-aged children by 6.45 percent.

But federal funding per student covers

only about 8 percent of special education costs, and CBO didn't calculate state and local expenses based on the change.

States already are permitted to use the developmental delay category for children ages three to five. In 1994-95, they provided IDEA services to a total of 523,825 preschoolers (ED, March 21).

They served nearly 1.6 million disabled children ages six to nine that year.

Analysis In Question

The CBO staffer responsible for the analysis was unavailable for comment, but some advocates are criticizing his work.

Barbara Smith, director of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood (DEC), says a 10 percent guess is too high. The budget office explained in its report only that its projections "are based on the historical spending of programs authorized by IDEA."

The federal government provided \$3.1 billion to serve disabled children six to 21 in fiscal 1997, and \$360 million for preschoolers under IDEA.

Limited Application?

DEC reported last fall that only 36 states deem preschoolers eligible for special education by using a developmental delay definition alone. Seven more states employ the phrase with restrictions, such as requiring students to also meet criteria for one of IDEA's 13 specific disability categories.

States decide how to define a developmentally delayed child.

Instead of classifying a student as mentally retarded, they might say he deviates from the norm on two cognitive tests.

The House and Senate education panels say the definition could include a child experiencing physical, cognitive,

communication, social, emotional or adaptive development delays.

In their reports on the IDEA bill, H.R. 5, the committees say expanding the category up to age nine will improve services at a time when "it is often difficult to determine the precise nature of the child's disability."

Under current law, children ages six to nine may be deemed eligible for special education only if they fit neatly into one of IDEA's 13 categories, and if they need services to receive an appropriate education.

President Clinton is expected to sign the IDEA law early next month. —William J. Cahill■

LOCAL

24. The News and Observer

May 18, 1997 Category: Local

Is it time to stop busing?

Balancing act only gets more difficult. As courts dismantle forced integration across the country, some in the Triangle applaud — and embrace neighborhood schools. Others say the benefits of busing far outweigh the burdens?

BY TIM SIMMONS AND TODD SILBERMAN, Staff Writers

To people in the Triangle, the court order releasing Oklahoma City from its obligation to bus children in pursuit of integration was little more than a passing news story. Even those who cared deeply about busing couldn't decide whether the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in 1991 was historic or just a blip in the 40-year struggle to integrate schools. Then in 1992, the federal courts released Dekalb County, Ga., from its court-ordered busing plan. Denver and Kansas City followed in 1995. Then came Cleveland, Dallas and Seattle in 1996. It wasn't long before school districts busing children voluntarily also began to rethink their positions. Is it time to stop busing? That's a question now being discussed in hundreds of school districts throughout the country—including those in the Triangle. At a student reassignment hearing in April, Wake County parents passed out newspaper stories about the end of busing in Denver, suggesting that Wake should do likewise. During the search for a superintendent in Durham, questions of

classroom achievement and racial balance soon split the community and reignited a debate about neighborhood schools. And white families are not the only ones quick to question busing. While blacks have always held differing views on the value of the practice, minorities are now among its most vocal opponents. "Diversity is a wonderful thing," said Nellie Riley, a black parent and president of the Hillside High School PTSA in Durham. "But schools are about learning. Are we saying we can't educate our African-American children unless we mix them in with white children?" Her view is being echoed throughout the country and especially in the Triangle, where schools are finding it harder to accommodate growth and racial balance at the same time. That balance isn't just a problem for Wake County, where more than 4,000 children are added to enrollments each year. Counties that ring the Triangle are reporting annual increases of 500 to 1,000 students. Each time school officials redraw attendance lines to accommodate the growth, it

becomes more difficult to provide the stability parents crave and the integrated classrooms they say they desire. Even without busing, the changes needed to manage growth can trigger heated debates between parents and school officials. Adding busing to the mix makes it that much harder to keep parents happy—and, in turn, to keep their support. "The question of assigning students to schools is so critical and significant that we ought not be doing it today using yesterday's model and approach," said Bob Bridges, the only black superintendent to serve Wake schools before he retired in 1989. "You need to have a 1997 model. That means studying it all and putting everything on the table. I am not sure what the 1997 model is."

