

Teaching Tolerance

The Need for a Clear and Practical Definition

By Eric Buehrer



Eric Buehrer

In recent years, schools have given an increasing amount of attention to issues surrounding diversity and tolerance. Character education courses, multicultural material, and even health curricula weave the

theme of tolerance through their lessons.

Incidents such as the murder of Matthew Shepard because he was gay, or the brutal killing of James Byrd because he was African American, or the attacks on synagogues and churches shock us into the reality that hate-motivated crime is still alive in America.

While some people use these tragedies to create the appearance of a crisis largely for political reasons, it must be pointed out that incidents of hate crimes are relatively rare. For example, incidents of hate crimes in 2001 (the latest figures) were only 0.082 percent of all crimes (including intimidation—causing reasonable fear of bodily harm though none occurs—which accounted for 40.6 percent of hate crimes). Known offenders made up only 0.0032 percent of the population.

According to the FBI, hate crimes committed on campuses (they group schools and colleges together) totaled 833 in 2001. This amounts to 0.001 percent when compared to the estimated enrollment of 68 million students that year. (Of course, the rarity of the occurrences is little consolation to the 833 victims that year.)

Clearly, we are not a nation of bigots and haters although the spotlight put on certain incidents might make it appear that way. The need for tolerance is not because of an epidemic of hate crimes, but because of the much more mundane and daily social interactions that require treating each other with respect and dignity. It is in these interactions where educators deal with intolerance most frequently: hallway insults, angry outbursts, and smug dismissals of others' viewpoints during class discussions.

Not only do educators deal with these types of social interactions among students, but also they, too, are tested in their tolerance for student clothing, hair styles, body piercing, attitudes, morals, and behaviors.

Defining Tolerance

When some use the word "tolerance," they mean the first definition you find in the dictionary: *recognition of and respect for the opinions, practices, or behavior of others.* However, it is important to understand that respect here means not veneration but the avoidance of interference. Without this clarification, the definition of tolerance comes to be viewed as a gushing acceptance of just about everything someone says or does. Some even go so far as to define tolerance as the *embracing* and celebration of the opinions, practices, or behaviors of others.

Many educators and parents, however, cringe at the moral relativism of this approach. Yet, they feel boxed in by the current talk of tolerance. If they oppose it, they run the risk of being accused of advocating bigotry, intolerance, and even hate. This is because those promoting the most open-ended view of tolerance have staked out the playing field by defining the terminology. Pressure then gets placed on colleagues and students to adopt this view of tolerance. To resist is to appear intolerant.

Tolerance Requires Virtue

Tolerance, in and of itself, is not a virtue. If a student tolerates drinking and driving, his tolerance is not virtuous. Tolerance is neutral. Tolerance derives its value from what it is the student tolerates, and the manner in which the student expresses his tolerance and intolerance. This involves character.

When a student uses a racial slur, his problem is not a lack of tolerance but a lack of kindness and a problem with pride (the root of belief in racial superiority). When a

student makes fun of a classmate's point of view during a class discussion, his problem isn't a lack of tolerance but a lack of courtesy.

Proper tolerance is the outgrowth of moral character qualities such as kindness, patience, courtesy, humility, love, self-control, and courage. Even intolerance should be expressed through these qualities.

Students need to be taught that tolerance arises from character. If they don't understand this, they will think they are being tolerant when they are actually only expressing indifference ("whatever"), or

apathy ("who cares?"), or even recklessness ("why not?"). Improperly taught, "tolerance education" can lead to disarming students of their *proper* convictions.

Tolerance Requires Standards

The view that tolerance means "accepting everyone's ideas and behaviors" is impractical in the real world. It sounds nice in classroom discussions and school board declarations, but it won't work in the

hallways. You will find a more practical definition of tolerance in the dictionary's second definition of the term: *the allowable variation from a standard.* For instance, an engineer might ask about the tolerance of a metal beam in a building during an earthquake. How far should it bend before serious structural damage is done?

This is the definition by which we most commonly live. We establish a standard of what we think is best (even if somewhat vague). We then establish an allowable variation from that standard (often more vague). Then we judge the ideas and actions of others based on what we've established. This is as it should be. To do otherwise is to invite social and moral anarchy. The problem for many people isn't intolerance; it is in not clearly defining their standards.

