**Bush Budget Calls for Private School Scholarships**

President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush pose with fifth graders at the North Glen Elementary School in Glen Bern, Maryland on January 9, 2006. Bush visited the school to speak about the fourth anniversary of the passage of the “No Child Left Behind” federal education reform measure.

**By Robert Holland**

Private school “Opportunity Scholarships” and beefed-up math and science instruction to spur American economic competitiveness are two key education proposals in President George W. Bush’s budget for the new fiscal year beginning in October.

The FY2007 budget, released February 6, contains a $100 million item to offer eligible parents the option of using either $4,000 private school scholarships or $3,000 worth of intensive tutoring for their children when they are in public schools found “in need of improvement” under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) for six years or longer.

U.S. Department of Education officials said students enrolled in as many as 2,000 chronically underperforming public schools across the country could be eligible for the new offering this school year. The vouchers would go to low-income families under guidelines similar to those for the federal voucher project in Washington, DC.

“President’s Opportunity Scholarship Program OKed”

**By Karla Dial**

School choice advocates won a major victory February 17 in Wisconsin when Gov. Jim Doyle (D) and Assembly Speaker Jim Gard (R-Peshtigo) reached a compromise in a three-year battle over raising the enrollment cap for choice schools in Milwaukee.

The agreement came one business day before the Milwaukee Department of Public Instruction was scheduled to vote on a proposal to increase the number of students eligible for the voucher program.

Clint Bolick, president and general counsel for the Phoenix-based Alliance for School Choice, said he was disappointed Napolitano failed to follow through on her commitment. The tax credit program would have given low-income children across the state school choice.

**Arizona Gov. Reneges Again on Promise**

**By Kate McGreevy**

For the second time in two years, Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) has vetoed a corporate scholarship tax credit program she had previously promised to sign. Napolitano made her January 18 veto announcement just days after the Republican-led legislature passed a revised version of the corporate scholarship tax credit bill.

“The president’s Opportunity Scholarship Program OKed”

**By Michael Coulter**

Later this year, if the New Hampshire House agrees with a measure passed by the state Senate on January 18, students in low-income families in the Granite State could receive scholarships to attend the schools of their choice.

On a 14-9 vote, the Senate approved S.B. 131 to create the 21st Century Scholars Fund—which, if approved by state legislators, would provide scholarships to low-income students.

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**Emerging Issues 2005**

Edited by Joseph L. Bast and Dennis Byrne

Penetrating analysis of many of the major public policy issues of the day, written by 28 of the nation’s leading experts!

On September 23, 2004, 120 elected officials, public policy experts, and grassroots activists from across the country gathered in Chicago to look forward to the shape of public policy debates in the coming years. Twenty-eight short presentations were delivered by many of the country’s leading free-market thinkers. Emerging Issues 2005 contains the edited proceedings of this remarkable conference.

All the major public policy topics of the day are covered: Taxes and budget issues, environmental regulation, school reform, health care finance, telecommunications, tort reform, and more. The authors include elected officials at the front lines of public policy change, leaders of major think tanks and foundations, and highly respected scientists, economists, and legal authorities.

Emerging Issues 2005 is a timely and authoritative guide to the public policy debates that lay ahead, yet it is short and written in plain English, making it an excellent introduction to public policy debates for an entire government affairs or public affairs staff. It can provide essential background and perspective for everyone from the boardroom to the mailroom.

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Director of Economic Policy
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Supreme Court Upholds Public Funding for Catholic School Teachers

By Krista Kafer

On January 9, 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review a lower court’s ruling in favor of government funding for teachers in Catholic schools. The ruling provides yet another precedent favoring school choice, said Clint Bolick, president and general counsel of the Alliance for School Choice and a litigator in the 2002 Zelman v. Simmons-Harris case, which upheld Cleveland’s citywide voucher program.

“Since Zelman,” Bolick said, “we have seen an unbroken line of federal court cases supporting school choice. No federal constitutional obstacle to school choice exists.”

