

Go Back to School and Teach the Children Well

I didn't enroll in a Virginia school until the second grade. I counseled my parents on the folly of missing that first year. The next year at Walter Reed Elementary School a huge banner stretched just below the ceiling read, "The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It stayed up the entire 1958-59 school year.

Our public school displayed the Christian expression of the almost, but not quite, universal moral-ethical belief in this world. No way today. A Liberal judge would rule such a sign established a state religion. Every public official – legislative and executive – and the voters would tug at their forelocks and say, "Yes, your Lordship Judge. As you command, Sire."

How different we were 45 years ago. Our schools were racially integrating peacefully in Arlington, despite Democrat Byrd's orders. The Golden Rule, although of Christian origin, was the consensus cultural expression of right and wrong. The many Jewish children in my class didn't suffer. Carole Uhlaner excelled year after year as the nicest and smartest kid ever. (Does she have scars from playing 'Mary' in the CHRISTmas pageant?).

No murders, no rapes, no drugs, no assaults on teachers happened in Arlington public schools that year. There were no cops in schools and no metal detectors. There were fights, though, in every school. Boys fought with fists. I had several. A teacher broke up the fight and asked who started it. The crowd of children pointed to the antagonist. He went to the principal's office. The defender went to the bathroom to clean up. End of story. How retro.

Today we can still count ourselves lucky in Poquoson and York for our public schools. Despite the real challenges – broken homes, alcohol/drug abuse, child abuse, military deployments – our schools work for our children

The best aspect of our schools is the focus on the children. At every grade, our schools are structured for success. If a kid will half try, she'll be met more than halfway by dedicated - often outstanding – teachers. If a kid needs help, it's there. The administrators keep our schools right-sized to function as efficiently as possible.

But I do offer a few notes of caution. You need to learn what the faculties teach, so the schools – you own them - teach the children well. Whether you have school age children or not – you need to know what is being taught to shape your future. Some examples:

- 1 Academic Fads. Stay vigilant that our schools don't slip into the psycho-babble of 'whole language' or 'fuzzy math'. Check out 'block scheduling' in the Poquoson Middle School. Block scheduling has failed across Virginia.
- 2 Multi-Culturalism. If a Menorah goes up at Yom Kippur, does a Cross go up at Easter to teach the world's religions? Is Christianity taught as one-size fits

all or in the true diversity of Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Pentacostal and Cult thinking and experiences? Is the Christian religion of 85% of Americans treated as the co-equal for influence with the tiny other religions in the U.S.?

- 3 Economics. When do students learn on how capitalism works? The facts of supply and demand? Taxes kill jobs. Capital growth creates individual opportunities. Illegal immigration lowers the minimum wages, etc.
- 4 Pedagogy. How much of a student's grade is from a group project? (Remember, there are no group SATs/GREs, admissions to college or hiring to jobs.) How much of the grade is based on watching movies, making models, drawing, etc. instead of reading, writing and understanding?
- 5 Virginia Values. Are George Washington and the slew of Virginian Founding Fathers, Robert E. Lee, Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson, Booker T. Washington, Maggie Walker, and the Boys of Bedford taught as heroes?
- 6 Liberalism. Look for the hot button words – Diversity and Sexual Orientation. See the Virginia Education Association (VEA) propaganda. What exactly is pushed in your schools for either the ideology of tribe or the cult of deviancy? The “traditional” family is still the basic building block of our society.
- 7 Anti-Christian Bias. Christians have been refused club status, denied reading, drawing, singing, or discussing things of Christian content in Virginia. The schools were rebuked, but how many times did the abuse slip by? The Rutherford Institute is sending the guidelines on non-discrimination to every school in the country. You can help (www.rutherford.org) . Likewise see www.gtbe.org to know your rights. The General Assembly requires every school to post 'In God We Trust' and start each day with a minute of silence. Are the signs prominent or hidden - wake up Poquoson? Is the morning moment quiet indeed?

Finally, hire more teachers but add more administrators by rare exception. Raise all their salaries without raising taxes (and cut spending in other areas). Support them in raising expectations for children. Applaud the pursuit of education – real learning. Thank them. Encourage them.

And Never Forget who attacked us and why on 9-11-01.

James A. Bowden