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Ironically, educators can
create more "tolerant"
school climates by focusing
not on tolerance but
on character.

Never Told About Options!

Dear AAE—

I'm encouraged to write to you by my friend Nancy Dean. She and I and several others in our school district received a letter demanding that we join the MEA (Moorpark Educators Association) or pay an agency fee. We have gotten together to determine our response. Our contract reads that we can opt out of union membership by becoming an "agency fee only" payer, or we can opt out because of religious OR for "long-held philosophical" reasons. We understand that in the latter case we can donate all of the required union dues to a charity.

I do have religious beliefs in opposition to NEA and CTA that I can't "prove" by membership in a church (a union requirement!). So I'm relying on the "philosophical" portion of the contract to opt out of any part of the union scheme.

I have several friends who continue to be members of the MEA who are Catholic or conservative. They were outraged when I told them they don't have to have their dues used for NEA's and CTA's political purposes. Even though they've been members for years, they've never been told of the "agency fee only" option.

I'm enclosing a copy of the letter I sent to MEA, our Director of Personnel, and all our school board members.

My very best wishes to all of you at AAE, and my deepest gratitude to you for the important work you do to fight the oppressors that these big, bullying organizations have become. God bless your hearts!

—Linnea Brecunier
Moorpark, CA

P. S. I'm also enclosing something I think is moving and pertinent to educating our children. [See below]

And How Are the Children?

Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes in Africa, no tribe was considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising then to learn the traditional greeting that passed between Masai warriors: "Kasserian ingera," one would always say to another. It means, "And how are the children?" It is still the traditional greeting among the Masai, acknowledging the high value that the Masai always place on their children's well-being.

Even warriors with no children of their own would always give the traditional answer, "All the children are well." Meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that the priorities of protecting the young, the powerless, are in place, that Masai society has not forgotten its reason for being—its proper functions and responsibilities. "All the children are well" means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles of existence, even among the poor people, do not preclude proper caring for its young.

I wonder how it might affect our consciousness of our own children's welfare if in our culture we took to greeting each other with the same daily question, "And how are the children?" I wonder if we heard that question and passed it along to each other a dozen times a day, would it begin to make a difference in the reality of how children are thought of or are cared for in this country?

I wonder if every adult among us, parent and nonparent alike, felt an equal weight for the daily care and protection of all the children in our town, in our state, in our country...if we could truly say without any hesitation, "The children are well. Yes, all children are well."

—Rev. Dr. Patrick T. O'Neill, Senior Minister
First Unitarian Church

Letters To The Editor

Concern about Paraprofessionals

Dear AAE,

I am excited about the fact that the AAE is involved in contributing advice to those in charge of implementing NCLB.

However, I am disheartened as I witness the implementation of cost-cutting measures in intervention/remediation reading programs in my district. I live in the State of Washington, which is in the midst of a budget crisis. I am a reading specialist in a part-time position funded by a state initiative. However, the district I am employed in has decided to train paraeducators to teach and/or tutor students designated as "struggling" readers. These paraeducators do their best but have no education and/or experience in assisting these students. I feel this is such a disservice to these students who are going to be retained at the fifth grade level if they do not have the appropriate skills to be successful for promotion to middle school. Their retention will be based on their failure to pass the state test taken in the fourth grade. Perhaps, if they were given an optimal opportunity of being taught by an experienced instructor with the assistance of a paraeducator, they would obtain the skills necessary to make a successful educational transition.

I understand the ideal is that the classroom teacher has the ability to provide all her students opportunities and assistance to obtain the reading skills necessary to make the appropriate growth. However, there are many demands made of these teachers, and there will always be some students who require additional opportunities and assistance to be successful in school. The pressure to move towards complete inclusion and to perform to specified levels on state tests is going to affect these students adversely and they will be "left behind." Then, in the fifth grade, a school within a school will be required to assist their growth to ensure that they will be able to pass the state test given in the seventh grade.

I hope that the implementation of this legislation will provide regulations that will require states to provide optimal opportunities for students who are struggling. I think it is the height of injustice not to provide this type of opportunity and then base retention on the failure of the student to meet the required standards on a state test. They are being set up to fail.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

—Regina Simmons
Maple Valley, Washington

Another Grateful Member

Dear AAE,

I want to formally thank you and your legal staff for your help while I was successfully resigning from my teacher union, due to religious objections, for the 2003-04 school year. AAE's Director of Legal Services, La Rae Munk, was a personal source of encouragement and advice in a time when I was timid about opposing a large organization like the NEA and Education Minnesota. She also put me in contact with a colleague who had gone through the process successfully. You are all an encouragement to those of us who want to stand up for what we believe in this world!