By declining to review the case, the Supreme Court upheld the decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in American Jewish Congress v. Corporation for National and Community Service. In March 2005, the appeals court ruled in favor of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that oversees AmeriCorps, overturning an earlier federal court decision that said AmeriCorps violates the U.S. Constitution by providing awards to teachers in religious schools.

“Since Zelman, we have seen an unbroken line of federal court cases supporting school choice. No federal constitutional obstacle to school choice exists.”

CLINT BOLICK  ALLIANCE FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

No Indecentation

The AmeriCorps program provides a financial aid benefit of $4,735 to individuals who serve at least 1,700 hours at organizations that meet public safety, education, environment, and other human and community needs. The program also provides participating organizations $400 for each AmeriCorps participant, to assist with the cost of training and administration. Both secular and faith-based organizations may apply to participate in the program.

At the heart of the controversy was a program managed by the University of Notre Dame and approved by AmeriCorps that trains and places AmeriCorps participants at needy Catholic schools. Participants, who teach secular subjects to meet the terms of AmeriCorps participation, may also teach religious classes. They also contended the award of direct grants for administration and training to faith-based organizations violates the First Amendment.

In July 2004, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ruled in favor of the AJC, describing such practices as “impermissible government indirection in violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment.”

Decades of Precedents

The appeals court reversed the decision. Citing cases from the past two decades—Zelman, Zobrest v. Catalina Foothills School Dist. (1983), Witts v. Washington Dep’t of Servs. for Blind (1986), and Mueller v. Allen (1983)—the court stated a government program does not violate the Constitution if it is neutral toward religion and benefits a broad class of citizens who provide funds to religious institutions through private independent choices. Such aid, the Supreme Court has ruled repeatedly, does not amount to an endorsement of religion.

The appeals court noted AmeriCorps awards are available to a broad class of individuals without regard to religion. Participants who teach religious courses in addition to secular courses do so of their own free will. Only hours spent teaching secular subjects count toward the 1,700-hour minimum, and teachers may not wear the AmeriCorps logo when teaching religious courses. Likewise, the $400 grants are available to all participating organizations without regard to religion.

The ruling rests on a firm foundation of precedents that allow government funding to faith-based institutions including schools, said Andrew Coulson, director of the Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Opportunity in Washington, DC.

“When the Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of American Jewish Congress v. AmeriCorps, it reaffirmed its 2002 precedent in the Zelman v. Simmons-Harris ruling,” Coulson said. “The U.S. Constitution does not forbid government funds from reaching religious schools, so long as the funding program itself is religiously neutral.”

ANDREW COULSON  CATO INSTITUTE

Krista Kafer (kristakafer@msn.com) is a freelance writer based in Denver.
Arizona

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arships to attend the private schools of their parents’ choosing.

“The governor has broken a covenant with Arizona’s schoolchildren by vetoing a scholarship tax credit bill to expand educational opportunities after promising to sign it, not once but twice,” Bolick said.

Rocky History

Arizona state Rep. Steven B. Yarbrough (R-Chandler), the key sponsor of the corporate scholarship tax credit bill multiple times, explained the proposal has gone through several versions over the past few years. In 2003, it passed the Senate but not the House; in 2004 it passed the House but not the Senate.

Yarbrough noted the bill passed the legislature twice in 2005. Senate Republicans agreed to a deal with Napolitano: She would sign the corporate scholarship tax credit if they funded an additional tool to expand school choice organizations.

But after the Senate passed the budget funding the kindergartens program, Napolitano reneged on her end of the deal, saying the tax credit bill should have had a five-year expiration, or “sunset clause.” She said at the time that if the legislature passed the tax credit program again with the sunset clause included, she’d sign it into law. The most recent version, passed by the legislature on January 11, included the clause.

“Until we have a comprehensive agreement about next year’s budget, it is premature to consider individual budget-related legislation on a piecemeal basis,” Napolitano wrote in a January 18 veto letter to House Speaker Jim Weiers (R-Phoenix).