Pushing neighborhood schools

In some ways, looking for a new model is just another wrinkle in an education debate that traces its formal start to 1954. That's when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregated, dual systems of public education were

Assemblyman Dick Floyd (D-Wilmington) was the only dissenter in the 11-1 vote. He criticized Baldwin and

Goldsmith for meddling in local matters outside their districts, and said that incoming Los Angeles school Supt.

Ruben Zacarias should be given the chance to set a new course for the district without the burden of an outside audit. ■

30. Sacramento Bee

May 21, 1997

UC urged to give boost to low-ranking schools

By James Richardson
Bee Staff Writer

The elite University of California needs to step up its involvement in academically poorly performing schools to improve the chances of minorities entering college, a long-awaited UC task force report recommended Tuesday.

The report by a panel of 35 administrators, alumni, regents, business leaders and others was supposed to explain how UC will replace race- and gender-based standards in the admissions system that were abolished by the Board of Regents in July 1995.

"I have some hope for this," said Larry Vanderhoef, chancellor at UC Davis and a panel member.

But the recommendations were too cautious for Ward Connerly, who authored the ban on race- and gender-based preferences.

Connerly, a regent from Sacramento, said Tuesday that "in the evolution of my thinking" academic outreach programs targeted to specific racial groups should be permissible, a softening of his earlier position.

"It serves no purpose to go cold turkey on race when we know there is a humongous problem among blacks," Connerly said. "It might be foolish not to allow some targeting."

Other critics maintained that the task force's approach is too roundabout, and will not be enough to boost the number of African American, Latino and American Indian students entering the

nine-campus UC system.

"It's a decent approach, but where do they go from there?" said Joseph Jaramillo, an attorney with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. "They've abandoned targeting by race too quickly."

The regents will review the report at their June meeting at UC Irvine.

The task force's underlying premise is that by targeting poorly performing schools for improvement, UC will reach most of the minority groups that are underrepresented on its campuses.

The task force said that its review showed "a continuing pattern of differing outcomes for racial and ethnic groups in California's school system, with groups least represented in higher education concentrated in the most disadvantaged of (kindergarten through 12th-grade) schools."

However, other than providing faculty and research expertise, the report was not specific on how UC can help those schools improve. The UC system already spends about \$100 million a year in public and private funds for its academic outreach programs.

Richard Clarke, task force chairman and a retired executive with Pacific Gas and Electric Co., said he anticipated spending "tens of millions" more but did not put a price tag on it.

The task force called for UC

partnerships with schools, expanding existing programs and more aggressive education of students and parents about what they must do to become college-eligible.

Some members of the task force were still not pleased with the recommendations and were considering issuing their own report.

One task force member, UC San Diego Provost Cecil Lytle, the second-ranking administrator at that campus, has maintained that the task force's recommendations are really nothing new.

The school partnership approach is similar to an effort already under way by the 22-campus California State University.

Connerly said he fears such an approach will "reward mediocre schools."

UC Davis has already begun exploring partnerships with two high schools in the region in anticipation of the task force recommendations, Vanderhoef said. Administrators hope to meet with school officials before the end of the month to firm up the details.

The report also called for increased support for several current programs that target students by race. Vanderhoef was insistent that those programs should be subjected to closer scrutiny to determine whether they really work. ■

participation in the schools. The plight of a single parent who works and lives in downtown Raleigh was related to me. She has a child who was assigned to attend a school in Cary instead of a neighborhood school. To sign the child up for school, she had to take a taxi (she did not own a car) to Cary and back (\$20 each way). This parent was very concerned with her ability to pick up the child in the event he fell ill during school hours and her ability to participate effectively in the child's education. By limiting the ability of the parent to contribute to the school that her child attends, we as a society lose a valuable asset in the education system. This does not even address the financial burden