—Kim Showcatally
Mankato, MN

Progress in the Character Education Movement

A Word from Our Executive Director, Gary Beckner



Gary Beckner

Historically—that is, prior to the 1960s—our public schools operated on the premise that developing a young person's character was as important as improving his intellectual abilities. Our schools supported teaching the values that

made this nation great and there was not much confusion about what those values were. However, in the '60s, as America grew ever more diverse and pluralistic, many educators began to question the public schools' role in teaching values. Debates raged over "Do we have the right to teach values?" and "Whose values should we teach?" The fear of being labeled imposing, old fashioned, or intolerant (a fate worse than death in the "enlightened" circle of educators), prevented too many educators from speaking up in defense of our *traditional* curriculum models. As a result, our national system slipped its gears into "neutral" on the subject of values education. Neutral, of course, got us nowhere. By the early '80s, it was clear that we were reaping the results of a "value-less" education experiment. Finally, in desperation, more schools began to shift out of neutral. Now we are seeing the beginning of a drive toward restoring character education to its rightful place as a necessary companion to academics.

The late Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, said it well: "To have people who are well informed but not constrained by conscience is, conceivably, the most dangerous outcome of education possible."

We hear a lot of talk about raising academic standards in our public schools. And that's certainly needed. However, I suggest that raising our nation's moral standards will be the best thing we can do for our children. This will not be an easy task and will require *reeducation* of America's leaders and *teachers*.

The last decades of the twentieth century demonstrated a steady increase of moral relativism. This was partly due to the diffidence of many teachers who were, and still are, confused by all the talk about pluralism. Such teachers actually believe that it is wrong to "indoctrinate" our children in our own Western culture and moral tradition. Some actually flinch when they hear the word "indoctrinate." That's a shame. Their thinking has been clouded by the politically correct crowd. To indoctrinate is a *good* thing if for the right causes.

The Association of American Educators is trying to help educators shift out of neutral and is helping to create a new momentum in education that will offer a balance of academics and character education through a *value-centered* curriculum. There are still teachers who say public schools should concentrate on the basics and leave the teaching of "values" to others. Sounds reasonable, but any educator knows that it is nearly impossible to teach subjects without imparting values. We must accept that good behavior and good character traits are not written in some inherent genetic code, or always learned at home, or absorbed through the so-called "invisible" values of our general curriculum.

Unless somebody embraces the agenda of instilling values, children won't have the strength of their beliefs to fall back on when trials come into their lives.

The question is always, "Whose values do we teach?" That question invites instant polarization. We need to work toward changing the question to, "Which values should we teach?" This at least would allow room for constructive dialogue. According to our AAE surveys, our members agree that a core set of values exists that is common, acceptable, and desirable to any multicultural society. Every civilized society has attempted to teach their children basic character traits such as integrity, compassion, cooperation, loyalty, self-discipline, diligence, and respect for the law, for human life, for others, as well as for self. Some may wish to add to the list, but we haven't found a parent yet who wanted to eliminate any of these qualities. We can teach those values we share and avoid those that divide us.

AAE Selected as Character Project Evaluator

We fervently hope formal character education will not be dismissed as just another new fad like so many other educational "innovations" that have come and gone. The AAE is doing all it can to establish permanency in the movement. In that regard, I am pleased to announce that your Association of American Educators has been selected to be the Project Evaluator for two new character education projects to be conducted in Pueblo, Colorado, School District #60 and in the Stilwell, Oklahoma, School District.

These two districts were awarded grants from the USDOE's Partnership in Character Education Program—a key feature of the No Child Left Behind Act. Secretary of Education Rod Paige said, "It is important that parents, students, and community organizations work with schools to make character education be a part of the education process." He added, "We have invested nearly \$24 million in character education in FY 2003 because we believe that building strong character is as essential as reading, math, and science."