Funding Organizations

Yarbrough said the corporate tax credit bill would have provided a total of $5 million in annual tax credits for corporations donating to a school tuition organization (STO). STOs are nonprofit organizations that distribute scholarships to eligible students. Currently, STOs are largely funded by individuals, who since 1998 have enjoyed tax credits through Arizona’s Tuition Tax Credit Program.

“The STOs would receive donations and award scholarships to individual students,” Yarbrough said. “The maximum award would be $4,200 for K-8 and $5,500 for 9-12. The students would have to be switchers from public school or first-time students.”

Additionally, families would be means-tested to ensure their income did not exceed 185 percent of the school reduced-price lunch eligibility cutoff level, and private schools would have to agree to certain provisions, such as fingerprinting their employees and publishing the results of national norm-referenced tests.

High Hopes

Yarbrough hopes school choice advocates in the legislature will introduce a stronger version of the corporate scholarship tax credit bill in 2006.

“My band of school choice folks, which includes a narrow majority in both the Arizona House and the Senate, will definitely advance another version of the corporate scholarship tax credit bill this session.”

STEVEN B. YARBROUGH
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
CHANDLER, ARIZONA

“Hopefully it will be a better version than the budget version and more like the first version we passed in 2005.”

Corporate scholarship tax credits already have provided educational opportunities for thousands of disadvantaged students in Florida and Pennsylvania, Bolick said. He believes they have unique benefits, especially for states.

Significant Benefits

“They are less regulated than school vouchers, they can constitute a cost savings to the state, and because they do not involve appropriations of public funds, they can be insulated from constitutional challenges under state constitution Blaine amendments,” Bolick explained. Blaine amendments are provisions found in most state constitutions proscribing direct government aid to schools with religious affiliations.

But states aren’t the only entities that benefit from tax credit programs.

“The benefit to businesses would have been the opportunity to direct their state income tax liability to an STO for these scholarships,” Yarbrough added. “The benefit to parents and students would have been the potential for receiving a scholarship towards the cost of tuition at the private school of the parent’s choice.”

Evident Need, Support

Support for school choice in Arizona appears to be strong. A survey conducted by the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation in 2005 revealed 91.4 percent of Arizonans supported one or more of the five school choice proposals pending at that time in the legislature.

“The governor has broken a covenant with Arizona’s schoolchildren by vetoing a scholarship tax credit bill to expand educational opportunities after promising to sign it, not once but twice.”

CLINT BOLICK
ALLIANCE FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

School choice advocates like Bolick believe educational options are particularly necessary in a state where children are not achieving academically.

“As many as two-thirds of Latino and black schoolchildren, and nearly one-third of white students, score below basic literacy levels,” Bolick said of Arizona’s schools.

While Yarbrough said Napolitano’s political commitment to the teacher union ultimately prohibited her support, even after legislators added a sunset clause, he is committed to the legislation for Arizona’s schoolchildren.

“I hope we continue to fight for this additional tool to expand school choice in Arizona to the benefit of students and taxpayers alike,” Yarbrough said.

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Milwaukee

Continued from page 1

to begin telling schools how to implement seat rationing in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP).

At press time, the deal was awaiting approval by the Wisconsin legislature, which was scheduled to meet February 21-23. The proposed compromise called for:

- Lifting the enrollment cap immediately by 7,500 students, to set a new ceiling at 22,500. This represents a 50 percent increase in the number of low-income students citywide who can participate, and a huge increase over the modest 3 percent by which Doyle had previously offered to lift the cap. Between 20 and 25 percent of the 95,000 Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) students are now eligible to participate in the program, said School Choice Wisconsin President Susan Mitchell.

- Ensuring all schools in the program are accredited by December 31, 2009, and that they have applied to one of several independent accrediting agencies, such as the Wisconsin North Central Association or Marquette University's Institute for the Transformation of Learning, by September 30, 2006.

- Repealing existing eligibility restrictions. All students whose family income meets 175 percent of the federal poverty level are now able to join the program and can remain in it even if their family's income rises to 220 percent of the poverty level.

