



Family Concerns

"Bridging the Information Gap"

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The following report is from two CWA members who attended a recent Sunflower Republican Women's Club meeting featuring a concerned parent who was alerting parents to the approved reading list for the Blue Valley School District in Johnson County. The new superintendent of the Blue Valley School District attended along with other members of the District and literally did "damage control" tactics on those attending the meeting by marginalizing the presenters and by telling the attendees that the school district wants the kids to have a full reading experience. As Alba, our Area Director for CWA and Paula, a Prayer Action Leader state in the article below you need to see what the reading list offers for yourselves. As Fox News says, "You decide."

Go to: www.classkc.org and follow the links for a tutorial in things you never wanted to think about let alone read. Think about your own kids and grandkids reading them. Even if your loved one does not attend Blue Valley Schools make sure you are aware of what is being offered in your school district . . . your kids are depending on you.

Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than You Think!

By Alba English and Paula Silvey

On Thursday, September 9, 2004, we attended the monthly meeting of the Sunflower Republican Women's Club in Overland Park, Kansas. This was not your ordinary meeting. This was a standing-room-only crowd. Nancy Hanahan, the club's President, had invited a parent in the Blue Valley School system, Janet Harmon, as well as School Board member Cheryl Spalding to be the guest speakers. The topic was the "required reading" books that this school system has approved for its English classes.

Janet, who heads a group called "Citizens for Literary Standards in Schools" (www.classkc.org), spoke first and discussed whether why it really matters what children read and whether this kind of reading is age-appropriate. She came at this from the perspective of a parent as well as a former English teacher herself. She was sincere in her concerns and articulated her reasons for challenging some of the books being used. But the most powerful part of her presentation was the handout that she provided containing excerpts from the books in question.

Now I realize that some of you reading this article are going to scream the usual rhetoric . . . "you right-wing radicals, you just want to censor everything our kids need to read". I say to your smoke screen, get off of it. We are parents, we are grandparents, we are stakeholders in this school system, we are educators, we are voters and taxpayers and our concern for our kids goes far deeper than the politics of this issue. We ask, "are we really protecting our children?"

Recently a national study was funded by the Rand Corporation, which showed that kids who are exposed to explicit sex on television are more likely to experiment with what they see. We contend that the same conclusion can be drawn here with regard to the school's required reading list. The kids are "affected" by what they read. We can all remember as kids reading wonderful fiction and non-fiction and being transported in our minds to those far-away places, doing what the characters did and experiencing vicariously what the characters experienced. Has something changed? What are we giving our kids to "dream" about by exposing them to this vulgar subject matter, prolific use of obscenities, sexually stimulating passages, graphic descriptions of rape, incest, pedophilia, oral sex, anal sex, bestiality and violence? We wonder about the increased rate of suicide among our teens, but we fail to make the connection. We expect them to read these books and yet to separate it from their own thinking. Are we not "contributing to the delinquency of a minor?"

You can parade all the teens you want before us and have them testify of how wonderful these books are and how they should not be censored, and how great the teacher presented the materials and how necessary this or that book was in order to teach a particular concept like "persuasion" or "critical thinking", but we don't buy it for a minute. Many students and teachers have been so "de-sensitized" that they think of the reading of these books as a "right".

It's time for parents to wake up and look in the mirror. What's coming up is much closer than you think . . . increased suicide among teens, increased STDs, reckless and thoughtless behavior. Must there continue to be a downward spiral? The use of these books has been promoted by THOSE who think they know better than YOU do what is best for YOUR child. At this meeting the school board member confessed that these books came into the system because the focus of the Board over the last few years has been on facilities planning and budgets, not on curriculum. To that the Sunflower Club president stated that "somebody's been in the back seat and there's been no driver".

Wake up parents! There are many excellent books (some of them on the curriculum list, some of them classics) that could be used to teach critical thinking skills. If we really want to do what is good for the children, we will require a higher standard of literature in our schools. We will be concerned both for their "physical safety" as well as their "mental safety". We will not continue to permit this "assault" and "abuse" on our children's minds with amoral and immoral literature.

To view the excerpts in question go to the website (www.classkc.org) and judge for yourselves.