placed on parents to travel outside of their communities to participate in PTAs and other programs. Busing also means bus rides of nearly an hour for some students. The trip is in addition to the school day and requires a child to get up earlier in the morning and get home later in the afternoon, cutting into the child's sleep and study time. As a child, I can remember staying after school for sports activities, band lessons, school plays and other intramural activities. I was fortunate that my parents worked close to where I attended school (we lived in the country) and I was able to walk there when my activity ended. Busing either greatly reduces or altogether eliminates a child's ability to participate in before or

after-school activities. By limiting participation in these activities, we effectively deny children the opportunity of a complete education. The perceived benefit of busing is that it allows otherwise underprivileged children to attend schools that are viewed as better because of the neighborhood they are in. But in Wake County, the schools are all funded equally (based on enrollment) and not by the proportion of tax dollars collected in that specific community. Busing has been detrimental to our community schools and getting rid of it is a good starting place for taking back our educational system from the ever-encroaching administration. ■

29. Los Angeles Times

* 05/21/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Metro; Metro Desk; Page B-1

Legislative Panel Orders Audit of School District

By DOUG SMITH
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SACRAMENTO — After hearing allegations of funding misappropriations and retaliation against whistle-blowers, a state legislative committee ordered an audit Tuesday of the Los Angeles Unified School District to determine whether the law has been broken.

In a nearly unanimous vote, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee authorized a review of allegations that special education funds are being improperly used, and that those who report wrongdoing are subjected to such measures as transfers and false accusations of child abuse.

The decision was hailed as a vindication by several teachers and other school employees who had unsuccessfully pressed their grievances on the Los Angeles County district attorney, the state Department of Education and the state controller.

But by limiting the \$36,000 audit to special education and retaliation, the committee excluded some of the dissidents' well-publicized allegations, such as fabrication of enrollment numbers to gain state funding.

Assemblyman Steve Baldwin (R-El Cajon), who presented the request for an audit to the committee, said he narrowed its scope on the advice of the state controller's office to ensure its approval.

Assemblyman Jan Goldsmith (R-Poway), another of the group's

backers, said he now intends to pressure the district attorney's office to pursue a wider investigation.

"These things have been festering too long and they need to be properly investigated," Goldsmith said. "We need a parallel investigation by the D.A.'s office. That's their job."

District spokesman Brad Sales said the district has investigated all the complaints and has disciplined some employees who were found responsible for minor wrongdoing. He said no evidence of retaliation against whistle-blowers was found.

In a brief hearing, Assemblyman Scott Wildman (D-Los Angeles), the committee's chairman, allowed only three of half a dozen school district critics to speak.

Patrick Callahan, a former school psychologist, said he was transferred into an "isolation" job at administrative headquarters as a result of his complaints about failures in special education. He said he became physically and mentally disabled and eventually was terminated.

Sheila Hopper, a special education teacher, said she became the victim of a principal's retaliation after reporting misappropriation of funds and failure to test and provide required services to students with learning disabilities.

Hopper charged that the principal took five students for rides in her Cadillac to induce them to give false testimony and gave students prepared statements to

copy.

After police found no evidence to pursue a child abuse complaint lodged by the principal, the district conducted its own investigation and suspended Hopper for 15 days without pay, a penalty later reversed in arbitration.

In a subsequent civil lawsuit, a jury awarded Hopper \$50,000 in general damages and \$5,000 in punitive damages.

Hopper said the verdict was later overturned on technicalities, offering the district's appeal as one more example of its refusal to accept responsibility.

Another speaker, Selena Tucker, said she was demoted and had her workweek cut from 40 hours to 20 in retaliation for her complaints that led to the discovery of fraud at an adult school program. She said she reported a teacher who was soliciting indigent patients at Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center to sign papers indicating that they received instruction. Tucker said the classes consisted in some cases of films on health that some watched and others didn't.

No speakers opposed the audit.