- Making schools adhere to national standards by giving standardized math, reading, and science tests to fourth-, eighth-, and tenth-grade students. The results will be reported to Georgetown University's School Choice Demonstration Project from 2006 to 2011, to measure program effectiveness.

“Of course it’s a compromise—there’s no one person who loves every piece of it, but it is the culmination of a three-year effort to solve this problem.”

SUSAN MITCHELL
SCHOOL CHOICE WISCONSIN

Intense Struggle

Gard and Doyle’s struggle over the MPCP enrollment cap had intensified earlier this academic year, when it became clear the previous cap—15 percent of the total MPS enrollment, or approximately 14,500 students—had been reached. As a result, state law required the Department of Public Instruction to begin rationing seats in the 16-year-old program, meaning thousands of students already enrolled might be forced to return to low-performing public schools.

Before the compromise, Doyle offered to raise the enrollment cap to 18 percent of MPS enrollment in exchange for a $25 million funding increase for a state program to reduce class sizes and increase accountability measures. Critics said the 18 percent ceiling would forestall seat rationing by only one or two years, given the citywide demand for voucher seats.

The Wisconsin legislature had passed three bills to lift the enrollment cap over the past few years, and Doyle vetoed all three. Doyle will receive the increased funding for reducing class sizes and increasing accountability measures as part of the deal struck on February 17.

“Of course it’s a compromise—there’s no one person who loves every piece of it, but it is the culmination of a three-year effort to solve this problem,” Mitchell said. “I think there are legislators on both sides of the aisle who dislike provisions of the bill or feel that important issues were not addressed, but I think that at the end of the day, the bill will pass because people understand it is a compromise, a good sound one.

“Our whole coalition is going to work right away to make the point that we consider this a huge win, and it’s very important to pass a bill like this without amendment so the deal doesn’t fall apart,” Mitchell said.

Relieved Celebration

Gard gave the credit to school choice advocates who lobbied for increasing the cap.

Jim Doyle
Governor- Wisconsin

“[T]his is the most important reform movement going on now, and the centerpiece is in Milwaukee. ... I think we got the biggest win here for school choice.”

JIM GARD
ASSEMBLY SPEAKER
PESTIGGO, WISCONSIN

Mark Green
U.S. Representative—Wisconsin

More Applause

Congressman Mark Green, one of two Republicans challenging Doyle for the governor’s seat this year, told Madison.com on February 17 that it sounded like a good compromise, but “doesn’t change my belief that there shouldn’t be any cap on the choice program.”

Clint Bolick, president and general counsel of the Alliance for School Choice in Phoenix, Arizona, hailed the agreement as a watershed moment.

“It would have been a disaster for Milwaukee schoolchildren had the governor not finally agreed to elevate the interest of children over special interests,” Bolick said in a February 17 statement, referring to the fact that teacher unions are among Doyle’s largest financial backers. “Thousands of Milwaukee schoolchildren owe a huge debt to Speaker Gard and members of the legislature for championing their interests. This is a great day for everyone committed to educational opportunity.”

Nick of Time

Even as applause for the deal was rolling out, however, the Milwaukee Department of Public Instruction was issuing letters to MPCP schools, letting them know how seats would be rationed in case the law didn’t pass. The cap was scheduled to take effect February 20.

“The news came out today that the schools would only be able to keep about 47 percent of their kids without this, so I think people are realizing this was their one shot to get this done,” Gard said. “So we would have a big number of kids being taken out of schools, and a lot of schools wouldn’t survive. It happened in the nick of time. We’re just thrilled that we got this thing done.”

Karla Dial (dial@heartland.org) is managing editor of School Reform News.
By Greg McConnell

A s Ohio’s charter schools came under increasing criticism in the media last year, the state’s General Assembly passed legislation capping at 60 the number of new charter schools to be opened in the state over the next two years.

But while it’s true Ohio’s charter schools don’t yet measure up to the state’s public schools’ standardized test scores, there’s more to the story than meets the eye.

When the Ohio Proficiency Test (OPT) scores were released last summer, many media outlets seized the opportunity to highlight the fact that the state’s charter schools, which have been permitted only since 1998, were lagging behind the public schools in student performance on standardized tests.

