Public School Isn't Like I Remember It

February 27, 2002

Google Ads are provided by Google and are not selected or endorsed by Eagle Forum

Public schools seem to be obsessed with requiring students to fill out nosy questionnaires. The latest outrage, entitled "How Am I?", asked 55 intrusive questions of New Jersey 7th and 8th graders. Here are a few of the nosy questions. Have you ever driven a car after drinking alcohol, or ridden with a driver who seemed impaired? Are there guns in your home or the homes of your friends?

Are you engaging in risky sexual behavior (multiple partners, no protection from STDs or unwanted pregnancy)? Do you often think you are stupid, worthless, unlovable?

If you drink, do you drink intending to get drunk? Have you used any kind of drugs? Have you ever made choices while under the influence of drugs or alcohol that you later regretted?

Do you hang around with a crowd that smokes, drinks, or uses drugs? Do you have a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, or uncle who is an alcoholic, is significantly overweight, or developed colon cancer?

The teacher told the students to put their names on the questionnaire and to graph their responses to indicate their levels of risky behavior. The students received a score on the questionnaire to be applied to their class grades.

Whatever happened to our Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable searches and our Fifth Amendment right against self- incrimination? Did anyone read these kids their Miranda rights?

No wonder New Jersey just passed a new law requiring the state's public schools to obtain written parental consent before administering surveys requiring students to reveal personal information. Parents should check up and see if their schools are obeying the law.

California public schools seem to be trying to show us how far they have gone to downgrade Christianity. Some schools are teaching an intensive, three-week course in Islam that is not merely history or a course "about" religion; it is behavior modification and role-playing.

Study handouts include a history of Islam and its founder, Mohammed, 25 Islamic terms, 20 proverbs, Islam's Five Pillars of Faith, and 10 key Islamic prophets and disciples. The students are required to wear a robe during class, adopt a Muslim name, and stage their own jihad or holy war in a dice game.

When parents complained and the press discovered this course, the school principal said it "reflects California (educational) standards that meet state requirements." The Houghton-Mifflin textbook, "Across the Centuries," is state approved and used throughout California.

The news media reported that this textbook presents Islam in a positive manner, while mentioning Christianity briefly and negatively. Events such as the Inquisition and Salem witch-hunts are highlighted in bold black type, while no negatives appear in the textbook about Islam's wars, massacres, and cruelties against Christians and other non-Muslims.

The miraculous events leading up to the holy book of Islam, the Koran, are presented as factual. References to the miracles of Christianity are downgraded by disclaimers.

All across the country, the public school policy called Zero Tolerance has become downright ridiculous. In North Carolina, a pre- school called Kids Gym Schoolhouse recently had five points deducted from its high rating because plastic soldiers were found in the play area.

A state evaluator wrote that the figures reflect stereotyping and violence and can be potentially dangerous if children use them to act out violent themes. The owner of the preschool called the evaluation "absurd," saying "it doesn't make any sense at all."

In Irvington, New Jersey, two eight-year-old boys who pointed paper guns at classmates were charged with "making terrorist threats." A judge ultimately dismissed their case, but the incident may remain on court records until the boys are 18.

A seven-year-old first grader in the Edgewood Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas, was banished to an alternative school for troubled students when he was caught bringing a pocket knife to school. For the first three days of his eleven-day punishment, he was the only first grader at a facility among older students guilty of serious offenses.

After graduating last June, a 19-year-old New Jersey student sued his school district because of a three-day suspension he had received in March after being branded a "racist." His offense was wearing a T-shirt from Wal-Mart emblazoned with comedian Jeff Foxworthy's "Top 10 Reasons You Might Be a Redneck Sports Fan."

According to a 2000 study by the Justice Policy Institute, a project of the non-profit Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, zero-tolerance policies have led to a doubling of student suspensions and expulsions since the mid 1970s. I wonder how many of those punishments were based on trying to make boys behave like girls.