District spokesman Sales said the district's general counsel sent a letter telling the committee it would cooperate fully with any inquiry.

"If they want to spend their money that way, that's their prerogative," he said. "We like whistle-blowers," he said. "We have a whistle-blower hot line."

have provided \$5 billion for school repairs. President Clinton embraced a similar idea in his State of the Union address but dropped it during budget talks.

These votes showed that the budget deal continued to remain intact despite the temptation to tinker. The agreement ranks as a major achievement for GOP leaders, and Clinton has called balancing the budget the paramount priority of his

second term.

"We'll give our country the first balanced budget we've had since the 1960s," said Clinton, cheering lawmakers on from an airport rally in Bridgeport, W. Va. "It's high time and I'm proud of it."

The package carries political victories for both sides.

Senate action on the budget deal was

just one step in a prolonged process. Congress later must take up 15 separate tax and spending bills that put meat on the bones of the budget outline.

In the House, work on the tax bill was expected to be fast and furious, as the Ways and Means Committee was expected to vote out a bill with \$135 billion in tax cuts offset by \$50 billion in revenues by June 13. ■

15. The Financial Times

05/22/97; Edition: London Edition; Section: NEWS: THE AMERICAS; Page 4

Mexican teachers in protest

By Leslie Crawford

Striking Mexican schoolteachers staged one of the largest-ever protest marches in Mexico City yesterday to demand a 100 per cent increase in wages. A breakaway faction of the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) called for a 24-hour national strike and said it had

brought 100,000 teachers from the country's misery belt — the poor, indigenous states of Oaxaca, Guerrero and Michoacan — to draw the attention of education authorities in Mexico City. Schoolteachers in Mexico earn less than \$360 (GBP 220) a month.

Dissident teachers claim their wages

have fallen by 60 per cent in real terms since the devaluation of the peso in December 1994. They have vowed to continue their protests until the government agrees to a better wage settlement. Leslie Crawford, Mexico City ■

16. Los Angeles Times

* 05/22/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: National Desk; Page A-23

AFT Says U.S. Lags in Math Teaching, Tests

By HEATHER KNIGHT
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON — In a study that it says reinforces President Clinton's call for national education standards, the American Federation of Teachers reported Wednesday that mathematics instruction and testing of U.S. students lags far behind that done in Japan, Germany and France.

Sandra Feldman, the new president of the teachers union, said that the United States should respond to the report not just by increasing math standards and expectations for students but by expecting more from teachers.

The report compared tests taken by students just before they enter high school and as they seek college admission and found that much higher percentages of foreign students are taking

and passing these exams.

For instance, the report said, 26% of German students, 36% of French students and more than 50% of Japanese students pass college entrance exams that contain a large math component. The United States' best equivalent to these exams—the advanced placement test for math which requires detailed subject knowledge—is taken by only 4% of students and passed by only 2%.

Japan, Germany and France all have national standards and Feldman said that this is a central reason behind their students' high performances.

"The difference is that these other countries all have systems of education aimed at getting more students to higher levels of achievement," Feldman said. "They have a common curriculum, tests

based on the curriculum and incentives for students to work hard in school. There is no parallel in the United States, so it's no surprise that our students don't perform as well."

According to the report, 75% of the union's members support Clinton's call for national standards, which would give states the option of administering national fourth-grade reading tests and eighth-grade math tests. With these national tests and such consequences as keeping those who fail them from passing on to the next grade level, students would know what is expected of them and "rise to the occasion," Feldman said.

Feldman said that efforts also should be made to upgrade the performance of U.S. teachers. ■

17. Detroit Free Press

May 23, 1997

Student seeks end to racially split school Separate-but-equal policy has support

BY GINA HOLLAND Associated Press

HERNANDO, Miss. — Hernando High has two principals — one white, one black. There are two homecoming queens and two class presidents, one of each race. The yearbook features a black Mr. and Miss Hernando High School next to their white counterparts. The students even choose class clowns and biggest flirts of each race.

