

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

A Lot of Blarney in Kearny: When Bad Things Happen to Good Students

Why Do So Many People Hate Matthew LaClair For Being Right?

Matthew LaClair would prefer to be just another junior at Kearny High School in New Jersey. Unfortunately, his history teacher David Paszkiewicz won't let him.

In a story that's gaining in national traction, especially after yesterday's New York Times piece, LaClair recorded the teacher telling his students that if they didn't accept Jesus they would go to hell. For good measure, he proclaimed there were dinosaurs on Noah's Ark, and that there was no scientific basis for evolution. And let's not forget, Paszkiewicz intoned, only Christians would be allowed in heaven. "Basically, what he said is this is the truth," LaClair told Brian Lehrer on WNYC. ([Click here](#) for the interview).

The sad part about the Times story was to find out that LaClair has become a pariah for having the temerity to protest when the church-state boundary was repeatedly trampled on by Paszkiewicz, who's a youth church minister outside of school. LaClair has lost friends and even received a death threat.

Paszkiewicz was described by the school's principal as an "excellent" teacher, even though he appears to have a rather fuzzy knowledge of the Constitution. Judge for yourself from these [clips](#).

And judging is what many people in Kearny, a blue-collar, perhaps too-close-knit town about 10 miles from Manhattan, are doing.

The level of hate directed at LaClair and his father Paul, a lawyer now considering suing the school district is startling and scary. Reading the message boards at [Kearnyontheweb.com](#) make the town seem more like a 21st-century version of Salem.

Give Paul LaClair a lot of credit for giving as good as he got on the boards, and for shredding Paszkiewicz and the district that tolerates his proselytizing in a letter to the local paper, [The Observer](#).

For now, school officials are hiding under the "it's a personnel matter" excuse to decline to say what actions they belatedly took against Paszkiewicz, who likely would have continued on his "fire and brimstone" approach to history were it not for LaClair.

But the fact that they dawdled in their investigation in the face of incontrovertible proof of Paszkiewicz's pedagogical malfeasance, and that so many people have blindly rushed to support him, tells you a lot more than you need to know about Kearny.

The odd part, this whole episode may be the best education Matthew LaClair's ever received in Kearny. Suffice to say, he deserves a lot better.

posted by Steve Gosset at 3:25 PM | 0 comments [links to this post](#)

<http://www.realitybitesback.blogspot.com/>

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 05, 2006

A letter from Paul LaClair

Editor's Note: The following letter came to us from Paul LaClair, father of Matthew LaClair. Because of its size, we were unable to publish it in the newspaper. However, we bring it you here, online, in its entirety. We apologize for not being able to include it in this week's edition.

When the David Paszkiewicz story broke in mid-November, some of his defenders immediately spun the story in several opposing directions at once. Apparently recognizing how far out of line the teacher was, they stopped at nothing to defend him.

The recordings do not lie. Paszkiewicz spent a week making inappropriate remarks in a public school classroom. No one set him up or forced him to say any of these things. He brought up topic after topic, all on his own. He is the adult in the classroom, and whatever faults he may have, not having control of his classroom is not among them. My son Matthew and other students asked questions, but Matthew did not initiate any of those topics, not one.

What Matthew did was recognize something was seriously out of line, and committed the apparently unpardonable sin of making an undeniable record of it. Let's stop the nonsense. If those recordings saved Paszkiewicz's career, his adoring throngs would be all smiles. But because the recordings preserve a truth some people do not wish to hear, and apparently understand all too well, they need a target. The story is as old as the ancient Greeks who attacked the messenger

bearing

bad

news.

Kearny's air has been filled with rumors, innuendos and outright untruths. So I write to clarify what happened and set the record straight.

Throughout the week of Sept. 11, a history teacher at Kearny High misused his authority to push his religious and political opinions, often stated as dogmatic fact, on a captive audience of students. Using a classroom as a political soapbox is poor judgment and bad pedagogy. Using it to promote a religion violates the Constitution. After a student complained to the principal Sept. 25, the teacher complained in open class that he could no longer conduct the class in the same manner as before, because "someone might change my words."

