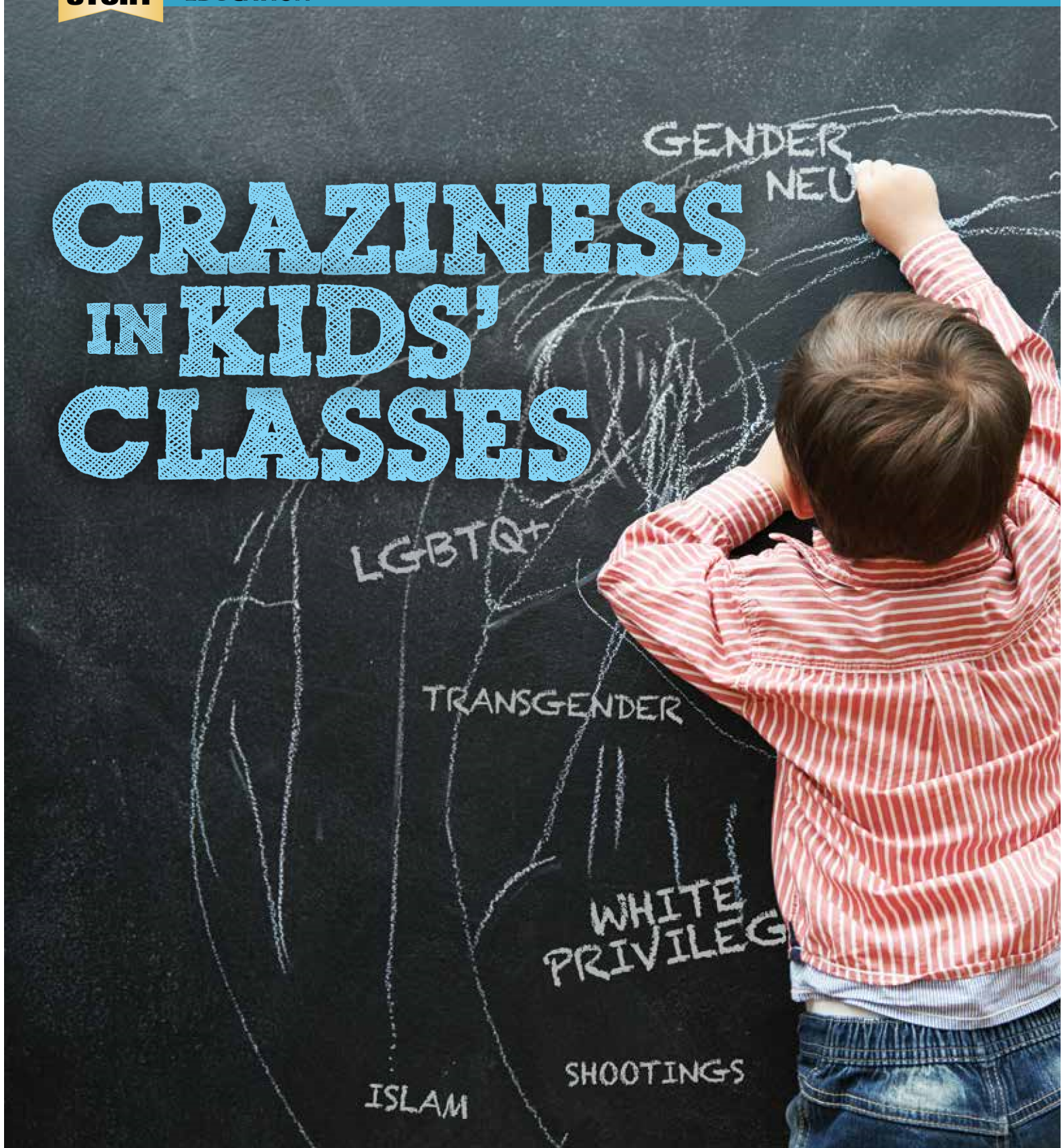


# CRAZINESS IN KIDS' CLASSES



Parents who went to public schools decades ago likely assume their children are receiving the same types of lessons and instruction that they did. They couldn't be more wrong.



by Selwyn Duke

If the “philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next,” as the apocryphal saying goes, then today’s Blackboard Jungle could lead us to a true dark age. This may seem an extreme statement to those whose public-school days are decades past. But just as entertainment has changed radically over that time period, with cultural effluent streaming out of Hollywood and leftist and libertine messages streaming into children’s minds, so has education — and just as much. In fact, what transpires in government schools today is so bizarre that sometimes you’d be inclined to say “You can’t make this stuff up” — except that someone did.