Now, one student is challenging the practice, begun when the school was desegregated in 1970.

"I know that's not how it is anywhere else, and that's not how it should be," said Alison Williams, 17, an honor roll student who is the Latin Club president. She said living around the country and overseas with her Air Force family has given her a different perspective.

A junior, Williams first questioned school officials about the policy last year when she wasn't allowed to run for a student office because she is white and the rotating post was designated for a black that year.

"They said that's the way it's always

been, that's the way it's always going to be," said Williams, who was chosen this month by the entire 750-student body to the council presidency, which isn't selected by race.

Her mother, Beverly Williams, wants school board members to reverse the practice.

"I thought that was the whole reason we integrated — so everybody would be treated equal," Beverly Williams said. "They've moved everybody into one building, but we still have black and white."

Alison Williams asked the school board this month to end the practice, but the board has made no decision.

She and her mother are not contemplating legal action.

"Any challenge would probably face a difficult time in the courts simply because the courts have allowed schools a great deal of leeway in promoting the proper atmosphere," said David Ingebreetsen, executive director of the state American Civil Liberties Union.

So far, none of the other students or the 3,000 residents of the Memphis,

Tenn., suburb, have stepped forward to support the Williamses.

"This is just a big hype. There's nothing wrong with the system," said 18-year-old senior Keith Dockery, who is black.

Said Scott St. Aubin, 15, who is white: "They don't have anything else to complain about. It's not outdated. It's what's best here."

Theron Long, Hernando's white principal, says the practice teaches tolerance, and "students learn a great lesson by working together." He helped develop the plan to pacify blacks and whites when the all-white school was integrated in 1970 — the same year court-ordered desegregation was implemented in the state.

Harold Kinchelow, the black principal, said the policy worked so smoothly in the early days that "we just never thought about it" again.

"I guess it's time to do away with it because all these kids know each other and have no problem with each other," he said. ■

18. Associated Press

05-22 3:46p

Christian Coalition pushes constitutional change

By CASSANDRA BURRELL
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Christian Coalition began a nationwide campaign for a proposed "religious liberty" constitutional amendment on Capitol Hill on Thursday with hymns, charges of discrimination and calls for voluntary prayer in schools.

Backed by a gospel choir, Executive Director Ralph Reed said his group planned to make passage of the amendment in the House and Senate a top priority.

"We want to make it clear that we are no longer going to be treated as second-class citizens because of our faith," he said. "Our goal is to deluge Capitol Hill with petitions, telegrams and phone calls."

Washington was the starting point of the group's "Religious Freedom Ride," a one-day plane trip with stops in Cincinnati and Nashville to build up public support for an amendment affirming the right to religious expression on public property.

At the Cincinnati airport, Reed said he hopes the House will vote on the proposed amendment by this fall and the Senate by next spring, so that voters will know where their representatives stand on the issue.

"Many in our society have turned away from God, and left our children rudderless," Reed told a group of about 25 people in a motel at the Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky International Airport.

Supporters said children have wrongly

been barred from such activities as praying over lunches, reading Bibles on school buses and writing reports on Jesus.

It's clear that the First Amendment no longer is enough, the Rev. Earl Jackson said in Washington. He and other supporters asserted that over the past 30 years, courts and school districts have misinterpreted it, believing that it requires them to keep all traces of religious out of public view.

The Founding Fathers wanted freedom of religion, not freedom from religion, Jackson said.

"Somewhere along the way, the vision was blurred. Somewhere along the way, the voice was lost," Jackson said.

Opponents of the amendment called it a thinly disguised political power grab by

working to ensure that the next cohort of promising minority students receives top-flight preparation during kindergarten through grade 12, so that these children can get into the college of their choice meeting the same academic

standards as their Asian and white counterparts.

