

A step in right direction for teacher recruiting

BECKY CARNEY



A debate over proposed changes in how the state licenses teachers has called on the State Board of Education to maintain its current high licensing standards.

Unfortunately, one side of the debate erroneously believes that the State Board was proposing to lower standards. Nothing could be further from the truth, as a closer look will make clear.

First, the Praxis II test, currently being used, was never intended to determine effective teaching. Even the Educational Testing Service — the designer of the test — refuses to validate the test as a predictor of effective teaching. Since the Praxis II was adopted, North Carolina has implemented a rigorous accountability program.

Second, the licensing system being used today is not serving the state well. Currently, over 13,000 teachers on the state's payroll are not fully licensed. In many cases young people are being taught by substitute teachers who often have little more than a high school diploma. All together, teachers who have not met today's licensing standards are teaching 325,000 students in the state's public schools.

Third, at the root of the problem are two factors that the State Board is attempting to address. The first of those problems is that the state's colleges are not meeting the demand for new teachers. On average, schools need to hire 10,000 teachers per year and, in recent years, fewer than 3,000 of those teachers are coming from Schools of Education across the state.

The second problem is that the low pay offered to teachers makes it increasingly difficult to attract and retain high quality teachers.

In proposing changes to today's system, the State Board of Education is attempting to make it easier for schools to recruit qualified, experienced teachers from other states. Teachers from other states have become one of the most reliable sources of qualified teachers for North Carolina schools.

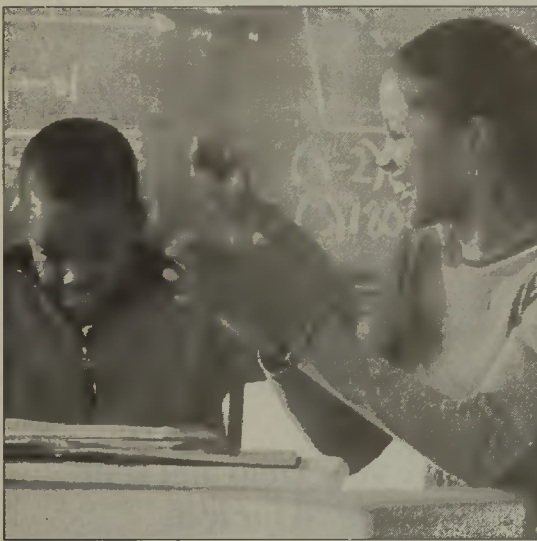
What the State Board changes would mean is that either a new teacher or experienced teacher from another state who had met that state's licensing requirements would not have to reprove themselves by taking a test. Additionally, new middle school and high school teachers shall pass a test or hold an academic major or the equivalent of a master's degree in their content area.

That is hardly a backward step — especially for experienced out-of-state teachers. One can only imagine what would happen to college faculty recruitment if UNC Chapel Hill or N.C. State required tenured faculty from other states to pass an examination before being hired by a North Carolina college.

Democratic and Republican members of the General Assembly — including my fellow House Bill 805 co-sponsors, Representatives Linda Johnson, Jean Preston and Douglas Yongue — have been urging the State Board to make changes that will make it easier for North Carolina schools to recruit experienced, proven teachers from other states.

We support the changes being made and strongly believe that these changes will bring to an end the time when nearly one-third of a million young North Carolinians are being taught by men and women who may or may not be qualified to teach. That is not a step backward. It is a step in the right direction.

BECKY CARNEY of Charlotte represents N.C. House District 102.



POSTSCRIPTS

Black is back, and that's so beautiful

American culture is digging our flavor, but do we benefit?

ANGELA LINDSAY



It seems America has taken note of and completely embraced what most African Americans have always known — black is beautiful.

We all know that black folk have had a tremendous impact on this nation's growth from the cotton fields to cornbread. But in recent years, our essence has totally transcended all things popular and has even seeped into conservative corporate America. This trend is leaving many black folk with the impression that white America is once again stealing our culture and making a profit off of it. Is this a harmless trend, or is it the slavery of the new millennium?

Our physical bodies may not be up on the auction block, but our culture, language and style is being sold off to the highest bidder at advertising firms eager to make a buck off of "us". Never has it been more marketable, more commercial, or just plain "cool" to be ethnic. Urban culture is being exploited in everything from sports to soda.

Mainstream companies such as Ebay, an online auction and marketplace, have incorporated urban vernacular into their television commercials. I was shocked to hear a conservative-looking, Caucasian reporter on the Cable News Network use the hip hop slang phrase "bling bling" with a straight face in a recent telecast. And, lest we forget, today's laundry list of blue-eyed celebrities, such as singer Justin Timberlake, who curiously develop a "blaccent" in mixed crowds.

