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FROM THE PRESIDENT

To read the full version of the *SQE Forum* on your monitor, click [here](#). To print out the print-friendly version, click [here](#).

If you like our newsletter and would like to make a contribution to the school choice debate, please consider making a financial donation (any amount is appreciated) by clicking [here](#). We do not receive any government funding and rely completely on our supporters for our continued existence! You will receive a tax receipt, along with our heartfelt thanks.

Your feedback helps us improve the *Forum*. Please e-mail me [here](#).

Best regards, Malkin

YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT TO US

Last month, we polled you to find out whether you would send or had sent your children to an independent (private) school. The results are as follows: 58% would send or had sent their children to an independent school; 37% had not; and 5% had no kids.

This month, we want to know whether you believe **classroom quality in Ontario** has improved, stayed the same or declined during the past four years. Please help us by clicking on [vote](#). After voting, please explain the basis of your opinion by clicking on [comments](#). This information will be very useful to us in the run-up to the October, 2007 Ontario provincial election. We will print your comments in the mail bag section of the next newsletter.

FREE ON THE WEB

There are all kinds of Internet sites devoted to education, and it's very time-consuming to find the good ones. From time to time, we will let you know about a worthwhile site. This month, we draw your attention to a web-site that provides free worksheets for download. There are worksheets for many elementary grade subjects, such as spelling, music, French, and math. Click [here](#) to access Keynotes Education free worksheets.

MAIL BAG

Our readers' comments are always interesting and insightful. Click [here](#) to read some of the feedback we've received since our last newsletter.

OUR MISTAKE

Our last issue recommended a YouTube video criticizing current U.S. math texts, but gave the wrong URL; it should have been <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tr1qee-bTZI>. We said that the same criticisms would be valid for "Canadian texts such as *Math Quest*". In fact, *Math Quest* is not approved for use in Ontario public schools, but the texts which are approved for Ontario – *Nelson Mathematics* and *Mathematics Makes Sense* – are subject to the same criticisms.

WEB-SITE OF THE MONTH

This month, we feature Harvard professor Carolyn Hoxby's web-site because her work is so relevant to school choice. For example, her paper "How School Choice Affects the Achievement of *Public* School Students" reports that "public schools are induced to raise achievement when they are faced with competition...The choice reforms that are currently in place do not appear to generate winners and losers, but only winners." Click [here](#) for Professor Hoxby.

FEATURE ARTICLES

The Inverse Power of Praise

The author looks at an unexpected downside to the current practice of trying to encourage children by stressing how smart they are. It turns out that such praise can backfire, making children underestimate their own abilities and be less likely to invest a lot of effort in difficult tasks. [more](#)

Spirit of Math

Back in the early eighties, the grade 8 students at Zion Heights Junior Public School in north Toronto suddenly began to dominate Canada's math competitions, winning more Canadian Junior High School Championships than all other schools combined. Zion Heights students also won most of the Canadian championships in the Pascal Contest, a national mathematics contest sponsored by the University of Waterloo, and more than 80% of the Ontario Team Championships. Spirit of Math, a program developed by Charles Ledger, a teacher at Zion Heights, was responsible for the students' success. Although Spirit of Math was and is scorned by the educational establishment, it was thoroughly vindicated at a recent Perimeter Institute lecture. [more](#)

Being of Real Help

Malkin Dare makes the case that most of the efforts to deal with Canada's serious literacy problems are a waste of time and money. This article explains why, and makes a suggestion as to what concerned persons can do that will actually help functionally-illiterate individuals. [more](#)

WHAT'S NEW?

[Ontario's Only Public Traditional School Shut Down](#)

After years of trying, York Region education officials have succeeded in shutting down Ontario's first and only public traditional school, Flowervale Public School. As of September 2006, the building is being used for students with special needs. Flowervale achieved exceptional results on the provincial tests, despite its location in a blue-collar neighbourhood and despite the fact that it exempted no students from the tests. [more](#)
[Kids Can Learn – But Can Educators?](#)

New research shows that a world-class elementary school math curriculum can be successfully transplanted into North American school districts and provide immediate and stunning performance improvements in urban school districts with high percentages of at-risk, economically-disadvantaged, and English-learning immigrant students, as well as in more affluent suburban districts. Virtually no special teacher training was required to achieve these results. [more](#)

[British Columbia Promises Improved Quality, Choice, and Accountability](#)

BC's Feb. 13 throne speech promises a number of changes to public education, including giving the Minister more capacity to create provincial schools and offer more choice in learning, and providing teachers with financial incentives to improve their students' achievement. [more](#)

[First State-Wide School Voucher Program](#)

Utah has become the first US state to provide school vouchers to every student in the state. It will let families spend between \$500 US and \$3,000 US in public funds per child on private school tuition. [more](#)

[The Great Global Warming Swindle](#)

This 45-minute BBC video proves that global warming has nothing to do with carbon dioxide, but rather is caused by solar activity. [view](#)

BOOK REVIEWS

Dumbing Down: Outcomes-based and politically correct – the impact of the Culture Wars on our schools. Kevin Donnelly. Hardie Grant Books. 2007. 230 pages.

This book describes Australia's latest educational fad: Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). OBE has already come and gone in Ontario (during the nineties), but its influence lingers on – embedded in the curriculum and the EQAO tests based on that curriculum, and continuing to dominate educators' thinking. In many educators' minds, OBE justifies such things as automatic promotion, low standards, evangelistic environmentalism, fuzzy report cards, and child-centred learning. Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt concerning the true purpose of the modern emphasis on teaching "critical Literacy" (known in Canada as "critical thinking").

The Math Plague: How to Survive School Mathematics. Sherry Mantyka. MayT Consulting Corporation, 709-579-5879, maytcc.smay@gmail.com. 2007. 134 pages.

This book, an easy read, discusses the math difficulties of incoming students at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The author is the Director of the Mathematics Learning Centre which provides remedial instruction to the many students who fail the university's placement test because their math curriculum had underemphasized drill and precision. Many parallels are drawn with non-mathematical areas of achievement, such as sports and music, showing that high levels of performance require huge amounts of boring, repetitious practice. Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt explaining why the New England Patriots football team won the Super Bowl in 2002, 2004, and 2005.

The Outrage of Project Follow Through: Five Million Failed Kids Later. Siegfried Engelmann.

Written by the eccentric genius behind the very effective Direct Instruction programs, this book tells the inside story of the largest research project ever mounted, and for sure the largest research project ever totally ignored by educators. Last month, the author displayed his book chapter by chapter on his [web-site](#), but it is unfortunately no longer available on the Internet. Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt that proves that children's poor learning is almost always due to inadequate teaching.

SQE ACTIVITIES

SQE president Malkin has been honoured by the Zonta Club of Kitchener-Waterloo with a woman of achievement award for her volunteer work in the field of literacy.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Click [here](#) to watch an eagle in real time sitting on her eggs (laid March 5 and March 8, 2007). If you follow the right links, you can watch a video of her actually laying the second egg. The eggs will hatch out after about 35 days.

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