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RELEASE: April 2, 1982

TEACH STUDENTS TO OBEY THE LAW

One of the most frequent complaints by parents about public schools is that they fail to teach the fourth "R" -- right or wrong -- and that the schools fling adult problems and materials at immature students without giving them any moral or ethical guidance.

When parents and taxpayers level such criticism at the schools, the school administrators and guidance counselors respond in chorus: "Ah, but we cannot force your moral principles on the students because that would be imposing your sectarian religious doctrine on the children; and that would be an unconstitutional interference with the principle of separation of church and state."

Parents have known for years that this is a phony answer because, until liberalism and humanism became the fashion in the 1960s and 1970s, all children were taught in the public schools -- in a thousand ways, directly and indirectly -- that it is wrong to lie, steal, cheat, fornicate, or harm another's person or property.

The question of whether or not such standards and values can be taught in the schools has become a heated controversy because of the widespread introduction of sexuality classes. The sexuality instructors aggressively assert that they must teach about sex acts and devices without any reference whatsoever to moral standards.

They claim that, in order to keep the schools scrupulously free from any religious dogma, teachers may not tell the students that any sex acts are wrong. They claim that the detailed "facts" of sexual behavior must be presented to coed classes in a total moral vacuum, without making any value judgment as to which might be wrong, abnormal, deviant, perverted, or even unhealthy or unwise.

When confronted by such arguments, parents and taxpayers should respond: We are not asking you to teach religion or even religious values. We are not even asking you to teach what is moral or immoral. We are only asking you to teach the students what is lawful and what is unlawful, plus the true facts about the physical and psychological

costs of promiscuity.

It would be incredibly bad teaching practice if the schools described the exhilaration of drugs and alcohol to the students, but failed to warn them that some are always unlawful to use, that others are unlawful prior to attaining a certain age, and that the physical costs of drug abuse are horrendous. It would be just as bad teaching practice to tell students about the pleasure of sexual acts, with descriptions of how to do them, without also telling the students that it is unlawful and dangerous for unmarried persons to engage in them.

It would be incredibly bad teaching practice if the drivers' education classes taught students how to drive but failed to inform them that it is unlawful and dangerous for them to use that skill until they reach a certain age and get a driver's license. It is just as bad teaching practice when sexuality class instructors describe how to engage in all kinds of normal and abnormal sexual acts (including information about contraceptives and abortions), but fail to inform the students that they can be unlawful and dangerous.

The Supreme Court ruled in 1981 that public schools may not inform students that God's Ten Commandments say "thou shalt not kill, steal, bear false witness, or commit adultery." Whether that decision is right or ridiculous is not the issue here.

The public schools have an obligation to teach children that the laws of most states say: thou shalt not kill, maim, steal, lie, cheat, rape, have sex with a child, commit adultery or fornication, or produce or distribute obscenity. The physical and psychological penalties of teenage promiscuity are tremendous in every state.

So, parents should demand that the schools teach our children what is lawful and what is unlawful so that they will grow up as decent, honest, truthful, law-abiding citizens who respect other persons and their property. Schools should not teach our children about sex unless they are told that sex acts outside of marriage are unlawful in most states and dangerous in every state.

Schools that presume to conduct sex classes have an obligation to tell the students about facts that teenagers who engage in pre-marital sex may pay a terrible price in venereal disease and/or illegitimate pregnancies, that the VD may be incurable, and that the harmful physical effects of promiscuity may last a lifetime.