Thirty-five billion for education? Sure. But we should be pouring it not into some fat middle-class entitlement

whose only certain effect will be to inflate college costs for all but into the inner city, where the failure of government-run education is a disgrace to the nation. ■

69. The Washington Post

05/23/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: OP-ED; Page A28

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Crowded Classrooms

In response to the editorials regarding the Fairfax County Public Schools' search for a superintendent [April 7; April 15], the school board should hire someone willing to listen to the client and hold the interest of the client as the highest priority. The most important clients are, of course, the children in Fairfax County, who deserve the best education we as taxpayers can afford.

As indicated in a recent PTA survey, class size is the number one concern of parents in Fairfax County. The first priority of the new superintendent should be to work with the school board to relieve overcrowding in the schools, reducing class size in all schools to their optimal level and capping it. The Tennessee Star Project (1985) found that students in small classrooms (13 to 17 pupils) did significantly better than students in regular-sized classes (22 to 25), regardless of students' economic, racial or ethnic background. TD The student/teacher ratio in Fairfax

County's regular elementary classrooms (not those entitled to reduced K-3 initiative) started at 26.5 last September. Our elementary classrooms actually have a cap of 30 students in grades K-3 and an even higher cap of 35 students in grades 4 to 6. Classes of this size with children this young are an outrage. Even so, this overcrowding is not being addressed seriously. Without being addressed, it will not be remedied, and the situation will only get worse.

Class size was not addressed in the \$560,000 management review. That report compared the overall student/teacher ratio, which included special education, alternative education, etc. It does not address average classes and average kids.

I am not buying the assertion that smaller class size means a cut in programs, but as the report suggests, there should be program evaluation. Such an evaluation also should ask why programs proven to have profound

benefits for elementary age children, such as art and foreign language, are not in the regular curriculum. Our foreign immersion program benefits only 3,000 elementary students; that's why the MGT report suggested doing away with it — not because it isn't a great program. Art every other week is not enough for elementary schoolchildren.

We keep hearing how the school board wants public trust restored. I don't think it is lost, but here's a grand opportunity to secure it permanently: Implement and enforce a lower cap on classroom size.

Assurance of small class size in Fairfax County, now and in the future, is good for property value, good for business, good for teachers and most of all good for children. It is a real, nonpartisan solution to a multitude of problems we face concerning the education of our young.

SUSAN FRENCH OVERSTREET
Fairfax Station ■

EDITORIAL

70. Fort Worth Star-Telegram

May 23, 1997

University Quality

The University of Texas at Arlington's decision to raise entrance requirements for incoming freshmen makes excellent sense.

When a proposal to raise admission requirements at UT-Arlington came up a few years back, an idea endorsed by many faculty members, then-President Ryan Amacher vetoed the possibility.

Amacher reasoned that UT-Arlington

was already experiencing enrollment problems and that increasing requirements would simply intensify the difficulty.

But as was the case at many other universities at about the same time, enrollment took a dip anyway. Maybe it would have been worsened with higher standards, maybe not.

It's been our observation, however,

that the university's programs with stricter academic requirements seem to be in greater demand than those with lesser demands. Note the College of Nursing, or accounting or MBA programs, for appropriate examples of curriculums with high expectations.

Sometimes this is portrayed as a quality-or-quantity decision. But in our view, a university's reputation is its

industry, then maybe it's time for Strung-Out Barbie. No, on second thought, that's a little too realistic. The last thing that any responsible American wants to do is to glamorize the use of heroin. (These disclaimers are getting tedious, but I have to stress my sensitivity to the feelings of the disabled, the Gifford family, Lt. Flinn and all those fighting for a drug-free America).

President Clinton chastised the fashion industry Wednesday for magazine layouts that "have made heroin addiction seem glamorous and sexy and cool." This is a proper use of the moral

authority of the presidency, but I can't resist pointing out that this is a risk-free venture for Clinton since junkies are usually not a major voting bloc.

But if Clinton was playing the role of the Good Father, so too were the downtown fashion photographers performing to type. The entire self-justification of the youthful avant garde has always been to anger their elders. Heroin chic is indeed a grotesque way to achieve this requisite shock value, but the motivation behind this glorification of the drug culture is plain

old pay-attention-to-me rebellion.