It’s appropriate to begin this exposition with a school policy that might have helped create a nation-shaking event: the Parkland, Florida, school shooting. The Broward Sheriff’s Office (BSO) was called to the home of the killer (as is my habit, I won’t use his name and provide him publicity) perhaps as many as 45 times during the past decade; additionally, the BSO received a warning that he “could be a school shooter in the making.” There were also warnings sent to the FBI. Yet while “South Florida police detectives have arrested a slew of young men in unrelated cases who exhibited similar, troubling behavior on a variety of charges,” taking “them seriously,” wrote the *Miami Herald* February 23, it “never happened with [the Florida shooter].” The reason why might not have just been garden-variety incompetence, either.

In 2010, I reported on the Barack Obama administration’s \$4.3-billion “Race to the Top” initiative, which involved an effort to reduce the suspension and expulsion rates of black and Hispanic students. In other words, the goal was to assign punishment based on quota. This was embraced by various school systems, such as that of Minneapolis, Minnesota, but was also likely inspired by one: Broward County’s.

As *Breitbart* reported February 26, “The Broward County school district’s adoption of a school discipline policy that was praised by the Obama administration for seeking to reduce the reported

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number of school suspensions, expulsions, and arrests may have played a role in the fact that [the Parkland killer] remained under the radar until his shooting rampage in Parkland, Florida, on February 14.” The social-engineering goal was to address the “school-to-prison pipeline” that, as the Obama administration’s theory goes, discriminates against minority and low-income students. Of course, following this logic, we could also say that the pipeline “discriminates” against boys — if obscuring the fact that boys commit more violent crimes than girls do were a priority (interestingly, the Left makes no effort whatsoever to muddy the waters on this disparity). *Breitbart* then quoted Manhattan Institute senior fellow Max Eden, who said that the Broward schools “decided to reduce police involvement by not bringing in cops to arrest kids for a whole range of serious offenses, and

then, as you would expect, the arrests go down when you stop arresting.” In Broward this was known as the “PROMISE” program. But how does this relate to the BSO’s failure to arrest the Parkland killer at his home?

As *American Thinker*’s Jack Cashill related February 26, quoting an old Associated Press article, “One of the nation’s largest school districts has reached an agreement with law enforcement agencies and the NAACP to reduce the number of students being charged with crimes for minor offenses.” By now you can guess what school district and law-enforcement agency are being referenced. Cashill also informed, “It is not hard to understand why Broward County officials would be eager to adopt this program. Miami-Dade had been receiving all kinds of honors for its efforts to shut down the dread[ed] ‘school-to-prison’



**The color of accountability:** Obama’s “Race to the Top” education initiative was really a race to the bottom. It encouraged the practice of punishing students based on racial quotas, a perversion of justice that might have made the Parkland shooting possible.

To explain non-Asian minorities' relatively poor academic achievement, Edina blamed "institutional racial bias" and one of the latest imaginary boogeymen, "white privilege."

pipeline. On February 15, 2012, Miami-Dade County Public Schools put out a press release citing a commendation the Miami-Dade Schools Police (M-DSPD) had recently received." Of course, you get more of what is rewarded — including criminal-enabling kid-glove justice.

Cashill points out that because the PROMISE program encompassed all "marginalized minorities," the Parkland killer's Hispanic last name caused him to fit the "metrics" of the collaborative school-police agreement, "regardless of his DNA."

The last part of this story involves Scot Peterson, the BSO deputy labeled a coward for not entering Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and attempting to stop the shooting. As Cashill writes, "What Broward County authorities did know is that the best 'school resource officers,' the euphemism for in-school sheriff's deputies, were those most sensitive to the objectives of the PROMISE program. It is hardly shocking that in 2014, the now-notorious Scot Peterson was named School Resource Officer of the Year by the Broward County Crime Commission for handling issues 'with tact and judgment.'" Cashill later quotes the *Miami Herald* and relates that in 2015, "A deputy investigated a report that [the Parkland killer] 'planned to shoot up the school' — intelligence that was forwarded to the school's resource officer, with no apparent result."

"That school resource officer just happened to be Scot Peterson," Cashill continued. "He did not err by letting this misunderstood Hispanic lad go unpunished in any meaningful way. Peterson showed his award-winning 'tact and judgment.' He had to understand that to keep the PROMISE momentum going, the school would have to see fewer and fewer arrests each year."



