

# Operation Jericho

Standing in the gap for our nation's Christian children. A Project of Citizen's United for Responsible Education - C.U.R.E

## **Arbitrary Math: The Anti-Christian (postmodern) worldview behind the new mathematics curriculum**

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A popular cartoon shows student Johnny standing at the chalk-board where he has written out the equation,  $2+2 = 5$ . He's pointing his chalk at a stunned teacher explaining: "*Look; my generation will soon rule the world, and if we say  $2 + 2$  equals 5, that's just the way it's gonna be!*"

What makes the cartoon funny is that it reflects the absurd reality of today's "fuzzy" mathematics curriculum. I like to call it, "*arbitrary math.*"

I wish I could claim credit for the term, but The **National Council of Teachers of Mathematics** (NCTM), who wrote the national math standards, beat me to it by defining the goal of *mathematical reasoning*, stating:

*"[Students] learn that mathematics is man-made, that it is arbitrary, and good solutions are arrived at by consensus among those considered expert."*<sup>1</sup>

Welcome to the *postmodern classroom*, where there is no such thing as truth or certainty; but only the arbitrary whims of various viewpoints, and differing perspectives. In the new classroom, facts become opinions, and conclusions based upon discovery are replaced by consensus based upon feelings. Right answers are de-emphasized in favor of *information processing, approximation and synthesizing perspectives to find common ground.*

Teachers are no longer supposed to teach a body of knowledge (i.e. "facts" and "truth"), but are now facilitators charged with helping students construct their own realities. The education cartel explained it well in this report from Achieve, Inc. in 2000:

*"Constructivism means...teachers should actively engage students in designing their own unique understanding of content, and...teachers should legitimize and celebrate the design differences from student to student."*<sup>2</sup>

Surely this can't include mathematics! Well, according to 250 pages of new rules governing the licensing of teachers (being passed state by state), "*A teacher of mathematics MUST recognize that there are multiple*

*mathematical worldviews, and how the teachers own view is similar or different from that of the student.*"<sup>3</sup>

If there are no absolute truths (as postmodernists claim *absolutely*), or built-in "design" within the universe, then mathematics cannot be viewed as the discovered language unlocking the keys of design, but only as an invention constructed to solve a social need.

Perhaps you remember the term; "outcome-based education." History was replaced by social *outcome-based* studies where history is only needed if it supports a pre-determined politically-correct social outcome attitude. Likewise, in Outcome-based mathematics, basic computational skill development takes a back seat to social goals.

In 2011, the NCTM published "*Learning to Teach Mathematics for Social Justice: Negotiating Social Justice and Mathematical Goals*"<sup>4</sup> explaining:

*"Education is intricately linked to economic, political, and social power structures in society that serve to perpetuate inequity in both schools and society. ...[T]he call for equity in mathematics entails a shift from thinking about preparing students to live within the world, as it currently exists, to thinking about preparing students to restructure 'those social systems...in order to remove barriers that women, minorities, and others experience. [Secada, 1989]."* (p.1)

One example of how social justice is included in mathematics has students "*calculating to determine how much [money] someone making minimum wage (working 40 hours per week) could afford to pay in monthly rent.*" (p.24) The study found that "three social justice goals" had been met by this lesson:

*"First, ... that students would recognize that a minimum wage is not a living wage. ...second ...raising students' awareness...about the discrepancy between minimum wage and a living wage. ...Students seeing injustice is a precursor to a third theme...that such teaching engages students in taking action to make change in the world."* (p.25)

The study suggests that basic mathematic computational skill is still required to do these calculations. But it's clear that most of the available class time is devoted to indoctrinating students with a pre-planned social agenda. I've seen example after example of math curriculum that focuses on just about

every political position from a left leaning perspective, including gun control, evolution, land-use, radical environmentalism, and population control, for example.