Hearing that, Matthew immediately recognized that instead of admitting his offense and moving on, this teacher was trying to cast blame on him, misrepresenting the truth to do it. So the student requested a meeting with his parents, the principal and the teacher. The principal declined to have the parents at the meeting, but would allow the student to meet with the teacher. After being put off for two weeks, the meeting occurred Oct. 10. Present were the student, the teacher, the principal and the department head.

At the hour-long meeting, the student asked the teacher what words he had supposedly changed in his letter of complaint, or how those words were "out of context." The teacher denied most of the student's charges, claiming students had merely asked him questions about the Bible and he had responded (which is entirely false, not to mention he has no business conducting Bible study in a public school, even if his students ask him to do it). He specifically denied using the phrase "you belong in hell." Then the student informed all he had recorded the classes, and produced two CDs of recorded material.

At that point, did the teacher say, "Wonderful! Here are the recordings, please listen to them, and you will see that I have told the truth." No, he did not. His response was to refuse further comment without his union representative. Yet, instead of heeding his own advice, he fired one more shot at the student: "You got the big fish." Need anyone wonder why people all over the world have concluded that he lied?

As Matthew's parents, Debra and I chased after the administration for more than a month, requesting appropriate corrective action. Not money, not a lawsuit, just appropriate corrective actions. I wrote four letters, in sequence, through the entire chain of command. Yet despite clear requests in those letters, we were put off.

We have been crystal clear. The present situation was avoidable. All the teacher had to do was apologize and correct his inappropriate remarks. Had he told the truth and issued appropriate corrections, no one but us would ever have known about those recordings.

When he failed, we practically begged the administration to resolve the matter with us. They did not even try. We made clear we sought correction of inappropriate remarks, and quality control.

Teacher discipline is not our issue. We have stated publicly that Paszkiewicz is a good teacher, when he sticks to his subject. His moral conduct in Somma's office and since is another matter, but it is not for us to determine disciplinary action.

In response, the schools' attorney tried to put us off us with evasive answers no responsible adult would have accepted. Coming from a fellow attorney, that is professionally as well as personally disrespectful, not to mention foolish. After repeatedly avoiding my question, he finally told me that I am not entitled to know what goes on in my son's classroom. He is wrong, both ethically and legally. When my wife told him we did not wish to sue, his response was "go ahead." Perhaps the school board and the taxpayers will have a few things to say to Mr. Lindenfelser about this conduct.

So why is this a big deal? If this was an ordinary case of church-state separation, we might understand division within our community, but it is not. What happened in that classroom is an attack on the schools' science curriculum, an assault on quality education and an offense to the religious practices of Christians and non-Christians, and also to standards of simple, common decency.

When a public school teacher tells his students they belong in hell if they do not

share his religious views, he does not merely violate the Constitution. This is not a mere slight or technical violation of law. It is an outrage, an offense to good and decent people of all religions. No wonder some feel the need to vilify my son. They have a big, ugly mess to cover, and obviously they know it.

The teacher's arrogance and disrespect did not stop with non-Christians. One Christian student in the class said his pastor and his mother taught him something about the Bible. Paszkiewicz's response: "Don't buy it." In other words, ignore your pastor, ignore your mother and listen to me. This is thoroughly presumptuous and completely out of line.

Consider this bit of bigotry: "I don't need to go out and slaughter Islamic people, I just need to debate 'em and they're done." Then he asked whether any Muslims were in the class. What arrogance, and what abysmal judgment.

This teacher dismissed two widely accepted scientific disciplines with fractured and rambling remarks that display an abysmal ignorance of science, not to mention that this was supposed to be a history class. He insists these disciplines are not scientific, but the scientific community all over the world holds that they are.

