

## SEZ WHO?

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LOGO  
Contest

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## SEZ EWP

### The Dog Days of Summer

Summertime, and the living is easy! Really? Do things really change? Are they really different? How? Why?

For kids, it's time for extra play, or summer jobs, or just loafing around. But for some, there's year-round school schedules, and it's business as usual.

For parents, it's more scheduling for child care, more taxi services for even more activities, or too many "I'm bored!" complaints. But for some, it's business as usual.

For families, it's vacations to the beach, or to the mountains, or to grandma's. But for some, it's business as usual.

What's "business as usual" for you? Are you over-worked, over-stressed, bored, in a rut? If your answer to any of these is "yes," then it's time for a change! It doesn't have to be anything major or drastic, and it doesn't have to take a lot of time or money. It just needs to break the cycle. For mental, physical,

emotional, and spiritual health, we all need to take occasional breaks from "business as usual." So what interests you? What gets you going? What excites you? What makes you come alive? Go ahead, dream a little; think outside the box! Start small, or go big—"just do it!" In case you're stuck, here's some ideas to get you started imagining for the summer:

- ☀ Plant a garden
- ☀ Visit the zoo
- ☀ Fly a kite
- ☀ Go camping
- ☀ Read a book
- ☀ Make a paper airplane
- ☀ Picnic in the park
- ☀ See a rodeo
- ☀ Write a story or poem
- ☀ Tye Dye a shirt (then wear it!)
- ☀ Join a recreation sports team
- ☀ Learn to play a musical instrument
- ☀ Volunteer



## SEZ Dr. Thompson

### How Much Is Enough?

Recently, the Denver Post newspaper published "Talking (shhh) Sex" by Dr. Mark Thrun. In his comments, Dr. Thrun argued eloquently for the need to teach "safe sex" alongside abstinence. He argued that abstinence alone is not working. Letters that followed suggest that his argument is weak. Responses from readers suggested that abstinence would be more effective if our culture would teach by example. Some of the cultural, discipline, parent awareness, and attitudes from the respondents included:

\*Stop encouraging casual sex outside of marriage as the norm.

\*Society must accept that lack of effort on its part, not "chagrin," is the cause.

\*Children's peers, their entertainment, advertising, music, clothing and even other adults are screaming for them to have sex.

\*We want schools to take this on, but the issue is not education alone but it is also a moral issue (Schools must be careful about teaching or presenting moral issues.).

\*A middle school in a suburban area had an

unofficial "short skirt day" with stiletto heels as a day of "innocent youthful fun."

\*It's just "good wholesome fun" when they watch "girls gone wild," and listen to "the talk" with teens and preteens from Snoop, Eminem, Ludacris, Lil' Kim, MTV, VH1, BET, Oxygen, etc.

\*If 26% of the girls between ages 14 to 19 contract sexually transmitted diseases, are they getting this by practicing abstinence or "safe sex"??

How many school districts have abstinence in their curriculum? We teach many subjects in the school curriculum and have allowed those individuals with special training in "curriculum development" to determine what is best and what the content should be. Many elementary students move on to middle school with no concept of fundamentals such as units, tens, hundreds in math, but they get credit because they had the "basic concept right." They have a basic understanding of our form of government without needing to memorize the bill of rights or the list of presidents. (continued on page 3)



# SEZ The News

## The New York Times

April 20, 2008

### BOOKS

#### Growing Up for Dummies

By CHARLES McGRATH

MILLENNIALS, Quarter-lifers, Generation Y, Twixters, Oh-Ohs — it's hard to know what we parents of a certain age are supposed to call the young people now coming through the pipeline, the ones born after 1982. Oh, I forgot one: the Boomerangs. They're the children of baby boomers who, after graduating from college, return to the nest and sponge off their families. In 2006, if you believe the studies, almost half of all newly minted college graduates did this.

Mark Bauerlein has a catchall term for all these young people, especially the ones now in high school: he labels them "the dumbest generation," which is also what he calls his new book, subtitled "How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future."

Despite all the stories about über-achievers — students with near-perfect SAT scores who juggle six or seven Advanced Placement classes while also captaining the swim team, taking oboe lessons and working a couple of nights a week at the soup kitchen — most high school students, Mr. Bauerlein says, don't really do a whole lot. They don't read, they don't go to museums or get involved in community life, they don't do much homework.

