from Phyllis Schlafly

What’s Wrong with Public Schools?

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As the lyrics in a favorite song go, “Everything's up to date in Kansas City. They've gone about as far as they can go.” Indeed, spending on Kansas City's public schools has gone as far as it can go.

Instead of ordering mandatory busing, the U.S. District Court ordered. the city to build the most expensive public school system in the wor1d. It includes Olympic-sized swimming poo1s, racquetball and squash courts, a scale model of the U.N. General Assembly room (complete with language translation facilities), a 25-acre farm for agricultural classes, a model of an ancient Greek village to teach participatory democracy, a model courtroom to teach law, Olympic athletic instructors, student field trips to practically anywhere, imported European teachers, theaters, art galleries, state-of-the-art personal computers, and 55 magnet schools, each built around a theme.

Federal Judge Russell Clark made national 1egal history in 1990 when the U.S. Supreme Court in Missouri v. Jenkins upheld his decision to double the loca1 property tax to finance this spending spree, despite voters' disapproval. Construction alone has already cost a half billion dollars and is still rising, and taxpayers all over Missouri are required to tighten their school spending in order to finance the court orders in Kansas City.

The purpose of all this extravagance is to lure white suburban parents to voluntarily send their children to black inner-city schools. The “success” rate so far is that the percentage of which pupils has risen one-half of one percent, while the dropout rate continues to exceed 40 percent, the daily absentee rate is 30 percent, and both black and whites are dissatisfied with the results.

If anybody had asked the parents what kind of schools would attract them, they probably would have said they want schools that teach their children important knowledge and useful skills. However, those goals are not measured in dollars, so it seems to be difficult for the education establishment to focus on them.

The State of Texas recently delayed adoption of eight new American history textbooks after a citizens group headed by Mel and Norma Gabler pointed out 195

factual errors. The errors would be funny if they weren't so tragic. Here are a few examples.

“The United States easily settled the Korean conflict by using the atomic bomb.” The fact: No atomic weapons were used in the Korean War.

Sputnik was “the first successful intercontinental ballistic missile launched by the Soviet Union; [it] carried a nuclear warhead.” The fact: Sputnik was just a harmless satellite; fortunately, no nation has ever launched an ICBM with a nuclear warhead

“The Nixon presidency ended in disgrace [with] the assassinations of [Martin Luther] King and [Robert] Kennedy.” The fact: both were assassinated during the Lyndon Johnson Administration.

So much for the historians who write school textbooks, as well as the editors employed by the publishers.

Another request parents might have made is to have important, uplifting, and inspirational books assigned instead of the downers that are so prevalent in schools today. We all know about the high number of young adults who went through school without ever learning how to read, but now we find there is another problem with the books assigned to those who can read.

Jill Carlson headed a group of parents who researched the fiction on high school recommended book lists. They read and statistically analyzed the contents of 45 books selected at random from the major lists of books recommended to high school students in l988, and they published the results in a new book called What Are Your Kids Reading?

The Carlson team found the following false or depressing themes to be dominant. Most fathers are absent or bad. Marriage is boring or dangerous. Parents and their kids are estranged half the time. Clergy are bumbling hypocrites. The spirit world helps kids more than it hurts them. Sex outside of marriage isn't wrong unless it's forced.

Maybe the problem is that the teachers haven't themselves read truthful history or literature classics. The English test that must be passed by anyone who teaches English in the 6th through 12th grades in Illinois is discouraging.

Last year’s test included 15 passages from various books by largely unknown feminist, black, Asian, South American, Indian, or African authors. The test questions dealt with the Politically Correct social themes that predominate their works.

on the other hand, the test included no mention at all of any of the following U.S. or British authors: Herman Melvi11e, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, William Faulkner, John Donne, Francis Bacon, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Robert Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson, or Charles Dickens.

Public schools have a lot of problems, but there is no evidence that bricks and mortar can solve them.