**The race to instill racialism:** Unbelievably, teachers in Edina, Minnesota, have K-2 students participate in the "Melanin Project," which encourages them to focus on race for the ostensible purpose of eliminating bigotry. One exercise has the children trace their hands and color them the pigment of their own skin.

Of course, the lesson here isn't that sending a child to a government school places him in the cross hairs of mass shooters; they are rare, and more American children are killed each year in pool drownings or bicycle accidents. It's this: Do you really want your child attending an institution at which on-site police are needed and which, especially in liberal jurisdictions, malefactors will be roaming free nonetheless because of criminal coddling masquerading as "tact and judgment"?

Moving on from the rare to the everywhere (in schools) brings us to the soul slaughter, the mind molestation, perpetrated by the malefactors known as educators. A prime example is the Edina school system, which was once the pride

and joy of Minnesota — until it exchanged that pride for prejudice. Now, wrote the *Weekly Standard* February 1, "Academic rigor is unraveling, high school reading and math test scores are sliding, and students increasingly fear bullying and persecution." What happened in this wealthy Minneapolis suburb? In 2013, school officials launched a full court press to achieve "racial equity," a euphemistic cover for hardcore leftist social engineering.

To explain non-Asian minorities' relatively poor academic achievement, Edina blamed "institutional racial bias" and one of the latest imaginary boogeymen, "white privilege." This isn't unusual today, but Edina has taken the philosophy to new extremes with a racial-identity-politics program called "All for All." The *Weekly Standard* provided some shocking details:

The Edina school district's All for All plan mandated that henceforth "all teaching and learning experiences" would be viewed through the "lens of racial equity," and that only "racially conscious" teachers and administrators should be hired.

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District leaders assured parents this would reduce Edina's racial achievement gap, which they attributed to "barriers rooted in racial constructs and cultural misunderstandings."

As a result, the school system's obsession with "white privilege" now begins in kindergarten. At Edina's Highlands Elementary School, for example, K-2 students participate in the Melanin Project. The children trace their hands, color them to reflect their skin tone, and place the cut-outs on a poster reading, "Stop thinking your skin color is better than anyone else's [sic]! — Everyone is special!"

Highlands Elementary's new "racially conscious" elementary school principal runs a blog for the school's community. On it, she approvingly posted pictures of Black Lives Matter propaganda and rainbow gay-pride flags — along with a picture of protesters holding a banner proclaiming "Gay Marriage Is Our Right." On a more age-appropriate post, she recommended an A-B-C book for small children entitled *A is for Activist*. (Peruse the book and you find all sorts of solid-gold: "F is for Feminist," "C is for...Creative Counter to Corporate Vultures," and "T is for Trans.")

At Edina High School, the equity agenda is the leading edge of a full-scale ideological reeducation campaign. A course description of an 11th-grade U.S. Literature and Composition course puts it this way: "By the end of the year, you will have ... learned how to apply marxist [sic], feminist, post-colonial [and] psychoanalytical ... lenses to literature."

The *Standard* reports that at the "Rate My Teachers" website, one student characterized a mandatory year-long English course thus: "This class should be renamed ... 'Why white males are bad, and how oppressive they are.'" Not surprisingly, like Joseph Stalin having dissenters airbrushed from history books, this review was later deleted. Speaking of books, one student reported an English teacher as having said that classic literature wouldn't be taught in class because "dead white men are boring."



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**From math to manipulation:** Schools once taught what can bind us together and applies to all, the objective. Now group-identity politics has led to group-identity curricula, with the notion that traditional teaching reflects "white supremacy." Oh, the three R's are still emphasized, but now they're racism, revisionism, and relativism.

And those who complained were dead to the educators. The *Standard* related stories of students being harangued by teachers for disagreeing with the school-state ideology. Most egregious, perhaps, was the plight of the Edina High School's unofficial Young Conservatives Club (YCC). After complaining on social media about a 2017 protest at a Veteran's Day assembly, during which leftist ne'er-do-wells showed great disrespect toward the national anthem and "Taps," they were threatened on YouTube and harassed daily by large groups of fellow students who surrounded them and used threats of physical harm to coerce them into changing their beliefs. The school's response was to disband the YCC and brush off its members' security concerns, "saying that [they had] brought it upon themselves by criticizing the protests," according to a legal complaint. Meanwhile, the leftist harassers escaped discipline. The conservative students have filed a federal lawsuit against the district for violating their rights of free speech and association.