Evolutionary science is based on millions of fossils, supported by the DNA record and established-dating methods. All of it points inescapably to the same conclusions. Scientists all over the world are practically unanimous in that conclusion. Evolution is the intellectual foundation for modern biology, and has led to developments in medicine that have extended life throughout the world. Those are facts. Some doubt the theory, but we do not see them refusing the medical treatments it has made possible.

Some say Paszkiewicz is entitled to express his opinion. On his own time he is, but not as a teacher in our school. He is paid with taxpayers' money to teach the curriculum, not to misinform or give unfounded opinions. His transparent purpose was to promote a controversial and scientifically unsupported theological view not even uniformly shared among Christians. With one arrogant wave of the hand, this teacher dismissed a scientific theory that is recognized as an established fact by the Pope in Rome, ignored the law to boot, and strayed completely outside the curriculum. Apparently the school's administration doesn't care.

He dismissed the big bang, describing it as "nothing exploded and created something." That is not what the theory says. Then he tried to compare it to an exploding firecracker, never mind that a firecracker does not produce objects massive enough to exert a gravitational pull. Many people are suspicious of the big bang theory, but scientists all over the world, including NASA, agree it is the best explanation we have for the formation of the universe.

Most people reconcile religious beliefs without discarding the science. That is entirely appropriate. What is not appropriate, or consistent with modern life, is dismissing accepted science with ignorance and a complete lack of scientific curiosity.

Science has advanced so far that it exceeds the grasp of most of us. That does not mean we can dismiss it in favor of the simpler explanations of an earlier time. We are falling behind the rest of the developed world in science. We will pay a heavy price unless we join the rest of the world in the 21st century.

Paszkievicz dogmatically told the students the only purpose of public education is to provide an education to people who cannot afford one. While that is one purpose, the U.S. Supreme Court and 50 state legislatures have declared the purposes of public education also include teaching students democratic values, among other things. This was one of the only subjects that even touched on history that week, and Paszkievicz got it wrong. Not an opinion, just historically wrong, and all to promote his extra-curricular agenda.

The dividing line here is not between Christians and non-Christians. It is between respect and disrespect, humility and dogma, common sense and extremism, honesty and dishonesty, education and flat-earth ignorance. What Paszkievicz did sounds more like the backwoods in 1920 than metropolitan New York in the 21st century, and the students ate it up. Perhaps that is the most chilling part of this story.

If this teacher had been a Muslim telling your mostly Christian kids that they belong in hell, this community would be demanding en masse he be fired. (We are not requesting that, contrary to what some people have assumed.) But because he

calls himself a Christian, many have rushed to his defense. There are words for that, but I prefer not to be the one to write them.

What has the administration done? The superintendent told another newspaper this teacher was conducting a "high level" discussion in the context of American History. Perhaps he can explain how telling high school students they belong in hell has anything to do with history, or how telling them dinosaurs were on Noah's Ark is part of a "high level" discussion. Then he can explain why he was even commenting on what went on in that classroom, since he had not heard the recordings. And then Mooney can explain to Kearny's taxpayers and school board why he was condoning the teacher's legally indefensible behavior, thereby exposing the school district to a civil rights action.

Some in the community expect us to let this pass. We are expected to shut up and accede to the bullying demands of the loudest but least reasonable and least informed voices.

We respect some reasonable people may not think this is important. We think it is. In our view, one of the greatest threats to our democracy is the attempt to tear down the wall separating church and state, dismissing established science in the process. History is loaded with examples of nations being ripped apart by religious conflict. I challenge the apologists to cite a single historical example of a nation being brought down by respecting each person's right to worship as he sees fit, and keeping the state out of it. How much history do we need before we learn from it?

Some among us are determined to replace our democracy with a theocracy, replacing rule by all the people with rule by one religious group – theirs. The public schools have become a battleground in that campaign. Bring the culturally dominant religion into the public schools as a matter of course, get people to accept it (alone) belongs there and the campaign to undo the Constitution is nearly won.