In response to those criticisms, on December 21 the Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions, a nonpartisan research and educational institute in Columbus, released a new study, Using the Ohio Proficiency Test to Analyze the Academic Achievement of Charter School Students: 2002-2004, coauthored by policy analyst Matthew Carr and senior research fellow Samuel R. Staley. The authors found charter schools’ year-to-year improvements on the OPT actually exceeded those made by public schools, despite spending less money per pupil and having less-experienced teachers.

“Studying charter schools is tricky because charter schools are often targeted to the most disadvan
taged populations—at-risk students, high school dropouts, that sort of thing,” said Greg Forster, a senior fellow at the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation in Indiana, who conducted an external review of the Buckeye Institute study. “If you set up special schools to serve disadvantaged populations, naturally those schools are going to have lower test scores than the standard suburban schools serving privileged kids who aren’t struggling with the same problems.”

The study examined five subsections of the OPT—citizenship, math, reading, science, and writing—at both the fourth and sixth-grade levels. The analysis examined changes in passage rates in two different phases. The first controlled for demographic variables such as race, poverty, and income; the second controlled for demographics plus school characteristics such as spending on teachers and administration. In both phases, charter schools equalled or exceeded public schools in passage-rate improvements for all subsections studied.

The authors also examined each school’s Performance Index Score (PIS). According to the study, the PIS is “a single numeric score based on the combination of OPT scores and several other indicators such as attendance and graduation rates.” Each school in Ohio is assigned a PIS. Ohio’s charter schools showed greater gains than public schools in fourth-grade citizenship, math, reading, writing, sixth-grade writing, and the PIS.

“Thus, when comparing charter schools with their traditional, government-run counterparts in similar geographic and socioeconomic environments, and controlling for the salient variables in education,” the authors concluded, “we find that charters outperform their peers in 6 of 9 testing categories and perform just as well in the other 3.”

Answering Critics

As an example of the criticism facing Ohio’s charter schools, the authors cite a June 29, 2005 Cincinnati Enquirer article that noted, “Ohio’s charter schools began as an innovative alternative to low-performing public schools. Give kids longer school days, year-round instruction or specialized education, and they might thrive where otherwise they would not. But seven years later, the system is faltering. More than half of 112 charter schools rated by the state for student achievement are labeled in ‘academic emergency’ or ‘academic watch’—the lowest rankings possible.”

But such criticism misses the point that charter schools are serving a distinct student population, Carr said.

“Comparing [charters] to the state average, which includes suburban and country club school districts, is just ridiculous,” Carr said.

“It’s not our intention to say that all charter schools are doing great,” Carr continued. “There’s a curve there. Some schools are doing really well. There’s a nice curve of schools that are doing pretty well, and then there are schools that aren’t doing well, and that’s how the system is supposed to work. You know, that’s part of the market of charter schools. Those low-performing schools will be closed and replaced.”

Ohio’s Charter Schools Show Promise, Study Says

By Greg McConnell

The Buckeye Institute report, Using the Ohio Proficiency Test to Analyze the Academic Achievement of Charter School Students: 2002-2004, is available online at http://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/docs/Policy_Brief_Charter_Achievement.pdf.


The July 18, 2005 Ohio School Boards Association brief, “Taft signs budget bill; over 200 districts will see no increase,” is available online at http://www.osba-ohio.org/71805lr.htm.

See also:


“California Charters Show Above Average Gains,” http://heartland.org/article.cfm?id=16295


CONTINUED at right

Colorado Ed Board Votes to Improve Graduation Rate Accuracy

By Krista Kafer

The Colorado State Board of Education voted January 12 to require school districts to use a more precise method for calculating graduation rates in order to comply with a state law passed last June.

Colorado no longer will allow districts to count students as “transfers” unless the school has received notification of enrollment or a student-records transfer request. Additionally, students obtaining a General Educational Development (GED) certificate must be considered “completers” as opposed to transfers or graduates. District-reported graduation rates are included in yearly School Accountability Reports to parents and available online to the public.

