

The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My People Are Destroyed For Lack Of Knowledge" HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce those risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

THE LETHAL EQUATION: Values Clarification Plus Death Education Equal Teenage Suicide

A recent report by two researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago indicates that "the white, male youth suicide rate has apparently stabilized at or near the highest point in recorded history." The report, published in the fall 1986 issue of Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis, states that the suicide rate among white males between the ages of 15 and 24 reached a peak in 1977, when, on average, about 22 out of every 100,000 young men killed themselves. Since then, the rate has appeared to decline slightly and appeared to stabilize. (Educ. Wk. 10/22/86)

What all of this means is that we can expect the teenage suicide rate to remain near its all-time historic high for the indefinite future, meaning that teenage suicide, like teenage drug abuse, promiscuity and pregnancy, violence, and functional illiteracy, has become a permanent problem in America.

The teenage suicide rate now is about 6,000 a year, with many thousands more attempting suicide, and perhaps several millions thinking about it.

Why are so many young people killing themselves? They are the richest generation of youth in history, with more money to spend, more cars, stereos, TVs, VCRs, clothes, games, toys, skis, airline tickets than any previous generation. Their economic and career horizons are unlimited. And yet most of the suicides come from affluent middle-class homes. Apparently, material affluence cannot make up for spiritual impoverishment.

I have interviewed the principals of two high schools (one in Massachusetts, one in Iowa) which have had suicide epidemics. Neither could explain why the students had killed themselves. The principal in Carlisle, Iowa, said that psychologists told him the cause of teenage suicide is low self-image.

Low self-image as a cause of suicide? Tony Rodman, 17, one of the students at Carlisle High School who committed suicide in 1985 was the school's best athlete and one of its best scholars. Another student, Darcine Fink, 17, who killed herself in Sept.

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