The Partnership in Character Education Program awards grants to local school districts to implement character education

programs in areas such as citizenship, respect, and responsibility, for grades K-12. This year eight school districts have been awarded such grants. The Pueblo, Colorado, and Stilwell, Oklahoma, districts have partnered with the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, the National Council on Teacher Quality, the Link Institute, and the Association of American Educators to achieve the project goals. AAE advisory board member Dr. Kevin Ryan will serve as the principal evaluator. If anyone can

help us ensure success with the project, it is Kevin. Check out Dr. Ryan's qualifications on our web-site—click on [Advisory Board](#). Both of the grants are for five-year projects, and each will be implementing the *Core Virtues* program. For more information on *Core Virtues*, go to our web-site Resources page and click on [AAE's Recommended Character Education Programs](#).

Our Board of Directors is pleased to be an active participant in the character education movement and will work diligently with the partners mentioned above to create this model of success for many more school districts to emulate. **EM**

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Attention Members—

If you teach in a district that you believe might be interested in applying for a USDOE Character Education Grant, contact AAE's Director of National Projects, Mr. Tracey Bailey, at 1-877-385-6264 in Washington, D.C. You may also contact Kate Walsh at the National Council on Teacher Quality at 202-223-1823, or Elias Crim at the Link Institute at 219-395-6345 for more information. **EM**



Department of Ed Recognizes New Accreditation Source

In an important move, the U.S. Department of Education has recognized the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) as an accrediting agency for teacher preparation programs. This distinction assures the quality of its standards and process to the public and seems destined to make TEAC a viable alternative to NCATE (the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) whose accreditation process is often criticized for being unwieldy and excessively focused on inputs. With a membership of 100 institutions, TEAC is tiny in comparison to the NCATE but maintains the advantage that it places far more emphasis on solid evidence that its accredited institutions are producing student achievement gains.

"Teacher Education Accreditation Council Receives Federal Recognition" press release, October 1, 2003
<http://www.teac.org/about/pressrelease.asp>. **EM**

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

Unique Florida Program Points to Effectiveness of School Choice

Children with special needs benefit from opportunity to attend private schools

An analysis of Florida's McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities shows that school choice provides "tangible benefits" to students with special needs, says David Salisbury, director for the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute.

"School choice opponents often argue that choice will benefit only the best and the brightest, leaving behind those children who are the most difficult to educate," Salisbury explains in a Cato briefing paper, *Lessons from Florida: School Choice Gives Increased Opportunity to Children with Special Needs*. However, a close look at the success of the Florida program refutes those predictions. The

McKay Scholarship program, which has been in existence for three years, provides average scholarships of over \$5,000 to an ethnically diverse mix of students with a wide array of learning disabilities and other special needs. The number of students enrolled in the program has increased steadily, and 89 percent of the scholarship recipients re-enrolled for the following school year. Similarly, private school participation has steadily increased, from only a few in 2000 to 547 today.

Salisbury points out that in addition to providing special needs students with a range of more effective options, the program has also benefited public schools by decreasing class size (a legislatively mandated goal in Florida) without costing the school additional resources. Most importantly, parents of special needs children have a greater voice in the educational environment that best suits their child's needs.

"The federal program under which special accommodations are made to children with disabilities has been highly criticized," Salisbury notes. "In view of the benefits that can be provided to children with disabilities through increased options and choice, reform advocates and policymakers are increasingly looking to school choice as a solution to these problems." The Florida program provides valuable lessons for policymakers in other states who are considering the school choice issue. **EM**

Source—The Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., a nonpartisan public policy research foundation dedicated to broadening policy debate consistent with the traditional American principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace. Visit Cato Institute's web-site for a full copy of the report: www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp-081es.html.

Men Trailing in College Achievement

Between 1975 and 2001, the number of bachelor's degrees earned by men increased by 5 percent. The number earned by women increased by 70 percent. Among African-Americans, about twice as many women as men are now earning four-year degrees.

Today, as Kati Haycock, director of the Education Trust, a Washington, D.C.-based group that helps urban schools and colleges stated, "It's astonishing how many campuses are approaching a 60-40 [female-male] ratio."

There's economic and social dynamite in these figures. A bachelor's degree, for example, adds about \$1.3 million to a man's lifetime earnings and \$650,000 to a woman's. And college-educated women naturally want to marry college-educated men. Two years ago, 180,000 more women than men

earned four-year degrees in the United States, most of them entering a marriage market with slim pickings. **EM**

Source—The Baltimore Sun. Link to the article: www.sunspot.net/news/education/bal-md.edbeat24sep24,0,5443076.column.