“You could solve a problem by pretending it doesn’t exist,” and that’s exactly what we were doing with regard to high school dropout and graduation rates,” said Jared Polk (D-Denver), vice chairman of the state education board and author of key components in the proposal.

Numbers Vary

“We know that a large number of ninth-graders weren’t graduating four years later, but the official statistics didn’t reflect that,” Polis continued. “With these new rules we will solve the mystery of the disappearing students.”

Previously, graduation rates could be inflated by listing students in GED programs as graduates or transfers. Likewise, missing students could be listed as transfers rather than dropouts. According to a January 12 article in the Denver Post, graduation figures for the state ranged from 61 percent to 82 percent each year, depending on the methodology.

To achieve an accurate representation of a school’s graduation rate, the National Governors Association Task Force on State High School Graduation Data recommends students who opt to take a GED rather than earn a diploma not be considered as graduates. In order to avoid counting dropouts as transfers, the task force recommends states require transfer requests for documentation.

Addresses Inconsistencies

Concerned about inconsistencies in Colorado’s data, state Sen. Nancy Spence (R-Centennial) and Rep. Terrance Carroll (D-Denver) introduced Senate Bill 91 to require the State Board of Education to standardize graduation and dropout rates by November 15, 2005. The bill passed and was signed by Gov. Bill Owens (R) in June 2005.

The Colorado Department of Education then developed a proposal to require districts to acquire documentation from receiving schools or parental notification of enrollment in order to list students as transferred. Under the original proposal, parental notification of intent to enroll elsewhere was enough for districts to list students as having “transferred” to another school. The staff proposal also allowed districts to classify GED students and
ALEC Endorses NCLB

Also supports academic growth tracking and alternate teacher certification

By Lori Drummer

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) hosted its annual States and Nation Policy Summit on December 7-10, 2005 in Washington, D.C. More than 500 state legislators, business leaders, and public policy experts who share a commitment to common sense and conservative policies convened at the Marriott Wardman Park hotel for three days of intensive discussions on the critical issues facing the states and nation.

Endorse NCLB

ALEC’s Education-Federal Affairs Subcommittee and its Education Task Force unanimously approved the Resolution Supporting the Principles of No Child Left Behind. The ALEC National Board subsequently approved the resolution to become official policy.

The resolution confirmed ALEC members’ commitment to creating a public education system that is fundamentally focused on a strong system of accountability and transparency and to equipping parents with information necessary to make effective decisions regarding their children’s education.

“As its core, No Child Left Behind demands that our public school system educate each child while enforcing high accountability standards for students and educators alike,” said Colorado state Sen. Nancy Spence (R-Centennial), ALEC’s Education-Federal Affairs Subcommittee chairwoman. “If states choose to accept federal education dollars, we should likewise be willing to prove to taxpayers that the achievement gap is narrowing and that each child is receiving a solid education.”

While ALEC’s resolution recognizes parents are the primary educators of their children, it also acknowledges that states maintain a key responsibility for public education. The resolution further states the federal government is a partner in ensuring each child is given equal opportunity to become a successful, productive citizen of the United States.

“Our nation’s future economic strength and security depend on raising education standards and achievement, and we cannot turn our backs on children in struggling schools who need enhanced educational opportunities immediately,” said Missouri state Rep. Jane Cunningham (R-Chesterfield), who is ALEC Education Task Force chairwoman and a National Board member. “The [Bush] administration and Congress deserve our appreciation for enacting No Child Left Behind and setting high standards while giving states the flexibility to determine proficiency levels.”

Tracking Academic Growth

U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings announced in November a pilot program for 10 states to develop growth-model programs for student assessments as they relate to NCLB. In recognition of that announcement, ALEC approved the Longitudinal Student Growth Act at its December Policy Summit. The model bill is the result of a state’s department of education to provide each school district, including charter schools, with an academic growth information report for each student. The measure also requires the state to develop a policy for using the information in the report and relaying it to students and their parents.

