

High School – Then and Now

✘ I don't have children, but if I did, I'd probably have to send them to private school or home school them. The more I read about the public school system, the more hard nosed I get about education in this country.

When I went to Eli Whitney Vocational High School in Brooklyn back in '64-'68, we didn't have a disciplinary problem or a truancy problem. While I'd say the majority of students were black and Puerto Rican, the school wasn't in the business of propagandizing a politically correct agenda of multiculturalism. The school was in the business of teaching us skills to get a job when we graduated. The skills I learned in high school have lasted me a lifetime. I had no problem getting a job after high school and continued to work while attending college and law school. The skills I learned in high school, have served me very well in my legal career.

From what I've read, things are a helluva lot different today. A few stories caught my eye recently.

At Achieve Early College High School in McAllen, Texas, students were required to wear red, white and not blue but green – the colors of the Mexican flag as part of their class assignment of memorizing the Mexican Pledge of Allegiance and national anthem.

According to the school's principal, Yvette Cavazo, "students must acquire 'knowledge' of foreign cultures and use language to enhance their 'understanding.'"

Understanding? I don't understand Principal Cavazo's point at all. I could understand an assignment which required the student to translate the United States Pledge of Allegiance or our national anthem into another language, but why would I want my son or daughter to learn the Pledge of Allegiance of another country? If you want to sing some other country's

national anthem, wait for the Olympics. Ms. Cavazo, how does this help students when they apply for jobs or college in this country?

Is learning a foreign culture now part of a geography lesson? Is geography even taught in schools anymore? Last year, when the National Geographic Society surveyed 18- to 24-year-old Americans to find out what they knew about the world, only 37 percent could find Iraq on a map, despite the fact that U.S. troops have been in that country since 2003. Fifty percent couldn't even locate New York on a map!

And then there's Evergreen High School in Chicago, where students will only be allowed to have three potty breaks – during the entire semester! According to Principal Bill Sanderson, the new rule is designed to ensure students don't miss out on class time. Each teacher can decide whether or not to enforce it.

Principal Sanderson instituted this rule in order to stop kids from ditching class. But it doesn't take into account kids with urinary problems, menstrual accidents or other digestive problems. I can only imagine the mess that might flow from this ridiculous policy. Perhaps when the school will be overflowing with parents bringing their children additional clothes, the Principal will realize what a disaster his policy really is.

As I mentioned before, we didn't have this problem when I was in high school. Corporal punishment wasn't used in my high school in the mid-60s, but we were basically disciplined. We were there to learn.

If students are actually using "bathroom breaks" to hang out with their friends, then it's more than a simple discipline problem. Anyone who tries to change the problems in the public school system will just be opening a whole can of worms. Teacher control, parental supervision and a student's

desire to learn are all problems with no easy fix. You've got more of a problem than simply asking students to "hold it."

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.