Paszkievicz has displayed his contempt for the rule of law in misusing his position of authority to help wage that political battle. Apparently, he thought his popularity would insulate him, and that no student would dare challenge him; and, of course, if a student did challenge him, the student could never stand against

the teacher's adoring students and friendly administrators. How convenient it is, especially since Paszkiewicz believes he speaks for the majority. And it would all have held together but for those inconvenient recordings – the inconvenient truth.

So to those who say this is part of a larger battle, you bet it is. This is national news for very good reasons. We believe the Constitution as presently interpreted is correct. We believe religion is a personal matter, not properly the state's concern, and the smallest minority religion should be as welcome in America as the largest one.

There is no reason people of all religious persuasions cannot live together in harmony – in the main, we have been doing it for more than 200 years – or why the largest religion should force its views on everyone else. Paszkiewicz's defenders have been clear enough: spread "the faith," even if they must force-feed it. Some faith that is. Why are they not satisfied with each person practicing his religion freely, as he chooses?

That is why we stand our ground. We do not wish to see our own brand of radicals and extremists turn America into something it has never been.

We did not seek this. For six weeks, we tried to resolve it, only to be met with stonewalling, discourtesy and disrespect. If any of you think this is fun, I invite you to try it.

To those who have chosen to sling vicious personal attacks against Matthew and me: What purpose are you serving, and what are you saying about yourselves? Lie for Jesus. Threaten and slander your neighbor for Jesus. Spill hatred into your community for Jesus. What will it take for you to see what is wrong with that picture? I am fully confident that many local clergy could easily tell you what is wrong with it.

To the vast majority of Christians in Kearny who understand exactly what I just said – the true spiritual lessons of Jesus' life – please join us to help heal our community. We invite local clergy and civic leaders to contact us, and join together to bring sanity to this situation. I have learned from hard experience that there is little point talking to people who will not listen, but at least the

reasonable people of Kearny could join together. We do not, and never have believed, that our battle is with you.

Finally, we have asked the school board to take jurisdiction. So far, they have not.

The world is talking about Kearny. Its verdict is not kind. One way or another, this will not stand. Let the next headline read: "School board takes action, resolves matter."

We are less than 10 miles from one of the greatest cities in the world, a Mecca for business and culture, and a magnet for the greatest talent from all over the world. May we resolve this in a way that will make us proud and demonstrate the best of this town we all call our home.

Paul LaClair
Kearny

Labels: [Kearny news](#)

posted by Kevin Canessa Jr. @ [Tuesday, December 05, 2006](#) [5 comments](#) [links to this post](#)

5 Comments:

At [Monday, December 18, 2006 5:10:00 PM](#), whaleshaman said...

the kid's a hero. give him a medal!

At [Monday, December 18, 2006 11:57:00 PM](#), mpicanco said...

I concur.. Let Matthew and his parents be a role model for the rest of us. This issue is bigger than culture wars, it's about how the world can live together despite our differences. Its best chance is to uphold the secular society outlined in our Constitution.

At [Tuesday, December 19, 2006 9:27:00 PM](#), Anonymous said...

Bravo! to Mathew and his father. I see a bright future for the brave young man. I wish I had his courage now, as an adult.

While I feel some pain for the teacher, this is something he brought upon himself.

I am following this story while living in Connecticut. It shocks me how conservative - vicious - are the responses from the Kearny community.

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At [Tuesday, December 19, 2006 10:39:00 PM](#), [lizard6849](#) said...

If the school district declines to make amends, the next resort is the courts. Call Americans United for Separation of Church and State and/or your local ACLU for assistance. This is a clear, documented case of a teacher promoting religion in a taxpayer-supported public school -- a clear violation of the First Amendment

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At [Wednesday, December 20, 2006 10:51:00 PM](#), [oneellama](#) said...