Minnesota to Try Pay for Performance Plan

Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty announced a plan to attract the best and brightest teachers to some of the toughest schools in the state. The plan would give principals at five schools sweeping authority to recruit, hire, and fire teachers outside of normal union contracts and tenure rules. The teachers in these pilot programs would then be eligible for bonuses of \$20,000 to \$40,000 based on their performance and student achievement. The state's education commissioner, Cheri Yecke, believes that these five pilot programs will "give officials the kind of data they need to study how compensation affects student performance." **EM**

Another Union Leader Headed to Cell Block

It took much longer than expected, but federal authorities have filed charges against the perpetrators of the Washington, D.C. Teachers Union (WTU) scandal. Several union officers, including former President Barbara Bullock, were accused of stealing as much as \$5 million in members' dues and spending the cash on personal luxury items.

Last month, the U.S. Attorney charged Errol Alderman with one count of conspiracy for creating a dummy consulting business designed to launder union dues and deposit them into personal accounts controlled by Bullock and her executive assistant. Alderman became the third minor player in the scandal to be charged.

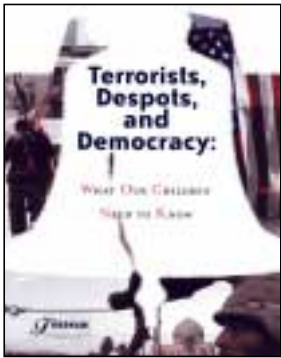
Bullock herself was charged with one count of mail fraud and one count of conspiracy in an apparent plea deal that will reportedly net her ten years in prison. The *Washington Post* reported that the plea deal was held up for a time by Bullock's lawyers, who complained that former United Teachers of Dade President Pat Tornillo is facing only a thirty-month sentence for similar crimes.

Charges against Bullock's executive assistant, Gwendolyn Hemphill, and former WTU Treasurer James Baxter are sure to follow, and additional persons may face prosecution due to the falsification of IRS and U.S. Department of Labor filings during Bullock's tenure. **EM**

Source—Communiqué, a publication from EIA, which conducts public education research, analysis, and investigations. www.eiaonline.com.

What Should Schools Teach Children about Iraq, Terrorism, History, and Civics?

Two new reports from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation examine what American students are being taught about U.S. history and civics, the dangers we face in the war on terror, and how the field of “social studies” has reduced the study of history to an ambiguous subject based on multiculturalism and moral relativism rather than the rigorous study of our past.



Terrorists, Despots, and Democracy: What Our Children Need to Know includes the voices of political leaders, practitioners, and cultural analysts discussing what schools should teach about U.S. history, American ideals, and civic life in the wake of 9/11, the war on terror, and the liberation of Iraq. The twenty-nine contributors represent a wide variety of fields and political persuasions—from former Humanities Endowment chair Lynne Cheney to author and commentator Richard Rodriguez, from JFK Library historian Sheldon Stern to political scientist James Q. Wilson.



While many now accept that American students know too little of American history and civics, these analysts probe the causes of this ignorance—and lay primary

responsibility at the feet of the social studies “establishment” itself.

After the September 11 attacks, writes

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 “In the wake of September 11, an engaged citizenry that understands the principles and history of the American experiment in self-government is more important than ever. This collection will help our public schools educate citizens prepared to do their part.”

Fordham Foundation president Chester E. Finn, Jr., in the foreword of *Terrorists, Despots, and Democracy*, too few education leaders urged teachers to “read books with their pupils that address patriotism, freedom, and democracy; that deal realistically with the presence of evil, danger, and anti-Americanism in the world; or that hail the heroism of those who for more than two centuries have defended our land against foreign aggressors—including our debt to those who perished on 9/11/01.”

Contributor William Galston, former domestic policy aide to President Clinton and a professor at

the University of Maryland, concurs, saying, “In the wake of September 11, an engaged citizenry that understands the principles and history of the American experiment in self-government is more important than ever. This collection will help our public schools educate citizens prepared to do their part.”

