Parents Are Starting

to Win School Victories

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Over the past decades of declining public school excellence and increasing public school crime, many parents have chosen the expensive option of transferring to private schools or the time-consuming option of homeschooling. Many more have remained in public schools, where they face a constant battle against inferior curricula that fail to teach the basics but indoctrinate children in beliefs and attitudes that the parents find contrary to their faith and values.

Despite public school hostility to parental supervision, parents are beginning to win some battles against the entrenched establishment. We can report a variety of remarkable victories.

Illinois Governor George Ryan has just signed a law that prohibits the public schools from forcing students to participate in School-to-Work. The new law forbids the public school system from requiring any student to meet occupational standards for grade level promotion or graduation unless that student is voluntarily enrolled in a job training program.

School-to-Work is a highly controversial program designed to "restructure" the public schools into job training centers instead of educational institutions teaching traditional academics. It originated with a federal law of that name signed by President Clinton in 1994.

The purpose of School-to-Work was best described by Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL) as a plan "to train schoolchildren to be entry level workers for the national and global business community, with minimum academic requirements." It's also a plan to route school funding and authority from the federal government to bureaucrats and businessmen appointed by governors, thereby bypassing elected state legislatures and school boards.

Most parents expect more from the schools than training in work skills for minimum-wage jobs. They expect an academic education to enable their children to aspire to be all they can be.

The Kansas State Board of Education voted a couple of weeks ago to remove evolution from public school science tests. This action frees up local schools and school boards to make their own decisions in regard to teaching hypotheses about evolution, which are all too often presented in a way that is offensive to students of religious faith.

Contrary to the widespread front-page publicity accorded this action, no teacher will be prohibited from teaching evolution. The Kansas action simply stopped the state from imposing Darwinian theology on schoolchildren.

Debra Gaudette of East Hartford, Connecticut, has just triumphed in her five-year effort to see the results of her daughter's Connecticut Mastery Test given in the sixth grade. The U.S. Department of Education finally issued a ruling saying that the school establishment had violated Mrs. Gaudette's parental rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Mrs. Gaudette pursued her long and lonely battle in the face of refusal, stonewalling, and hostility from the school establishment. Since the tests, which may be filled with leading, privacy-invading, and even ridiculous questions, play a large role in determining the child's future, she believes that she, as parent, is entitled to know which questions her child missed and how they were graded.

FERPA was her winning weapon. While it is an outrage that it took the Connecticut school system five years to obey the law, her victory is a win for all parents who want to know how their children answer test questions and what criteria the school uses to grade them.

Abstinence education has suddenly become trendy rather than old-fashioned. The new Miss Wisconsin, Mary Louise Kurey, stood on an abstinence education platform throughout her beauty pageant competition, despite warnings from contest officials that this would handicap her chances.

At least 19 contestants in other state beauty pageants, including three young women competing for the title of Miss Illinois, also used abstinence education as their platform. Beautiful girls are standing in open defiance of the explicit sex education (with demonstrations of sex devices) that has been forced on public school children for the last 20 years under guidelines from three special-interest groups: the National Education Association, Planned Parenthood, and SIECUS (Sex Information Education Council of the

U.S.).

Student-initiated prayer in Alabama was upheld in a new U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision overturning a portion of a 1997 ruling by U.S. District Judge Ira DeMent. Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor called the ruling "a victory for all the children in the public schools of our state, that they do not surrender their constitutional rights when they attend a public school in Alabama."

Parents who dare to exercise their parental rights over their children in public schools are often called "right-wing, book-burning censors who are trying to impose their fundamentalist views on others." On the contrary, it's the public schools that have been doing the "imposing," and parents who have the courage to resist are starting to be successful.