This letter is an eloquent and potent indictment of the teacher, the administration, and the school board; their responses seem wholly inadequate. The reactions from Kearny residents to date have been mostly *ad hominem* attacks on Mr. LaClair and his son, or simple appeals that Mr. Paszkiewicz is actually a good teacher. Where are the replies that actually address Mr. LaClair's major points?

A worker in Fountain Valley, California recently triggered pilgrimages to a chocolate factory over machine drippings she thought resembled the Virgin Mary. Tod Tamberg, a spokesman for the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, quoted in the LA Times, had the guts to challenge this piece of irrationality: "Imagine showing up on your judgment day in front of God, and he says, 'Where did you see me? Did you see me in the poor and the immigrant and the homeless?' And you say, 'Well, no, but I did see you in a piece of chocolate once.' Doesn't sound so good, does it?"

Mr. LaClair has illuminated another piece of irrationality. The

community, the clergy, and school officials can't help but be listening. So far, the response doesn't sound so good, does it?

[New Jersey is the new Kansas...](http://obscenedesserts.blogspot.com/2006/12/new-jersey-is-new-kansas.html)

<http://obscenedesserts.blogspot.com/2006/12/new-jersey-is-new-kansas.html>

OBSCENE DESSERTS

LIFE. DEATH. AND MANY THINGS IN BETWEEN.

Dienstag, Dezember 19, 2006

New Jersey is the new Kansas...

I have a new hero. Strangely enough, he's a braces-wearing high-school student from New Jersey.

His name is Matthew LaClair.

As reported in the *New York Times* (thanks to *Butterflies and Wheels* for the link), he was disturbed by the proselytising efforts of his history teacher, David Paszkiewicz. Concerned that school authorities wouldn't believe his story if he complained, he taped what Paszkiewicz said.

And what he said, really, is quite breathtaking:

Shortly after school began in September, the teacher told his sixth-period students at Kearny High School that evolution and the Big Bang were not scientific, that dinosaurs were aboard Noah's ark, and that only Christians had a place in heaven, according to audio recordings made by a student whose family is now considering a lawsuit claiming Mr. Paszkiewicz broke the church-state boundary.

"If you reject his gift of salvation, then you know where you belong," Mr. Paszkiewicz was recorded saying of Jesus. "He did everything in his power to

make sure that you could go to heaven, so much so that he took your sins on his own body, suffered your pains for you, and he's saying, 'Please, accept me, believe.' If you reject that, you belong in hell."

(How timely, just yesterday I posted something with regard to 'flaming assholes'. There are so many...)

Now, this was apparently a high school *constitutional history* course, so you might be wondering (I know I am) what business Paszkiewicz had using his valuable class time wittering on about evolution not being science and urging students to accept Christ into their hearts.

I suppose it's not all *that* shocking to see someone making a confused evangelical rant. There are, after all, a lot of people around who hold views like that. Particularly in America, where about half the population seems to believe that the world is around 6,000 years old. People without the slightest idea of what science is, let alone the ability to critique it intelligently.

On one of the tape excerpts available at the *Times* article - which are unfortunately of rather poor quality - you can hear the usual line about evolution being simply another faith and also the one about the nasty state which unfairly prohibits people like himself from using their position of authority (and captive audience) to spread the gospel. It seems, indeed, that Paszkiewicz was well programmed at the creationist factory with all the standard-but-meaningless throwaway lines which only total idiots seem to find insightful and convincing.

So, the existence and activities of someone like Paszkiewicz are not at all *surprising*, even if he seems to have been a lot more brazen about shouting out the Good News in a public school than most of his ilk.

No, what *is* somehow surprising and disappointing (although I know it shouldn't be...when will I learn?!) is the reaction of those around him:

In this tale of the teacher who preached in class and the pupil he offended, students and the larger community have mostly lined up with Mr. Paszkiewicz, not with Matthew, who has received a death threat handled by the police, as well as critical comments from classmates.