“Social studies teachers are trained to believe that acquisition of historical knowledge is not as important as learning critical thinking skills, and politically correct attitudes,” says high school social studies teacher and *USA Today* All-American Teacher Jana Eaton, a contributor to *Where Did Social Studies Go Wrong?* “And all too often, students are taught that the U.S. is oppressive, but not the other side of the story. The good needs to be told along with the bad.”

With these two reports, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation inaugurates “Back to Basics: Reclaiming the Social Studies,” a multifaceted effort to revitalize the teaching of U.S. history and civics. **EM**

For more information contact the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1627 K Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 223-5452, or e-mail: backtalk@edexcellence.net.

Teaching Tolerance

(Continued from page 1)

Even so, we establish standards in hundreds, even thousands, of categories. For example, our standard (ideal) for marriage may be two people who love each other deeply in a supportive and nurturing relationship. However, our allowable variation from the standard is a marriage filled with anger and disharmony. But, what goes beyond the allowable variation; what is intolerable is spousal abuse.

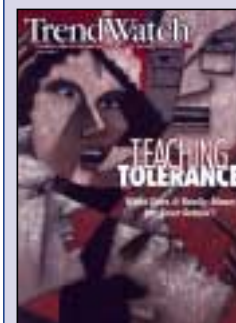
Within the school setting, this definition of tolerance is applied in many places: dress codes (pants are allowed, but not hot pants), hallway conduct (conversation with the opposite sex is allowed, but not sexual harassment), and classroom participation (students may not have to participate in discussions, but they can’t fall asleep).

This practical definition is valuable for classroom instruction because it honors students’ moral frameworks developed by their religious education and families. Rather than teach them that tolerance is best demonstrated by an *absence* of judgment, it teaches that tolerance requires *making* judgments: establishing first, a standard, and second, the limits of the allowable variation.

If students aren’t taught to clearly establish their standards and allowable variations, they will struggle with what to tolerate. In frustration, they may simply jump to the sophomoric view that they should just accept everything. This doesn’t require hard thinking and yet has the appearance of taking the moral high ground.

Some may raise the concern that making judgments will only add to someone’s existing prejudices. There are two reasons why this doesn’t have to be. First, as we have seen, the reality is that this is the way tolerance *really* works, so the best course of action is to help students think deeply about their standards. Second, no matter what their standards are, they should act virtuously toward anyone who varies from those standards.

Ironically, educators can create more “tolerant” school climates by focusing not on tolerance but on character. **EM**



Eric Buehrer, a former high school teacher, is the publisher of TrendWatch, and the author of *The Public Orphanage*, which Arthur Stellar selected in Education Leadership as one of ten recommended

books. To subscribe to TrendWatch call 1-800-929-1163, or visit www.gtbe.org.

Court



Federal Government to Prosecute Nation's Largest Teacher Union for Religious Discrimination

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has found that officials of the National Education Association (NEA) teacher union and several affiliates are repeatedly violating the rights of teachers of faith to refrain from unwanted union affiliation on the basis of their sincerely held religious beliefs.

The formal determination released last month by EEOC officials comes on the heels of a two-year battle waged for teachers of religious faith by attorneys with the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation that led to congressional hearings, sustained national media coverage, and, ultimately, a previous conciliation agreement requiring the unions to refrain from stonewalling teachers who asserted religious objections to supporting a union they believe to be involved in immoral activities.

The conciliation agreement signed last fall, which EEOC officials have now determined the NEA, Ohio Education Association, and a local affiliate union have violated, required union officials to process teachers' religious objections in a timely fashion and not to require a renewed objection each year.

"This repeated religious discrimination by NEA officials shows they think they are above the law and they have no respect for people of faith," said Stefan Gleason, Vice President of the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation. "These tactics are designed to harass and deter teachers who consider objecting to the NEA's political and social agenda."

Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, union officials may not force any employee to financially support a union if doing so violates the employee's

sincerely held religious beliefs.

To accommodate the conflict between an employee's faith and a requirement to pay fees to a union he believes to be immoral, the law allows employees instead to donate that money to charity.