As for classic literature being purged, Edina isn't alone — and, apparently, dead white women are boring, too. After all, Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, along with *Huckleberry Finn*, has been dropped from the curriculum in Duluth,

Minnesota, schools. It's part of "an effort to be considerate of all students," wrote the *Star Tribune* in February, as the books "contain racial slurs." In case you're wondering, the problem is a particular slur, the one disgorged continually in rap songs and by black youths in everyday banter.

Of course, being "considerate of all students," or being "sensitive" or "inoffensive" (whatever the excuse *du jour* is), is merely leftist pretext for purging tradition. Such claims presuppose that you can please all of the people all of the time, which here is impossible because most everyone is offended by something and most everything offends someone. It's always just a matter of choosing whom you're going to offend; leftists choose traditionalists.

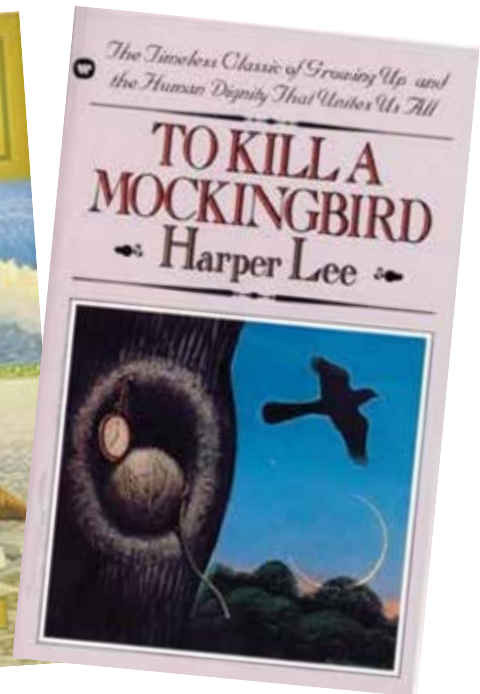
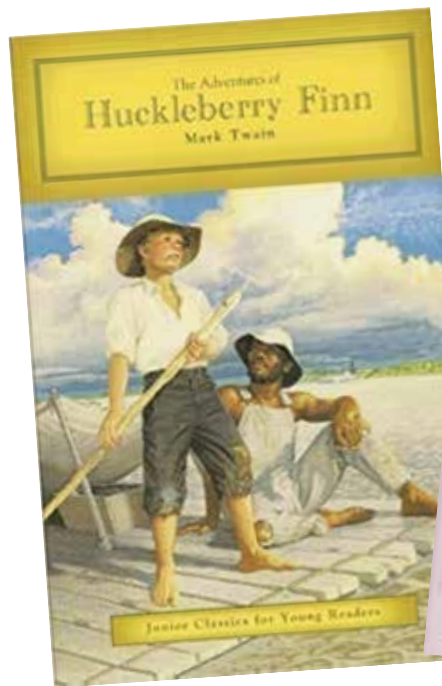
Another removal of *To Kill a Mockingbird* from curriculum occurred last year in Biloxi, Mississippi — and the locality was just joining the club. As the *Duluth News Tribune* reported in February, "The American Library Association listed the book as the 21st most banned or challenged book from 2000 to 2009, with 'Huckleberry Finn' topping it as the 14th most banned or challenged book in that decade." Interestingly, there is a good reason to remove *To Kill a Mockingbird* from curricula: It's a modern book — one of many which (*The*

*Catcher in the Rye* also comes to mind) supplanted better, more traditional works — and one which reflects and exacerbates our destructive obsession with race and “racism.” Of course, today it’s being purged for the wrong reasons and will only be replaced with more intensely racially obsessed material.

Then there are the schools that will still teach *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but try to kill sexual morality in the process. In West Bend, Wisconsin, for example, 150 Badger Middle School students who read the work were given a 55-item “privilege test” including questions such as, “I never doubted my parents’ acceptance of my sexuality,” “I have never tried to hide my sexuality” and “I feel comfortable with the gender I was born in.”

