

Keep the Faith

Must public schools pretend that only secular solutions are available to meet students' needs?

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ALMOST ANY EDUCATOR would agree that education is more than merely filling a student's head; it is also nurturing his heart. That is one reason why schools attempt to address students' emotional and moral needs along with their cognitive needs.

An important way to satisfy these emotional and moral needs is to address them in spiritual terms. However, this poses a difficulty for public schools. For instance, school leaders may recognize the connection between religious values and moral behavior or emotional well-being, but they are not certain how to facilitate this connection without church-state entanglement.

In this edition of *TrendWatch*, we offer some guidance to educational leaders by highlighting programs and schools that are working out successful relationships with faith-based organizations. Their shared goal - or common ground (to use the current vernacular) - is their desire to see children and young people develop into whole, healthy, and productive people.

Schools need not ignore the spiritual dimension of a student's life, even though they must be careful about the way they address that aspect of healthy development. Faith-based organizations can help schools do this in ways that meet the needs of students

while not violating First Amendment rights. It can be done, and it must be done for the sake of students.

Because of problems associated with the growing moral callousness of today's youth, schools can no longer afford to ignore the important role that faith can play in promoting good conduct. In fact, it is in a school's best interest if educators and administrators not only allow but also encourage an appropriate relationship with faith-based organizations within their communities. Public schools need not be sanctuaries of secularism. I hope you find the stories in this edition inspiring and instructive.