

Ferdie J. Deering

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# Who Decides What Schools Teach?

"THE problem of determining what should be taught in our schools is complex and difficult. At the very heart of this problem is who shall determine what is taught."

That observation is from an article concerning basic education by Dr. John Folks, associate deputy state superintendent of public instruction, which appeared in Oklahoma Union Farmer.

He is right. What do parents desire that their children should learn? Should they or teachers decide what should be taught?

When our nation was young public schools were regarded as strictly local institutions, to be run by boards chosen by school patrons. Curricula were designed to teach "readin', writin' and 'rithmetic," with overtones of discipline and morality.

As public and private colleges proliferated, sophisticated courses were added to prepare students for higher education.

To support expanded educational programs, legislation was enacted to provide state aid for less prosperous schools. Educators were not

satisfied, so they went after federal aid.

In each instance it became necessary for local boards to surrender part of their autonomy in exchange for money. The Golden Rule of "He who has the gold rules" applies to schools.

With millions in state aid and billions in federal aid, schools assumed political importance. School officials organized and teachers unionized, promising support to politicians who would promise to give them whatever they requested.

As schools became consolidated and parental involvement declined, social reformers began using them as an avenue for propaganda for their philosophies — unionism, humanism, atheism, etc.

The extent to which this occurred was revealed in a study made by Connecticut Mutual Life called "Report on American Values in the 1980s; The Impact of Belief." Here are a few examples:

• It showed 73 percent of the public believes government has too much power over lives of citizens, but only 59 percent of educators held to this

view.

*Competent's!*  
On religion, 73 percent of the public believes government has too much power over lives of citizens, but only 59 percent of educators held to this view.

On religion, 73 percent of the public believes God loves them, compared to 40 percent of the educators polled.

Concerning drugs, 57 percent of the public but only 30 percent of the educators opposed smoking marijuana.

Only 35 percent of the public said abortion is not a moral issue but 75 percent of the educators said it is not.

Only 27 percent of the educators said premarital sex was wrong and 46 percent said it was not wrong before age 15.

Whether or not such topics are classroom subjects, teachers translate their views to their pupils.

Recent legislation in Oklahoma restored to local school boards some of the responsibilities and authority they once had. Communities may exercise greater influence over what their children are taught, if school patrons demand it.

## Articles Disgusting

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TO THE EDITOR:

I just finished reading Mr. Deering's article, "Who Decides What Schools Teach?" I'm thoroughly disgusted with another of his articles which is trying to destroy the public school system and educators. I am tired of his continual negative articles about public schools. The information he gave from "a study made by Connecticut Mutual Life" is very misleading. How many educators were in this study? Fifty, 500 or 1,000 of the hundreds of thousands of educators in the U.S.? What level of education are we dealing with? Elementary, secondary or college? What part of the United States was polled? This is very important because teachers in Oklahoma have strong moral character and discourage use of marijuana and premarital sex.

How long has it been since you have spent some of your time in the classroom? Don't depend on a study to inform you what teachers are supposedly teaching in their classrooms.

**Gwen Douglas McAlester**