(What the *hell* is going on there? A *student* gets a *teacher* in trouble and his classmates take the side of the *authorities*? What kind of obsequious generation of toadying ass-kissers is being cultivated at this school? That wouldn't have happened in *my* day, I tell ya...)

Here is an example of the kind of justification which people are using to stand

up for a teacher who so *clearly* is abusing his position of authority to spread religious doctrine in a public school:

Greice Coelho, who took Mr. Paszkiewicz's class and is a member of his [Baptist] youth group, said in a letter to *The Observer*, the local weekly newspaper, that Matthew was "ignoring the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which gives every citizen the freedom of religion."

No doubt Ms. Coelho learned about the First Amendment in Mr. Paszkiewicz's class, where I'm sure he spent rather *less* time on the part of it which forbids the establishment of religion and which has, over and over again, been interpreted to prohibit the sort of explicit preaching which this sad excuse for an educator engaged in.

Does that sound harsh? I hope so. No, really, I'm *very skeptical* that he really is - as the principal has stated - an 'excellent teacher'. The tape excerpts available online show him not only to be ignorant about the topics he discusses but also to be clearly *imposing* his fairy-tale view of the world on his students as...revealed truth.

By the evidence here, he is - like most fundamentalists, deep down - a *bully*.

He was not 'teaching'. I know what teaching looks like from both sides of the classroom. No, what Paszkiewicz was engaged in was *indoctrination*.

Furthermore, judging by his former student's comments above, it's clear that he spent so much time trying to save his students' souls he forgot to actually *teach them anything about the subject they were supposed to learn*.

To be honest, there seem to be more than one confused teacher at this school:

One teacher, who did not give his name, said he thought both Matthew and his teacher had done the right thing. "The student had the right to do what he did," the man said. As for Mr. Paszkiewicz, "He had the right to say what he said, he was not preaching, and that's something I'm very much against."

No wonder he didn't want to give his name...since what he said *makes no sense*. Both of them, logically, *cannot be right*.

Moreover: Paszkiewicz *was* preaching and his behaviour *was* so *clearly* over the line that, as the *Times* notes, even people you would expect to be *on his side* don't support him:

"It's proselytizing, and the courts have been pretty clear you can't do that," said John W. Whitehead, president of the Rutherford Institute, a group that

provides legal services in religious freedom cases. "You can't step across the line and proselytize, and that's what he's done here."

Yes. And that should be apparent to *anyone* - even Christians - who are willing to *honestly* look at this case. But instead, as seems typical, this is going to be spun by the offended believers as an issue of 'rights' and 'free speech'. It is another opportunity for believers to cast themselves as martyrs of that bad-old, 'arrogant' secular worldview. Poor babies.

But very much like the reasonable *sounding* 'we just want to show both sides of the debate' discourse through which creationists try to package their extremist clap-trap, the 'free speech' angle here is disingenuous. People like Paszkiewicz *are not interested in a serious, free, logical and open-ended debate*. They are purveyors of revealed 'truth', a 'truth' *which logically excludes other views*. (Or, rather, which *illogically* excludes other views, but I think you know what I mean.)

They have merely adopted the language of reasonableness to push an extremist agenda.

I have to say that the more I examine even *good-will* attempts to somehow reconcile religion and science the more I think this is ultimately fruitless. I've been watching some of the video from the *Beyond Belief* conference earlier this year. Even ostensibly sophisticated calls to somehow find a common language for spiritualism and reason - such as the frankly bizarre and unconvincing critique of the arrogance of scientific certainty and 'locker room bravado' offered by Joan Roughgarden in session 3 - ultimately, I think, fall flat. (Roughgarden's talk, also available in different parts at YouTube, is, I find, really little more than a not-fully-reheated, sub-Thomas-Kuhn-style 'sociology of science' rant seasoned with badly applied discourse theory, whimsical spiritualist burblings, and a not very subtle personal-is-political agenda. Richard Dawkins's reply is quite good...even if, undoubtedly, some will find it 'nasty'. But I digress...)