And according to Mr. Bauerlein, they know next to nothing. Fewer than 30 percent know what the Reconstruction was, and practically a quarter of them cannot identify Dick Cheney as the vice president. They're six times more likely to be able to name the current American Idol than the speaker of the House of Representatives. On tests of competence in math and science, American high-schoolers do worse than students from countries that we used to think of as backward.

In fact, that's the great paradox of the dumbest generation, Mr. Bauerlein says: never have American students had it so easy, and never have they achieved less. Material gains and intellectual performance seem almost inversely related. Until he starts finger-pointing and hand-wringing in the last couple of chapters, which also go in for a certain amount of sermonizing, Mr. Bauerlein, a professor of English at Emory, delivers this bad news in surprisingly brisk and engag-

ing fashion, blowing holes in a lot of conventional educational wisdom. Full of stats and charts, his book is like a PowerPoint presentation you can actually stay awake for.

As you read along, it all seems pretty convincing (if depressing), especially when he gets around to naming a culprit: the digital revolution, which he says has empowered students in certain ways while also eroding their attention spans and analytical abilities. Sounds about right. But then you pick up William Damon's book, "The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life."

Mr. Damon, director of the Center on Adolescence at Stanford, says that students today are "working harder and learning a bit more, at least judging from the most recent test-score results." (Not the ones Mr. Bauerlein has been reading.) But he also says that most of these students are drifting aimlessly, with no clue as to what they want to do or become in the future. The only thing they seem to know for sure is that they don't want to run for public office. (Mr. Bauerlein also picks up on this trait, though you could argue that, given the spectacle of American political life recently, it's actually a sign of intelligence.) Young people are now so purposeless, Mr. Damon says, so uncertain and fearful of commitment even when it comes to finding mates, that many of them may never marry, and they're so hesitant about picking a career that they may wind up living at home forever. (He says there are "plentiful employment opportunities for the young," which may come as news to some recent college grads.)

"The Path to Purpose" also gets a little preachy and hand-wringy at the end, and some of the conclusions are drawn from a pretty small sample of interviews, but its diagnosis, too, is hard to quarrel with, especially when applied to the many slackers and Boomerangers who really do seem to lack a sense of direction.

According to Christine Hassler, author of "20 Something Manifesto: Quarter-Lifers Speak Out About Who They Are, What They Want and How to Get It," they're not just floundering, they're often anxious and miserable, suffering from something like menu overload: there are just too many choices to make. The result is often a feeling of stasis and let-down that Ms. Hassler calls Expectation Hangover, a phrase she is so fond of she has trademarked it.

"20 Something Manifesto" is actually

less a manifesto than a breathlessly optimistic self-help book designed to help its audience peel back the layers of their "identity onion" and sort out the poles of the "20s triangle": "Who am I, what do I want, how do I get what I want?" She talks a lot about the need for the floundering to feel self-gratitude and spend "quality time" with themselves; for the lovelorn, she suggests palliative remedies, like sending yourself flowers and writing yourself a note of appreciation.

In fact, "20 Something Manifesto" is an almost perfect illustration of the kinds of things that both Mr. Bauerlein and Mr. Damon are worried about. It's a book about purposelessness that's written not just for dummies but for people who are practically comatose.

In its format — lots of boxes, subheads, summaries and lists — it resembles a lot of textbooks these days, and it's written in an annoying, ingratiating style that presumes that Expectation Hangovers must also damage concentration and the attention span: "You may notice that I use a lot of analogies — it has become part of my coaching and writing style. Why? Well, it actually has to do with the way the brain works. . . . Analogies evoke the pictures we need to 'turn on' our right brain, which supports us in solving problems and dealing with emotions. And, hey, if you are going to take the time to delve into this book, you might as well get the full-brain-experience guarantee."

One thing Ms. Hassler is smart about, though, is the role of parents in creating the quarter-lifers' condition of aimlessness and anomie. Parental expectations these days can have smothering, crippling effects on their offspring, she points out.