This obsession with sex is virtually everywhere. For instance, while classics are being culled, the “California State Board of Education voted Nov. 9 [2017] to approve 10 LGBTQ+-inclusive history textbooks for K-8 students, becoming the first U.S. state to do so,” wrote the *Daily Californian* at the time. Even before then, the Obama administration had issued 2016 guidelines stating that “transgender” students — that is to say, those masquerading as members of the opposite sex — should be allowed to use the bathrooms and locker rooms of their choice (e.g., boys in girls’ facilities). While this decision was reversed last year by the Trump administration, reversing the thinking of deluded and dangerous local officials isn’t so easy. Just consider a recent report about Delaware’s proposed “Regulation 225,” which would let state students “as young as 5 choose their own race and gender-identity — without approval from their parents,” reported Fox News February 20. Schools would also “be required to provide access to facilities and activities that are consistent with a student’s gender identity [fantastical self-image] — regardless of the child’s sex at birth,” Fox also related. “That includes bathrooms, locker rooms, team sports and adhering to the child’s preferred name. Under the proposal, students could also choose their own race.”

If that sounds nutty, it doesn’t have much on the aptly named Amy Ellis Nutt, a sexual revolutionary featured in a pre-Christmas-break, school-wide assembly



**Killing education — and poor Huck:** Mark Twain’s and Harper Lee’s famous novels have been banished from some curricula mainly because they contain a certain racial slur — the same one found in rap songs off which record producers make millions of dollars. Interestingly, while adolescents’ supposedly virginal eyes mustn’t gaze upon such trauma-inducing terms, the very same educators may ram the LGBTQ+ agenda and graphic sex education down the kids’ throats.

at a northern Virginia school. As non-profit lobbying organization The Family Research Council reported in January:

George Mason High School in the City of Falls Church brought in Nutt, a *Washington Post* reporter, to lecture students on her book *Becoming Nicole*, about a boy who “identified” as a girl as a toddler, had his puberty suppressed as a child, and was castrated as a teenager.

Nutt’s lecture hit all the usual notes. Your gender is “assigned at birth” by people who might get it wrong. Toddlers can be transgender. Moray eels change sex and female reef fish produce sperm when there are no males. “Gender is a spectrum,” everyone must get “comfortable” with new gender language that is “changing every day.” Asking a biological boy to use the teachers’ rather than the girls’ restroom is “bullying.”

Parents weren’t notified of the Nutt talk, mind you, students weren’t given the op-

portunity to opt out, and even some teachers were horrified.

The truth is that government schooling is a spectrum — one ranging from bad to worse. Parents in the Missouri locality of Bourbon learned this the hard way and probably needed a bourbon after discovering that their schools were “distributing surveys to children aged 10 and 11 asking whether they wanted to change genders. The controversial documents also asked the 6th grade students if they thought about suicide, using drugs, engaging in homosexual acts, and more,” wrote *The Newman Report* in January.

Then the *New York Post* reported in 2015 that in “October 2014, a school district in Nebraska circulated a handout that suggested teachers avoid ‘gendered’ expressions, such as ‘boys and girls,’ in case they alienate transgender students. The instructions, issued by the Lincoln Public Schools system, recommended using gender-neutral expression[s] such as ‘Calling all readers,’ ‘Hey, campers’ or something as nonspecific as ‘Purple penguins’ when telling kids to sit down on the rug for circle time.” Of course,



children usually learn to tell the difference between boys and girls at age two; now we have adults who can't tell the difference.

They confuse fact and fiction, too. I've often pointed out that there's no good science behind the "transgender" agenda (I won't elaborate here), that as former "transsexual" Alan Finch put it, "You fundamentally can't change sex.... Transsexualism was invented by psychiatrists." Yet children in government schools are still used as guinea pigs in this experiment. It just bears out what philosopher G.K. Chesterton noted in *What's Wrong With the World* (1910): "The trouble in too many of our modern schools is that the State, being controlled so specially by the few, allows cranks and experiments to go straight to the schoolroom when they have never passed through the Parliament, the public house, the private house, the church, or the marketplace."

Of course, something passing through the church today pretty much guarantees it won't be in educators' narrow marketplace of ideas. Just consider the following outrageous example, from the earlier referenced *New York Post* piece: "It's common for principals to favor 'holiday trees' instead of Christmas trees, but Nichols Elementary in Frisco, Texas, went one step further in December 2013. The colors red and green were banned from the school's Winter Party, and the children were not allowed to make any reference to Christmas or any other religious holiday. One teacher there wanted to add an Elf on the Shelf to her classroom — but decided against it in case she 'got in trouble.'"

