

Premature Technology

Useless without educated, competent teachers

Traditionally, schools have been managed by individual state and local school boards. Washington politicians are trying desperately to intervene in the states' right to decide what type of spending is needed for their public school systems. Using federal money as an incentive, some politicians are creating programs that do not always allow local schools to spend money where they need it the most.



STEVEN GILBERT

Federal money is needed to supplement state and local funding of school districts, but federal programs designed for publicity and political gain are not necessary.

A perfect example of a program designed for political gain is presidential hopeful Al Gore's plan to provide every classroom with computers and Internet access. Gore is promoting the idea that the Internet is absolutely vital for education in the 21st century.

Warning of an oncoming "digital divide" for children who do not embrace technology at an early age, Gore is attempting to lure voters with the idea that Internet-based classrooms are an issue that should supersede state control and be implemented by the federal government.

While these types of high-profile programs give politicians something specific to talk about in speeches and debates, consider the prudence of designating federal money for specific programs as opposed to forwarding the money to school districts and letting them decide on their own how to budget it based on their individual needs.

To fund the "Internet in schools" project, Gore proposed and helped pass an amendment to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that imposes a 5-percent tax on the total cost of monthly local and long-distance phone service.

This controversial legislation taxes every phone user from large corporations to the poorest citizen on welfare.

The \$2.5 billion per year revenue from the "Universal Service Tax" is specifically earmarked for the promotion of technology in schools.

It is not wise to place these types of restrictions on federal school grants. There

are many cases where the school districts could make better use of the federal funding than spending on technology.

As an example, there is currently a massive shortage of teachers in public schools nationwide. According to the Texas State Board of Educator Certification, there is an estimated shortage of 44,000 teachers in Texas alone.

When school districts need to hire new teachers and retain current teachers with a well-deserved pay raise, choosing to spend money on high-tech classrooms is not a good idea.

The Internet is undoubtedly a vital tool for university students and is even beneficial for some high school classes, but Internet-based education is not very useful for kindergarten through eighth-grade students.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (PBS) compiled the opinions of several education experts in a study on this very issue.

Andrew Blau, who is a researcher and policy expert on educational technology, warns, "Our research suggests that wiring a classroom in and of itself doesn't do that much for the educational performance of the kids. What matters — the really significant variable — is whether or not the teacher has that training to put that technology to good use...Computers are not a silver bullet for whatever may be ailing public education today."

Dr. Jane M. Healy has more than 35 years of experience as a professional educator and elementary school educational psychologist.

"What I saw was kids mindlessly pushing buttons," she said. "I saw them operating at a very superficial level of knowledge. I personally do not believe that kids should even be on a computer until they are at least 7...It amazes me that educators and parents have bought into the industry message, 'Your kids need this as soon as possible or they are going to be way behind the curve.' This is such nonsense."

Primary schools should give students gradual introduction into computers and the Internet as they make their way through primary school, but the implementation of Internet technology in every classroom should be approached with caution.

Internet technology is being portrayed by some as a cure-all for the ills of public



ANGELIQUE FORD/THE BATTALION

education. It is rarely questioned whether the rapid implementation of an Internet-based curriculum is a good idea.

The Internet did not exist in its current form five years ago. Internet technology is still developing.

The business world is rapidly implementing Internet technology. Universities had a head start as the initial users of the Internet and are producing teachers trained and proficient in the new technol-

ogy. New teachers are gradually bringing new knowledge, training and teaching methods into our public schools.

What is the rush? Schools have not had time to establish a proven Internet-based curriculum or enough trained teachers to implement it.

It would be better to slow down the process and let schools catch up with technology at their own pace rather than

force-feed a new Internet-driven educational system with unproven results.

Otherwise, the school systems could get caught up in the "high-tech is better" hype and spawn a generation of young students with poor reading skills without identifying any real flaws in the system.

Steven Gilbert is a senior speech communication major.

Bull Board

Good Bull — During last weekend's opening ceremonies of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games, South and North Korea reinforced their push for reconciliation with a bang.

man's appearance would have been like if O'Brien had retained his usual no-holds-barred personality.

Interpretive dance by the Masturbating Bear and Pimpbot during the show would have made Lieberman's appearance comedy gold.

Better yet, an appearance by Triumph the Insult Comic Dog would have made headlines — "Joseph Lieberman would make a wonderful vice president ... for me to poop on!"

— David Lee

Bad Bull — The term "Aggies" is defined as a word "used to describe the entire student body of Texas A&M."

However, certain people on campus seem to have missed this point, as demonstrated by bumper stickers with phrases such as "Real Aggies. . . (insert phrase here)." The bumper sticker most recently seen said, "Real Aggies choose life."

This proclamation is one of the most blatantly inconsiderate, close-minded verdicts ever hidden under the guise of being a good Aggie.

