P.S. to the NEWS
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BRIGHT SPOTS IN EDUCATION

"How one west side high school can send a higher percentage of graduates to college than New Trier West, Hinsdale Central, Barrington, Deerfield, York, Evanston..." That was the headline over an amazing fullpage advertisement in a Chicago newspaper that featured a picture of a classroom full of neatly-dressed, alert high school students, all black.

For the benefit of those reading this column who are not from the Chicago area, the listed high schools are in the wealthiest suburbs, and the "west side" high school, called Providence-St. Mel, is in the heart of Chicago where the crime rate is terrifying and nearly one out of two residents is jobless. The ad certainly caught my eye, as I'm sure it did others'.

But listen further. The ad tells that more than 90 percent of the graduates of Providence-St. Mel are accepted at college, even though most of them are the first ones in their families ever to go to college. Many are the first ones in their families to graduate from high school. Some of them come from three and four generations on welfare.

Was this remarkable school the product of the billions the federal government has spent for schools, or for remedial education programs, or for inner-city programs of any variety? No, Providence-St. Mel receives no federal, state or local tax funds. It is supported by private, individual donations.

The secret of this school's success is, of course, not money, not government bureaucracy, but hard work, competition, and strict discipline. Cut a class at Providence-St. Mel and you pay a $10 fine and bring in your parents to be reinstated. Cut another class and you're gone for good. Smoke dope on school property and you're expelled. "Forget" your homework and spend three hours in study hall after school.

There is no dope. There are no gangs. And the only painting on the walls is done by art students. This school is giving its students the moral and academic tools they need to cope with the realities of life.

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The recently-released eleventh annual opinion survey of the top five percent of the 6-1/2 million students who were high school seniors and juniors during the 1979-80 academic year shows clearly that high achievement goes hand in hand with good moral character. The poll was taken among the students who excel in academics, extra-curricular activities, community service or athletics in the nation's 20,000 public, private and parochial high schools.

The vast majority (94 percent) have never used drugs, including marijuana; 80 percent do not think marijuana should be legalized and 90 percent wouldn't use it if it were. Nearly half don't drink and 88 percent have never smoked cigarettes.

The gloom-and-doomers who have been predicting the demise of the traditional family are in for a shock. Among these students, the best and the brightest, 87 percent favor a traditional marriage, and 62 percent think working in the home fulltime and raising a family is all the fulfillment a woman needs.

The sex education experts who have based all their curriculums on the assumption that most high schoolers are already "sexually active" (that's the popular jargon for fornication), are also in for a shock. More than three-fourths (76 percent) of the high school seniors and juniors have not had sexual intercourse, and 59 percent say they would not live with someone prior to marriage. Some 57 percent are anti-legalized abortion.

Eight out of ten belong to an active religion and 71 percent attend church regularly. More than half watch fewer than ten hours of television a week, and more than two-thirds believe in some censorship of pornographic movies, television, books and magazines.

Those who say that patriotism is dead are also in for some surprises. Two-thirds favor mandatory draft registration, and half support the draft itself. If given a choice about how to allocate their own tax dollars, 69 percent would spend for a strong national defense.

It is obvious that the students who live by a traditional moral code are the ones who become the high achievers: in academics, in athletics, and in leadership. When the schools enforce discipline, they are doing the students a big favor.

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