So let's not delude ourselves into believing that after a few stern words from Clinton, fashion rebels will respond with an orgy of milk-and-cookies wholesomeness. No cutting-edge photographer will start posing his waif-like models in front of carousals and patriotic parades. Instead of heroin, they will quickly come up with a new way to outrage our solidly middle-class sensibilities.

On that excessively earnest note, have a great weekend. ■

68. The Washington Post

05/23/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: OP-ED; Page A29

Race and Classrooms

By Charles Krauthammer

The effects of affirmative action's slow death are beginning to roll east across the country from California. The University of California system is now prohibited from using race as a criterion for admission. The first results are now in. The Post reports that minority (black and Hispanic) admission to the freshman classes at UCLA's and Berkeley's law schools dropped 80 percent. At the University of Texas at Austin, minority admissions were down 85 percent in the law school and 20 percent in the undergraduate school.

Any drop in minority representation in such important institutions and professions is a serious national problem. What are we doing about it? What is at the heart of President Clinton's huge educational initiative — by his own boast, the largest single increase in higher education spending since 1945?

Answer: A \$35 billion federal giveaway to middle- and upper-middle-income college students.

Yet the great crisis in American education is not at the university level. It is at the elementary and high school levels, where thousands of kids — particularly inner-city minority kids — are getting educations so rotten that their entire life prospects are blighted.

What, after all, are the California and Texas experiences telling us? They're showing that under affirmative action large numbers of minority students were being admitted on the basis of race. Take away the criterion of race — as has now happened there — and four out of five

minority law applicants and one out of five Texas (Austin) undergrads who would previously have been admitted don't make it in straight-up color-blind competition.

This is a tragedy that cries out for remedy. Think of what Clinton could do with that \$35 billion. At \$35 billion over five years — \$7 billion a year — we could be giving 2 million inner-city kids an outright grant of \$3,500 per year to improve their elementary and high school education. (According to the Cato Institute, the average private school tuition is \$3,116.)

Now, we can argue left and right how to give it out: whether directly as a voucher to the child for private education or poured back into the existing system to improve the public schools.

I favor the former. But I'd be willing to try the latter. For example: For every class of 20 children, take the \$3,500 per child and offer it to some special top-quality teacher as a bonus — \$70,000 (\$3,500 x 20) per year on top of regular salary — for teaching in the toughest inner-city schools. Establish an elite corps of elementary and high school teachers who take on the hardest tasks in return for financial rewards 50 percent higher than those of a full university professor.

Or why not a grand experiment? In one part of the country a voucher system; in another a massive teacher incentive program.

Devise whatever program you want. But the point is to spend that \$35 billion where it is desperately needed, at the

pre-university level that is so obviously failing our minority kids.

Given (as the affirmative action proponents correctly claim) that under the new post-affirmative-action dispensation, minority enrollment in higher education will decline, why is Clinton lavishing money on an education initiative that promises to go down in history as the Aid to White (and Asian) Kids' Education Act?

After all, Clinton fancies himself the nation's great racial healer. His aides say he wants to leave his mark as the president who bridged the nation's racial divide. He himself speaks of that divide as the "constant curse" of America. And what does he do about it? An apology for the Tuskegee experiment. Fine. But this is typical of Clinton's no-cost, feel-good politics as therapy.

Therapy is nice. But what the kids of South Central could use are better schools.

The administration is talking, too, of launching a commission and town hall meetings on race. This follows three years of the National Endowment for the Humanities' "national conversation" on diversity. Yak, yak. As if in the land of O. J. and Rodney King and Fuzzy Zoeller and Jackie Robinson's 50th and Proposition 209 there is a lack of racial discussion.

The race problem in America does not need more conversation. It needs cash. Cash where it can make a real difference — in the schools.

If Clinton wants to attack the problem of racial inequality, he should be