Students should not use their own personal morals as a way of determining whether another person deserves to be an Aggie.

All students on this campus earned the right to be here, and the title of "Aggie," when they were accepted to the University. A&M has become the world class university it is because of the student body's diversity.

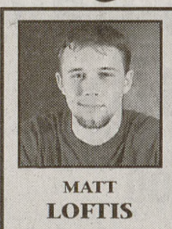
Whether the statement is "Real Aggies choose life," "Real Aggies vote Gore" or "Real Aggies marry their pet donkey," personal judgments under the name of Aggie spirit are out of line and detrimental to the unity that originally created Aggie fellowship.

— Jessica Crutcher

Unsung Hero

Former legislator Gaines should be recognized, honored

I've got a little story for you, Ags. Republican representatives, both black and white, in the Texas Legislature



MATT LOFTIS

of the early 1870s were the primary proponents of the Morrill Land Grant College Act.

As a result of their hard work, the federal act eventually was implemented, and public higher education came to Texas. The first two of these schools were the A&M College of Texas and Prairie View A&M.

Matthew Gaines, a black legislator in the 12th session of the Texas Senate, was a prime supporter of the act.

Gaines was a consistent supporter of public education in general and, when the possibility of higher education for blacks as well as whites (at Prairie View) arose, he was vigorously in support of the project.

History has supported Gaines' involvement in the founding of Texas A&M and his advocacy of the project from the beginning.

A&M has an obligation, based on history, to recognize Gaines' contribution, especially when considering the opposition he faced. A&M's tradition of never giving up goes back to those who supported the very idea of the institution, those who

refused to ignore the opportunity to educate all citizens.

This fact should be a source of pride for A&M, and Gaines' effort deserves commemoration.

It is reasonable that Gaines would be immortalized by a statue on campus.

However, when support for a statue of Gaines began to grow several years ago, the idea was not given full recognition and support from the University.

This idea to replace the plan for a Gaines statue with a less-controversial monument to diversity is unfair to students...Building an empty memorial to diversity is a slap in the face of the student body.

Since the Gaines statue was proposed by the Aggie Republicans, it has received the support of the Black Former Student Association, Aggie Democrats, the Faculty Senate, The Battalion, other on-campus groups and even groups independent of A&M.

Despite this support and historical justification, the project has not been given the means to raise the funds necessary to start construction.

After the project was approved by the President's Advisory Committee on Arts Policy as an acceptable project, the groups began to coalesce into a

movement to see the statue erected.

The Gaines statue was on its way to reality when, in the face of imminent criticism based on his race, the University's support refocused on the tamer idea of a "diversity monument."

This shrine to the diversity on the A&M campus will replace the statue of Gaines and appease those who want to see more recognition of minority

contributions to A&M. This idea to replace the plan for a Gaines statue with a less-controversial monument to diversity is unfair to students. The diversity monument project replaced the idea of honoring Gaines after the Matthew Gaines Memorial Committee (MGMC) failed to be recognized as an official A&M fundraising body.

Building some cheapened and faceless monument to "diversity" as an ideal will fail to honor true multiculturalism at A&M.

If anyone is a perfect representation of racial cooperation, surely it is Gaines.

An ex-slave, Gaines rose to

the position of state senator for his district after being freed.

His desire and willingness to work with white colleagues for mutually beneficial government makes him a character worth honoring at A&M.

Revering a historical figure involved with the founding of this school is a process that should not tolerate a weakened, diluted compromise. If the school will not openly empower efforts to raise money for the project, then the issue should die there.

Building an empty memorial to diversity is a slap in the face of the student body the school should be looking to educate.

Students have the power to revive the effort to establish a true memorial to multiculturalism on campus. A monument to the vagary of diversity is spineless and worthless.

It is a travesty, given the fact that Aggies have the opportunity to memorialize a real person with a tangible contribution to history.

A&M as an institution has to stand for something worthy. Otherwise, it will surely fall into the mush of timidity that predecessors labored to avoid.

The student body must not stand for history to be ignored and base racism to be permitted. Aggies have a worthy history to honor that should not be tarnished by fear.

Matt Loftis is a sophomore journalism and french major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Instead of having the athletes march into the stadium in two separate contingents, the International Olympic Committee allowed the nations to form one group.

They marched in under the nameplate Korea" with a unified flag — a blue outline of the Korean Peninsula on a solid white background.

Although the nations will compete separately, this sign of cooperation bodes well for their future.

Bad Bull — Say it ain't so, Conan. On Thursday night's episode of "Late night with Conan O'Brien," vice presidential hopeful Sen. Joseph Lieberman was spared O'Brien's usual fierce ducule.

Instead, O'Brien and his guest had a painfully tame conversation. He even let Lieberman close out the segment with a nooze-inducing rendition of Frank Sinatra's song "My Way."

A viewer can only wonder what Lieber-