Unfortunately, many incidental trendsetters of color are not reaping the benefits of their influential image. For instance, several hip hop music stars have incorporated popular name brands into their hits songs, many of whom received nary a dime of compensation from the very companies they promote.

* Sales of the Nike Air Force One sneakers have continually skyrocketed since rapper Nelly recited their praises in his hit song blatantly entitled "Air Force Ones". The cognac Courvoisier couldn't stay on liquor store shelves after music mogul Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, rapper Busta Rhymes and music producers the Neptunes collaborated on the ode to the alcoholic beverage appropriately titled "Pass the Courvoisier". When rapper Jay-Z instructed: "Motorola two-way me!" in his blockbuster hit "Give it to Me," Motorola's sales lit up like the screen of their two-way pagers as the young, urban set flooded electronics stores everywhere to purchase the technological devices.

Read: free advertising for corporations. Not to mention the subsequent appeal of the product to a whole new group of consumers. And the ethnic effect is not just in commerce.

Long gone are the days when waif-like model Twiggy set the standard for beauty in America. Her boniness has been bumped by the voluptuous bodies of beauties like singer Beyonce Knowles. Black folk have traditionally reveled in the femininity of wide hips, thick lips, and round buttocks. But, now that America has

caught on, the urgency on the part of less endowed women to enhance themselves has spread like an epidemic. I watch with a mixture of humor and horror as more and more women opt to mutilate their bodies via voluntary plastic surgery to plump their pouts and fatten their fannies all because society says curvaceous body features are "in."

Even ethnic hairstyles have become fashionable. It is not unusual to see people of all races sporting cornrows, braids and dreadlocks. Remember looking at the movie screen sideways when a corn-rowed Bo Derek scampered down the beach in "Ten?"

Celebrities like Philadelphia 76ers guard Allen Iverson have oft been publicly criticized for their "thuggish" appearance. But it is that very image that draws spectators to his basketball games just like rapper Fifty Cent's "gangsta" image draws consumers to record stores. It seems that while the powers-that-be may scoff at these popular images, let alone the idea of their own children emulating them, they can tolerate them just long enough to capitalize off them.

Critics may fail to realize that much of the urban culture witnessed today has come about as a natural progression from and reflection of the environments in which many African Americans and their ancestors were raised. So, it becomes not something we do — it's who we are.

As a result, many African Americans are protective of our culture because it is so inextricably linked to our identity. Many may feel that our persona has been stolen from us once and become defensive if they feel it happening again. As such, we may raise an eyebrow when a non-black person sits down to eat at a soul food restaurant or bristle at the sound of urban slang coming from the mouth of someone from another race. And we've all done it.

We are a creative and resourceful people, partially, at least, because throughout history we have had to be. Though it seems our uniqueness has been subjugated by today's society, I do not propose that we draw a line in the sand to cordon off what is "ours." Our innate ability to make something from nothing has only enriched our world. But it is unwarranted for our "some-things" to render us nothing in return.

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FILE PHOTO

Blackness is en vogue, including the standard of beauty offered by the likes of singer Beyonce Knowles.

OUR VOICES

'Under God' not national enterprise

The article by Angela Lindsay (April 22 Post) on the "under God" controversy was exceedingly interesting reading — interesting for its indication of the writer's youth.

And ironic for the manner in which Ms. Lindsay, herself an attorney, seems to unwittingly downplay the importance and historical value of the legal profession. It is on this attribute of irony that I disagree respectfully with this writer and offer my rebuttal.

Being older, I recall the discussion from the early post-World War II public debate on inserting "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. Some of the same points of debate from that era are the same pros and cons being offered now. It is, therefore understandable that some to the present opposition to the insertion of the phrase is now coming from us older persons who are in a *deja vu* been there done that, and who sadly recall that the conservatives obviously won and the "under God" phrase was placed in the pledge in the early 1950s.

The bottom line in my opposition to the use of "one nation under God" is that the phrase implies a link to some divine authority as the top layer of a multi-lithic bureaucracy. The fallacy in this thinking is that theocracies do not work; theocracies have never worked in Western societies or many in any society.

I am not an atheist; neither am I a lawyer, but as an old school preacher/seminary dropout, I remember one lesson that I think speaks well to our present 21st century debate. The very last verse in the last chapter of the Book of Judges states the case for the use of lawyers (and other human administrators) to preside over human affairs, and against a god-figure being placed in the constitutional framework.

Paul H. Hailey
Huntersville

Iraq regime change one year later

The writer is president of Charlotte Chapter Islamic Political Party of America.

With the recent mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners (some of whom were forced to pose in sexually humiliating positions) and the hiring of >ex-generals from Saddam's Republican guard — What good has come from the so-called "regime change"?

It appears that over a year later the Iraqi people have simply been forced to exchange Saddam and his Republican guard for Bush and his Republican guard.

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