Back to the topic with which I started: If ever there was a demonstration that the key issue *is not* one of arrogant secularism but rather one of an aggressive and uncompromising fundamentalism, this New Jersey case is it. (Which is also discussed here and here at *Pharyngula* and which, incidentally, gave a reasonable and generous critique of Roughgarden's somewhat batty-sounding book on sexual selection.)

I don't know you Matthew, but I wish you the best.

You did the right thing, but I can imagine that high school is going to suck a little bit more than it usually does, surrounded, as you are, by a 'larger community' with more than its share of brainwashed fundamentalist yahoos.

(Which is all the more worrying, as Ophelia Benson notes, since we're not talking about the rural hinterlands here but rather somewhere near New York City...)

[A Letter from Paul LaClair about David Paszkiewicz](#) _

[Teacher talks christianity in class; tells kids they're goin to hell.](#) _

<http://new-atheist.blogspot.com/2006/12/teacher-talks-christianity-in-class.html>

THE NEW ATHEIST

QUESTIONING FAITH IN GOD(S) & THE LACK OF IT.

Monday, December 18, 2006

Teacher talks christianity in class; tells kids they're goin to hell.

This kid is brave. Matthew LaClair recorded his teacher's inappropriate teachings. [Read about it at the NY-times](#), and do [check out the audio as well](#).

While Matthew does seem like a bit of a "trouble maker" (previously he caused some stir because [he wouldn't stand for the pledge](#)), he has a valid point and shouldn't be threatened by other students & teachers for voicing it.

I don't know how anyone could defend this teacher. From the sound-clips of the teacher, it's obvious to me that the teacher is crossing a line. Even if he is being a bit "baited" he should know better than to continue to talk about his personal faith in scripture in class. It's just not the proper setting.

The question about teachers voicing their political/religious opinions was put to the person-on-the-street in the local paper. And I honestly think that a teacher could get away with voicing their opinion if they said "It is my opinion that... blah blah blah ... but there are cases against this. If you want to know more, ask me outside of school. Lets get back to the topic at hand." Some more opinions previously posted on the Observer are archived at Google.

There is also a letter from Matthew's father posted on the Observer's editor's blog. His parents aren't suing; they just want acknowledgment. I have to respect that. If some teacher began discussing his sex life in class, and it was recorded, parents would definitely sue.

It's also interesting to note that the teacher in question, Paszkiewicz, has a poor opinion of public schools and home schools his own children. Why is he a public-school teacher then?

POSTED BY NEW.ATHEIST AT 1:27 PM

3 COMMENTS:

beepbeepitsme said...

This should be simpler than it is. A teacher's personal opinion on math, english, science, physical education, politics or any of the other subjects taught in schools is not required.

What is required is that they teach the subject matter as required by whatever curriculum they are supposed to be following.

This is what they are employed to do and they are required to do it without favour.

Their personal opinion that $1+1 = 2$ but only because god allows it, is not required. Their personal opinion that condi rice looks hot in a mini skirt (or not) is not required either.

7:07 PM

The Alpha said...

This is ridiculous. What about the little Muslim girl that was told she was going to hell? I think she should sue.

4:39 PM

new.atheist said...

I remember getting teacher's personal opinions now and then in class. It's kinda hard to avoid some opinion, even the text-books are some opinion (we're the U.S.A., and we're a great country.... etc.). But even in my world-religions class in high-school, my teacher never said anything like what this teacher is recorded to have said. We were all encouraged to talk about our faiths, and I don't think even any of the students said "I believe you're going to hell."

I don't doubt a student could sue a teacher for saying something like "I believe you'll wind up in prison one day," so I don't see why telling a student they're going to hell is any more kosher.

And I really can't believe how much backing there is for this teacher in NJ. I'm very familiar with the state, and it's the last state where I'd think so many would back a teacher like this.

9:59 AM

POST A COMMENT