The unions' continuing violations of Title VII became apparent during the investigation of charges filed at the EEOC. Foundation attorneys helped William Morgan, a practicing Quaker and custodian at Mentor Public Schools, who asserted a religious objection to supporting the union because it promotes pro-abortion and pro-homosexuality positions. In January 2003, Morgan asked the union hierarchy to accommodate his sincere religious objection, but he was rebuffed and union officials insisted he pay a fee to support the NEA and its affiliates. **EM**

Clemson Program That Helps Mid-Career Professionals Become Teachers Is "Perfect for the State"

The No Child Left Behind Act requires that there be a "highly qualified" teacher in every public school classroom by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. To meet this goal, many states will have to break from status quo approaches to preparing, recruiting, and retaining highly qualified teachers. Expanding alternative routes to teacher licensure is proving to be a powerful way of doing so. As an example of how this can be accomplished, the following excerpts from an article, "Mid-career People Quit Jobs to Take Up Teaching," in the *Greenville News* provide an overview of a new program being offered by Clemson University in South Carolina:

"Charlcey Cox quit her job as finance director for a communications company to become a middle school teacher. If she starts at \$32,000 a year, her new salary will be

about a third as much as her pay in the corporate world, she said. 'It's a lot of money to give up, but money is not everything,' Cox said. Cox is one of sixteen students going through a rigorous first-of-its-kind program that packs three years of classroom training into one year and targets mid-career professionals interested in changing jobs. The students represent a vanguard that's helping the state stem a teacher shortage and comply with federal No Child Left Behind Act legislation. If they complete the course, students will take home a Master of Arts in Education from Clemson University and be ready to teach middle school by next fall."

"All the students have degrees in some area beside education and need the Clemson program to become certified and qualified as teachers, [coordinator Lienne]

Medford said. Cox said she decided to enroll after her job moved to Atlanta and she decided not to go with it. Her husband who owns a business has made the pay cut easier, she said. 'I've always wanted to do this,' Cox said. 'The timing was perfect.' It's perfect for the state, too."

"The Clemson program will help the state comply with federal No Child Left Behind Act legislation," said coordinator Lienne Medford. "Under the law, all teachers must be certified and highly qualified at their grade levels and content areas by 2005-06. Students who complete the Clemson program will be both," she said.

The Clemson class brings together a diverse group of students. They include some in their early 20s who have just finished their undergraduate degrees and some in their 50s making a career change. **EM**

The complete text of the Greenville News article can be found at:
<http://greenvilleonline.com/news/2003/10/02/2003100216160.htm>

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"The Clemson program will help the state comply with federal No Child Left Behind Act legislation,"

The College Cost Crisis

Congressional Republicans last month released an important report declaring that America's higher education system is in crisis because of exploding college costs. The report is available online at <http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/108th/education/highereducation/CollegeCostCrisisReport.pdf>.

For many years, students and parents have been grappling with soaring tuition hikes that far outpace inflation rates and growth in family income. The federal government is now investing about \$90 billion a year in higher education—a record amount—yet the dream of a college degree continues to slip away from an increasing number of low and middle income students because of hyperinflation in tuition rates and college costs.

The report shows that while recent state budget cuts in higher education have unquestionably had a negative impact on tuition rates, the college cost crisis is the result of a more chronic, far-reaching problem: a system that is not accountable enough to students and parents. Colleges and universities have resorted to such tuition hikes even when the economy has been thriving, and when states have been increasing their investment in higher education.

The college crisis is happening, ultimately, because students and parents—the

consumers of higher education—lack the ability to fully exercise their power in the marketplace, and to hold institutions accountable for unreasonable increases. Consumers have inadequate information about tuition increases and what they're getting in exchange for their investment in higher education. Transparency and “sunshine” are in short supply in the higher education system. As a result, some institutions just aren't as accountable to parents and students as they need to be.

As the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education's 1998 report to Congress noted: “Institutions of higher education...are financially opaque. Academic institutions have made little effort, either on campus or off, to make themselves more transparent, to explain their finances. As a result, there is no readily available information about college costs and prices nor is there a common national reporting standard for either.” Little has been done in the past five years to change this reality.

The solution to the college cost crisis is not federal price controls, and it's not another huge increase in government spending. Rather, the solution is to ensure that students and parents—the consumers of higher education—have the information they need to fully exercise their power in the marketplace.

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Legislation will be introduced in the House soon that seeks to address this problem by calling for greater transparency in college costs. It will not call for the federal government to assume any role in setting college costs—but it also won't allow the federal government to continue to subsidize hyperinflation in higher education. It will call on institutions and the federal government to give students and parents better information about college costs, to enhance consumers'

ability to “comparison shop” and make informed choices in selecting schools.