Interestingly, though, teachers didn't have this fear at Chatham Middle School in Chatham, New Jersey, despite showing the children Muslim propaganda videos that included an explicit call to convert to Islam. Particularly egregious is a video the children were shown entitled "What is Islam? A brief introduction for Non-Muslims." As I reported in January, just consider the quotations from it below, presented to the students as facts:

- "Allah is the one God who created the heavens and the earth, who has no equal and is all powerful."

- "Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is the last and final Messenger of God. God gave him the Noble Quran."

- "Lo, We have sent thee (O Muhammad) with the truth, a bringer of glad tidings and a warner."

- "What is the Noble Quran? Divine Revelation sent to Muhammad (S) last Prophet of Allah. A Perfect guide for Humanity."

- "The Noble Quran: Guidance, Mercy and Blessing for all Mankind."

- "The Noble Quran: Without any doubt and an eloquent guide from Allah."

- "The Beautiful Quran: Guidance for the wise and sensible."

- "Islam: A shining beacon against the darkness of repression, segregation, intolerance and racism."

This is nothing new, however. WND.com's Bob Unruh reported in 2006 that in Nyssa, Oregon, students were being taught the "Five Pillars" (foundational beliefs) of Islam in such a way that a "lawyer who argued a previous dispute over this issue to the U.S. Supreme Court said such methodologies wouldn't 'last 10 seconds'

if it were Christianity being taught." As one upset mother, Kendalee Garner, put it, her 13-year-old son was being "indoctrinated that Islam is a religion of peace, and being dressed up as a Muslim, being taught prayers, and scriptures out of the Quran."

Tragically, schools today are intellectual wastelands where bad is called good and good is called bad. Here are some more examples of curricular craziness:

- Inmates running the asylum — it was reported in February that students at California High School in San Ramon chose to ban the National Anthem from high-school assemblies, claiming that the song's third verse is racist.

- Apparently, though, the students who read the anthem and are offended are in the minority, because official numbers showed late last year that most California children cannot read or do math at even a basic level.



**Transitioning to lunacy:** While Huck and Harper are out, a Virginia school did see fit to invite journalist Amy Ellis Nutt to indoctrinate its students with "transgender" ideology. The Nutt talk included the notions that "gender is a spectrum" and "toddlers can be transgender."



AP Images

**Get 'em young:** This is an educator in Claremont, New Hampshire, reading a left-wing book on bullying to young students. Though innocuous sounding, “anti-bullying programs” have become a Trojan horse through which the LGBTQ+ agenda is peddled to children.

- But the Golden State has nothing on Baltimore, Maryland, a third of whose schools had *no students proficient in math in 2017*.

- Washington, D.C.’s widely acclaimed Ballou High School found the solution, however, with its 100-percent 2017 graduation rate. It accomplished this by, in a brazen scam, handing diplomas to every single one of its many failing students.

- Then again, you could just keep the focus off the three R’s. The Conejo Valley Unified School District in California did this by exposing minors to pornographic material under the guise of teaching literature, creating a huge controversy, it was reported in December. Not to be outdone, it was revealed a month earlier that Georgia’s DeKalb County School District sparked its own fire by giving children as young as 11 work dealing with “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” — despite their parents having tried to opt them out. Also last year, the Rocklin Academy School in Rocklin, California, did likewise, enraging parents by introducing the subject of “transgenderism” to kindergarteners.

- Despite this, it’s often hard to get even an apology for such trespasses; nonetheless, one teacher’s students at Rockingham Middle School in North Carolina last year were expected to issue one — standing in front of the class — for being white

and Christian and having the “privilege” that supposedly bestows (they should just move to Delaware and identify as black Buddhists).

- But this isn’t the only school today where accountability (for *something*) still reigns. While education and police officials wouldn’t stop the Parkland killer, they did thwart eight-year-old Floridian Jordan Bennett in 2013, 10-year-old Ohioan Paul Entingh in 2014, and six-year-old Coloradan Elijah Thurston in 2015. All three boys were suspended from school — for pointing their fingers in the shape of a gun. It was not reported whether they possessed assault digits and armor-piercing nails.

- Then there are assault sandwiches. Most of the publicized perils of the quintessentially American PB&J had concerned only nut allergies. That is, until Verenice Gutierrez, principal of Harvey Scott K-8 School in Portland, Oregon, warned in 2012 that offering an immigrant student a peanut butter and jelly sandwich could be “racist.” This is yet another example of why I say — regardless of what’s on the menu — how anyone with a nut

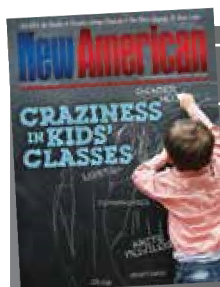
allergy could set foot in a state school and not experience immediate anaphylactic shock is beyond me.

