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FROM THE EDITOR

In response to some readers' complaints about our new format, we have tried to create a version of this issue that is more like the old format. This is the short version. To access the full version, click [here](#). If you don't like to read the newsletter on your monitor, there is also a print-friendly version of the fuller version [here](#) that you can print out and read like a magazine.

Please tell us what you think of these changes by clicking [comments](#).

YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT TO US

Last month, we polled you to find out whether you thought your children received a better education than you did yourself. The results are as follows: 8% thought their children had received a much better education; 8% thought their children had received a somewhat better education; 23% thought their children had received a somewhat worse education; and 62% thought their children had received a much worse education.

This month, we want to know what you think of your local school board. Please help us by clicking on [vote](#). After voting, you can tell us all about your local boards' most noteworthy activities by clicking on [comments](#). We will print your comments in the mail bag section of the next newsletter.

[EVERYONE CAN LEARN SCIENCE](#)

Click [here](#) to access some great web-sites for readers who are trying to nurture a love of science in kids of all ages.

[MAIL BAG](#)

Our readers' comments are always interesting and insightful. Read some of the feedback we've received since our last newsletter—religious education funding—the good old days—the bad old days—the good new days—child-centred methods—public school fees—quotas—math instruction—and [more](#).

EDUCATION BLOGS

Education reform junkies should have no trouble getting their fix, given all the wonderful education blogs around. Click [here](#) to access a few blogs to get you started.

FEATURE ARTICLES

[A Way to Rescue Poor Kids](#)

Imagine for a moment that we have a cheap cure for cancer. Now imagine the medical establishment is doing everything possible to discredit the cure and prevent its use, so doctors who treat (but don't cure) cancer can keep their jobs. Imagine millions of patients continuing to suffer and die because nobody—including most doctors – knows about the cure. [more](#)

[McGuinty Education Report Card](#)

When they ran for office back in 2003, the Ontario Liberals made 25 education promises. Since Premier Dalton McGuinty regards education as so important that he wants to be known as the “education premier”, and since his team will be seeking re-election next summer, this seemed to us a good time to issue a report card on the Liberals’ progress in keeping their education promises. [more](#)

[What Your Profs Really Think](#)

First, the bad news. Your writing, basic computational skills, and critical thinking abilities are—there’s no way to sugar-coat this—abysmal. Math profs grumble about students who pull out a calculator to get the answer to 3×7 . English profs complain about students who can’t compose an outline for a four-page paper. [more](#)

[Bury Our Heads in the Sand – Not Good Enough!](#)

Alberta students always significantly outperform the rest of Canada on tests of student achievement—no matter what the subject, the age group, the test! So is the rest of Canada sitting up and taking notice? Perhaps learning from Alberta? No, they’re burying their heads in the sand! [more](#)

[Mission Possible](#)

In this article, Malkin proposes a very simple and doable action for ordinary people who want to improve their public schools. Essentially, she wants you to talk to your friends about school choice. Find out why by clicking [more](#).

[The Other Milton Friedman](#)

The death last week of Milton Friedman, "the grandmaster of free-market economic theory," as The New York Times accurately labeled him, ended a great life. But there was another Milton Friedman many obituary writers overlooked, or mentioned only in passing, that may offer him an even greater legacy than his economic theories about limited government. [more](#)

WHAT'S NEW?

[Two Taj Mahals for the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board](#)

In September 2006, the Ontario Ministry of Education released the results of an investigation into a **\$22 million construction cost overrun and questionable corporate card expenses** at the Windsor-Essex Catholic School Board. The overrun was attributed to many factors, including the addition of a synthetic track and a theatre-style cafetorium in both schools. The final tally for the two schools was almost \$80 million. [more](#)

[In Memoriam – Milton Friedman](#)

Milton Friedman, 1912-2006, was a Nobel-prize-winning economist who advocated laissez-faire capitalism. Here is what he had to say about public education. “If you look at the role of government in education, there are three different levels. 1. There is the level of **compulsion**: the government says every child must go to school until such and such an age. That is the equivalent of saying if you are going to drive a car, you must have a licence. 2. The second stage is **funding**: not only do we require you to have an education, but the government is willing to pay for that schooling. That would be equivalent to saying the government is willing to pay for your car that you drive. 3. The third level is **operation**: that would be the equivalent of the government manufacturing your automobile or, to put it in a different image, consider food stamps today. Food stamps are funds provided by the government, but if food relief were to be run like the schools, the government would say everybody has to use these food stamps at a government grocery store and each person with food stamps is assigned to a particular grocery store. Do you think the groceries would be very good?”

[All Kids Reading All The Time](#)

The link leads to a BBC broadcast on the use of phonics in West Dunbartonshire, the second-most deprived part of Scotland. Their expectation this year is that they will have **no 11-year-old children unable to read at grade level**. The reading program is Jolly Phonics. [more](#)

[Hope for the Neediest Children](#)

A recent Fordham Foundation analysis of how well the various states are educating their neediest children shows that some states have made significant gains over the last 10-15 years—California, Delaware, Florida, New York, Massachusetts, and Texas. These states are “national leaders in education reform, indicating that solid standards, tough accountability, and greater school choice can yield better classroom results”. [more](#)

[No-Excuses Schools](#)

The annual Garfield Weston Award for Academic Achievement in Excess of Expectations “recognizes schools that ensure students succeed regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds”. This award challenges the notion that schools in rich neighbourhoods always do better academically than schools in lower-income neighbourhoods. [more](#)

BOOK REVIEW

***Let's Kill Dick and Jane: How the Open Court Publishing Company Fought the Culture of American Education* (St. Augustine's Press, 2006, 161 pages) by Harold Henderson**

Educational reforms come and go, yet public schools stay the same. Their culture is pervasive and almost invisible, as water is to a fish. Nothing much is going to change until this culture changes, and no one reform can unlock it. Quite the opposite: its anti-intellectual, activity-oriented bias turns reforms that sound good on the 10 pm news into more routines for the 9 am class. For 34 years, from 1962 to 1996, the Open Court Publishing Company sold elementary math and reading textbooks that tried to combat the culture and bring about real school reform. Stories from the company's struggles help make this culture visible. Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt from this book.

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AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

High school and university students who think one of their teachers/professors is right out to lunch may feel less alone after they visit these web-sites where students can find out what others think about these teachers. Canadian high school teachers are rated at www.ratemyteachers.ca, while Canadian professors are at www.ratemyprofessors.ca. Clicking on the individual's name brings up all the raters' comments, some of which are hilarious: "She hates you already." "Emotional scarring may fade away, but that big fat F on your transcript won't." "Evil computer science teaching robot who crushes humans for pleasure." And lots more.

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