Federally supported institutions must be held accountable for unreasonable tuition hikes—and consumer empowerment is the way to achieve this goal. **EM**

AAE Teachers Chosen as Panelists for the New American Board Examination Process

Seven AAE teachers (right) were selected by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) to participate as panelists to help set the cut scores of the new American Board credential exams.

In addition to the AAE members, dozens of other panelists were assembled to participate in the process of setting the ABCTE standards for teacher certification. Each expert panelist represented an integral element necessary to ensure the credibility and quality of an American Board certification.



Left to Right: Bertha Zapata, Tampa, FL; Karen Norton, Warren, AR; Karen Stroud, Murfreesboro, TN; Ken Evans, Vancouver, WA; Dr. Kathleen Madigan, President, ABCTE; Retha Nance, Wheatland, OK; Betty Minton, Anadarko, OK; Sandra Crandall, Fountain Valley, CA.

Panelist Sandra Crandall said, “I came away from our work knowing that the education of America's children would be secure when a teacher enters the field through passage of the American Boards.”

Arkansas State Teacher of the Year Karen Norton, added, “The work was exhausting, but well worth it. I applaud ABCTE for setting high standards.”

The AAE extends our appreciation to ABCTE president Dr. Kathleen Madigan for including active classroom teachers in the process! **EM**

Wells Fargo Capital for Knowledge Program[®] Now Includes Student Scholarship Sweepstakes

The Wells Fargo **Capital for Knowledge**, an AAE-endorsed member resource, is now equipped with a new tool designed to help high school students prepare for college.

The **Capital for Knowledge** Program's suite of services now includes the **CollegeSTEPS** Program Scholarship Sweepstakes, a college preparatory program that helps prepare high school students for college by offering information and advice on what classes to take in high school, how to study for college preparatory exams, what to look for in a university, and *how to find scholarship opportunities through a series of electronic postcards*. Once students enroll,

they're automatically registered for a chance to win one of one-hundred \$1,000 tuition prizes awarded to eligible* high school seniors in random drawings held throughout each school year. For more information, please visit www.capital4u.net.

The **Capital for Knowledge** Program is a complete education and financial resource used by more than 100 participating associations to help members and their families reach their goals. The program includes flexible, affordable loans for higher education studies, technical/ professional training and certification, private K-12 schools and academies and education loan consolidation.

The **CollegeSTEPS** Program has been awarded the Seal of Approval by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). The Seal of Approval recognizes programs and products that assist students and families as they consider higher education options. NACAC represents more than 7,900 school and independent counselors, college admission officers, and related educators who work to make the transition from high school to college easier for students. **EM**

* Void to residents of NY and FL.
See www.capital4u.net for Official Rules and Eligibility Requirements.

Check Out a New Resource on AAE's Resources Web-Page!

eLiteracy.LLC

This excellent new online literacy course is a user-friendly, comprehensive, professional development program that can allow teachers to earn credits that count toward their yearly requirement.

Designed to help K-3 teachers succeed in teaching reading skills, E-Literacy meets the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act as well as the goals of Reading First!

For more information go to www.e-literacyonline.com. If you haven't lately, visit AAE's web-site at www.aateachers.org and look for other new resources on our Resources page.

Homework Tips for Parents

Research shows that parent involvement can have either a positive or a negative impact on the value of homework. Parent involvement can be used to speed up a child's learning. Homework can involve parents in the school process. It can enhance parent appreciation of education. It can give them an opportunity to express positive attitudes about the value of success in school.



However, parent involvement may also interfere with learning. For example, parents can confuse children if the teaching techniques they use differ from those used in the classroom. Parent involvement in homework can turn into parent interference if parents complete tasks that the child is capable of completing alone.

The U.S. Department of Education publication "Homework Tips for Parents" includes information, in both English and Spanish, about how parents can help their children with homework. It features general homework tips, reading homework tips, and math homework tips. Parents and teachers can order a free copy by:

Calling the U.S. Department of Education's Publications Center (ED Pubs) toll-free at 1-877-4-ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827); TTY/TDD: 1-877-576-7734; FAX: 1-301-470-1244;

Ordering online at: www.edpubs.org.



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EducationMatters is published by the Association of American Educators. For more information, contact AAE, 25201 Paseo de Alicia, Suite 104, Laguna Hills, CA 92653

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