- While this craziness could be remedied by a return to God, He is, again, unwelcome in today’s government schools. A good example came out of Indiana last year, when a McCordsville Elementary School first-grade teacher “sent home a letter asking kids not to talk about ‘God,’ ‘Jesus,’ and the ‘Devil,’” reported Fox59.com. So now, if Augustine of Hippo was right about evil being the absence of good, Satan can slither in subtly, wearing different labels and in guileful guises. Meanwhile, the only time we hear the Lord’s name in classrooms today is when it’s taken in vain.

Note that most of this essay’s examples of lunacy are from recent years not mainly because school political correctness is a worsening problem, but because there’s no shortage of such examples. This moral rot is everywhere in some measure, touching everyone. Thus it is true that if your child attends school, he will be indoctrinated and corrupted — all that varies is the degree of the soul-rending child abuse.

Why is this happening? There are many reasons, some deeper, some shallower; some more innocent, some more malevolent, but I’d like to examine the deepest one: philosophical corruption. Let’s start with an analogy.

Imagine you were formulating a diet for children. Recognizing that laws of human nutrition exist, you’d apply them as best you knew them. For example, we need a certain number of calories to survive, all 13 required vitamins, the necessary minerals, complete protein, etc. Moreover, you’d stress the ingestion of healthful foods whether you or the kids liked them or not, as such a practice accords with the Truth of the matter. What would happen, however, if you fell victim to the delusion that nutritional laws didn’t exist, that everything was a matter of “perspective”? How would you then determine diet?



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You'd have nothing left to use as a guide but taste — if it feels good, eat it. Then you perhaps start giving the children what they like, not what they need; or maybe you banish your grandmother's "tried and true" foods because you happen to despise them. Out with the old and in with the new, alluring, factory-engineered, processed formulations! It might be cake for breakfast and ice cream for dinner, and diets would quickly devolve until junk food reigned supreme.

In a sense, this is precisely what's happened today on a moral level. I often cite the 2002 Barna research group study showing that most Americans do *not* believe in Truth (absolute by definition) and are most likely to make what should be moral decisions based on *feelings* — on what "tastes" right, in other words. This phenomenon is only getting worse, too. Barna's data indicated that each succeeding generation is more relativistic/nihilistic than the previous one, with only six percent of 2002's teens believing in Truth.

The point is, however, that if Americans

are making decisions based on feelings, decisions on curricula are no exception (in fact, this problem is most acute in highly secular academia). What does this breed? Well, without the objective as a yardstick for determining what's taught, likes and dislikes (fashions) are all that remain. Preference supplants principle; taste subordinates Truth. So in the curricular "diet," you start giving kids what they like, not what they need; if something "offends" them, it is discarded, having been judged "bad" by now-deified feelings. Or the feelings of the ideologues in control hold sway, and they may banish their grandfather's tried and true educational paradigm because they despise it. Of course, in-fashion (liked) groups get what they want, too; hence "Afro-centric curriculum" for blacks, feminism for girls, "LGBTQ+" pablum for the ever-burgeoning alphabet crew, etc. "If it feels good, teach it" creates an intellectual junk-food wasteland.

What is the solution? We must return to basics, of course, but this is more than just the three R's. Nothing is more basic than the universal, eternal and unchanging: Truth. There is no such thing as a

"value free" education, and this is why the values instilled must not be values, but what the Founding Fathers and other great men of Christendom stressed: virtues. "Values" is, essentially, a synonym for "taste," not good by definition, but *neutral* (Mother Teresa had values, but so did Hitler). Virtues, however, are that set of "good moral habits." Just as nutritional rules eliminate guesswork and inform about what to feed the body, virtues do likewise and relate what to feed the mind and soul. Some examples are justice, fortitude, temperance, diligence, faith, hope, and prudence.

Speaking of which, prudence dictates that the now old advice, "Stay in school, kids," has become a recipe for destruction. Infamous Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was a mass-murdering psychopath, but he did correctly observe, "Education is a weapon whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed." Tragically, upon considering today's American government schools, Stalin would likely smile, give a pat on the back and say, "Keep up the good work, comrades." ■



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