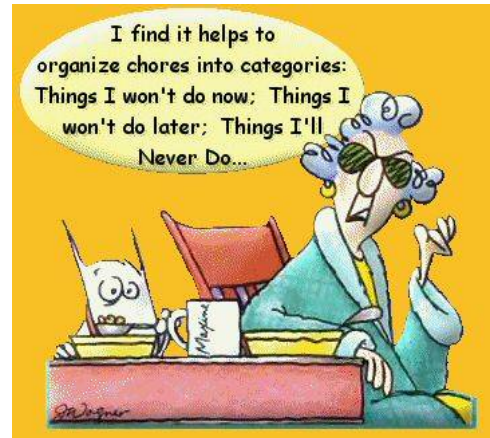
Mr. Bauerlein and Mr. Damon see it a little differently. They both note that young people regard their families more highly, and generally get along with them better, than people the same age did a couple of generations ago. But they see this as a sort of accidental anomaly — the one bright spot in an otherwise dismal picture.

It stands to reason, though, that parents must be part of the problem. Some of us have raised dummies and the disengaged not on purpose, surely, but perhaps because we listened to Mr. Rogers and told them too often that we liked them just the way they were.

*Charles McGrath, the former Book Review editor, is a writer at large at The Times.*

# SEZ Wit and Wisdom

“We do not see things as they are; we see things as we are.” -Talmud  
 “Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.” -Carl Jung  
 “Go to your bosom; Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know.” -William Shakespeare  
 “The years teach much that the days never know.” -Emerson  
 “It is the man who has done nothing who is sure nothing can be done.” -source unknown  
 “Let our advance worrying become advance thinking and planning.” -Winston Churchill



## SEZ Dr. Thompson (from page 1)

*“We want this for our kids and our families. We are ready to fight. We believe in our children, and we believe they deserve it.”*

They do have "exposure" to ESL (English as a Second Language) where they are allowed to speak Spanish during class. Language Arts classes where they write papers that have very little "socially redeeming value" and are given a passing, if not high, grade even though the paper has misspelled words, little or no punctuation, and sentence structure that requires even the best of teachers to concentrate to get meaning from the sentence.

Enter charter schools. Another recent Denver Post news article, "Charter-school

	Middle School	Charter School
Safety/discipline total incidents reported	151	1
Student to teacher ratio	18 to 1	13 to 1
Avg yrs teaching experience	11	4
% teaching subject of their degree	46	25
Avg teacher days absent	4	1
# of professional development days	5	12
Avg salary, annually	50,000	31,000

Fans Want More," includes these comments: "We want this for our kids and our families. We are ready to fight. We believe in our children, and we believe they deserve it." "I don't think this is an aberration." "...they begin school at 7:25 and end at 5 p.m., they have three weeks of summer school and 18 days of Saturday school...It all pays off."

Many of the statistics in the accompanying table should cause you to question what the National Department of Education would like you to believe about discipline, teacher to student ratios, years of teacher experience, importance of teaching in your degreed area, reason for teacher absence, days for professional development (and what is offered at these sessions), and how much money makes for better education.

Check out Chapter 2 of "I'm Sick and Tired and Scared To Death: Education Edition" where you'll find stories of student contacts, administrative experiences, and legislative meetings that give insight into why we have curriculum problems. Student comments in Appendix A will alert you to the fact that students are aware that a problem exists. Sez Who? In this case, students currently in the system.

## SEZ You!

It's your turn!

**EWP (still) wants/needs a logo!**

Help us out—send us your ideas.

Winning submission will receive an autographed copy of "I'm Sick and Tired and Scared to Death" (your choice of editions).

Contest will remain open until a logo is chosen. Send us your ideas today via e-mail or snail mail!

Submit your comments, questions, feedback, favorite poems, stories, photos, quips, quotes, cartoons, whatever.

We also invite you to send stories and/or articles for consideration in "SEZ The News."

Submissions may be sent via e-mail or snail mail. For any submission you want returned, please provide a SASE.

# SEZ Our Schedule

Watch for us in your area! If we're not there, contact us to arrange a date for your group.

2008		2009	
Spring (March-May 2008) March	Lincoln, NE	Spring (March-May 2009)	
Summer (June-August 2008) May	Lincoln, NE WOMC-Maryland CJAD-Canada KEYS-Texas	Summer (June-August 2009)	
June	Book Signing Glenwood Springs, CO	Winter (November 2009-February 2010)	
July	Bigfork, MT Northern California		
Fall (September-October 2008)			
Winter (November 2008-February 2009)			

\*\*\*Book NOW!\*\*\*



POSTAGE

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