I submit that the government education cartel no longer sees any real value to basic mathematics. Dr. William Glasser, a licensed medical psychiatrist and author of the book, Schools Without Failure, explained the new view of mathematics as keynote at the 1996 Minnesota Education Association teacher conference. I heard him explain what his book states - that long division and multiplication tables are no longer necessary:

*“No one in their right mind would ever do long division or multiplication tables.... Answers are unimportant. A \$2.00 calculator will give you that. Math puts children in prison because we torture them with tables, then they fail and feel bad about themselves.”*

So, who gets to program the buttons? It is telling that an education conference would choose an M.D. of psychiatry to be its keynote speaker. Are children in school to learn, or are they there to be “cured” of their parent-instilled Christian Worldview?

It is also telling that the entire current philosophy of the New Mathematics was tried before – and failed miserably. According to the 1985 World Book Encyclopedia:

*“New Mathematics was an educational movement during the late 1950’s and the 1960’s that attempted to change the teaching of mathematics. ...Traditional mathematics stressed basic computational skills...developed by repetitious drills and memorization. New mathematics programs urged students to understand concepts rather than learn rules.*

*“During the 1970’s, achievement test scores declined...”<sup>5</sup>*

During our battle to stop New Math curriculum in Minnesota back in the late 90’s, an Education Week article admitted this was a return to the same failed ideas, claiming *“In the 1960’s many progressive innovations failed because they were backed with more passion than well thought-out procedures for implementing them. Now, a generation later, we return to the same basic ideas...”<sup>6</sup>* Two years later, Minnesota scored an “F” in Mathematics.

Today, there are plenty of studies showing our current decline, so I won’t bore you with statistics proving the obvious. Instead I’ll suggest that this is by design. According to the Guide for Connected Math – one of the named “Exemplary” rated programs:

*Because the curriculum does not emphasize arithmetic computations done by hand, some*

*CMP students may not do as well on parts of standardized tests assessing computational skills... We believe such a trade-off in favor of CMP is very much to students’ advantage.”<sup>7</sup>*

Furthermore, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) under the US Dept. of Education, set the rules governing what curriculum may be considered “exemplary” or “promising” and therefore the only curriculum allowed in the states today. According to the rules, the panel *“MAY NOT eliminate an education program from consideration based solely on the fact that the program does not have one specific type of supporting data, such as test scores.”<sup>8</sup>*

It made absolutely NO difference that a letter to then Secretary of Education Riley signed by 100s of Mathematicians urged Riley to withdraw the entire list of “exemplary” and “promising” mathematics curricula and cautioned school districts to reject curricula with such USDOE ratings.<sup>9</sup> Today, the National Curriculum standards have forced these abysmal programs on every school in the nation.

It is clear, whether intentional or not, that government-directed education is a bad idea and getting worse. Mathematics is the final subject to fall under the postmodern ideological knife. If social studies, literature, sex-ed, haven’t convinced you – perhaps this will. There is absolutely nothing left of value in government indoctrination camps formerly known as “schools.” And Christian parents especially have no business turning their children over to the government re-education cartel’s psychotherapy sessions for 6 to 8 hours a day.

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<sup>1</sup> Lappan, Fey, Fitzgerald, Friel, and Phillips; Getting to Know Connected Mathematics, National Science Foundation, 1996, p.17 “CMP and the NCTM Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics. Standard 3.”

<sup>2</sup> Achieve, Inc. *Aiming Higher; a Report on Education Standards and Policy for Minnesota*, 2000, page 10.

<sup>3</sup> Minnesota Teacher Licensing Rules; 10/06/98; RD2873; 8710.4600, p.111, para H.(2).

<sup>4</sup> Bartell, Learning to Teach Mathematics for Social Justice: Negotiating Social Justice and Mathematics Goals; NCTM, www.nctm.org., 2011.

<sup>5</sup> World Book, Inc. Chicago, 1985 Edition Vol 14, “New Mathematics.

<sup>6</sup> John Gessner; This Week; Lakeville Life and Times; Nov. 6, 1999 page 18A.

<sup>7</sup> Lappan; p. 84.

<sup>8</sup> OERI, Fed Register: Nov 17, 1997 (Vol 62, Number 221., 34 CFR Part 70,1 page 61,427.

<sup>9</sup> See An Open Letter to United States Secretary of Education, copy at www.mathematicallycorrect.com