Championed by Colorado state Rep. Keith King (R-Colorado Springs), this model legislation recognizes student longitudinal growth toward state standards, with the goal that all students be at least proficient in reading and math by the tenth grade.

King pointed out enacting the legislation will enable schools to rate student progress as a key element when measuring educational effectiveness. Tracking student records longitudinally would require states to implement a data-management system, complete with a state data warehouse, so growth relationships can be identified across grade levels.

Alternate Teacher Certification

ALEC’s Education Task Force also adopted the Alternate Certification Act, which permits people with comprehensive alternative certification to enter the teaching profession without a bachelor’s or master’s degree in education. ALEC believes states should enact alternative teacher certification programs to prepare people with subject-area expertise and life experience to become teachers through a demonstration of competency and comprehensive mentoring program.

Alternate certification programs increase the pool of highly qualified teaching candidates for school districts and potentially reduce the number of out-of-field teachers by providing a larger number of prospective teachers in the most needed subject areas.

Such programs include the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), which offers potential educators the opportunity to enter the teaching workforce without following the traditional education-college experience. Through its Passport to Teaching certification, ABCTE offers a cost-effective program that awards teaching credentials based on subject area mastery and professional teaching knowledge as evaluated by rigorous assessments. The teaching credential is nationally recognized and portable from state to state.

Lori Drummer (ldrummer@alec.org) is director of the American Legislative Exchange Council’s Education Task Force.

The ALEC resolution and model legislation described in this article is available through PolicyBot™, The Heartland Institute’s free online research database. Point your Web browser to http://www.heartland.org, click on the PolicyBot™ button, and search for documents#18516 (Resolution Supporting the Principles of No Child Left Behind); #18518 (Longitudinal Student Growth Act); and #18517 (Alternate Certification Act).


**INTERNET INFO**


“Giant Step” Forward

The Polis amendments garnered bipartisan support. A vote to remove the first of his amendments lost 3-3, with one Republican joining two Democrats in support of the amendment and two Republicans joining one Democrat opposing. Two members were not present. The final proposal containing both amendments passed 5-1.

Bob Schaffer, a Colorado state education board member for the 4th Congressional District and former congressman, supported the Polis amendments. Past reported graduation rates, he said, have “never been more than a hypothetical. As such, Colorado’s school leaders have been denied a crucial data set necessary to the construction of ambitious statewide school-improvement strategies.

“The new reporting rules represent a giant step toward more precise management of all government-owned schools in Colorado,” Schaffer said. “The state is now closer to developing a more complete understanding of its customers—which ones graduate, which ones leave, where they go, and why.”

Krista Kafer (kristakafer@msn.com) is a freelance writer based in Denver.

**INTERNET INFO**

“On a 14-9 vote, the Senate approved S.B. 131 to create the 21st Century Scholars Fund—which, if approved by the state House, will provide scholarships of up to $3,500 for low-income children to attend the public or private school of their choice.”

The scholarships can be used at any public or qualified private school. The scholars will have the option to return the money to the state. Only the scholarship amount cannot provide a rebate to parents; instead, they must return the money to the state. Only students currently enrolled in public schools are eligible for the scholarships. Once a student receives a scholarship, he or she will continue to do so, provided his or her family continues to meet the income requirements.

A board, whose members will be appointed by the governor, Senate president, and speaker of the House, will oversee the program.

Confident about Constitutionality
Some senators who voted against the measure said it would violate New Hampshire’s state constitution, which contains a clause prohibiting public funds from going to private religious schools.

At least one expert disagrees. In “Constitutionality of School Choice in New Hampshire,” an analysis published by the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy, a New Hampshire-based think tank, former New Hampshire Supreme Court Justice Charles G. Douglass III writes that a school choice program would be constitutional, so long as it is “religiously neutral,” “provide[s] no more than incidental benefits to a religious sect or religion in general,” and is “brought about as a result of the independent choices of parents who receive the public funds.”

Hampshire
Continued from page 1

On a 14-9 vote, the Senate approved S.B. 131 to create the 21st Century Scholars Fund—which, if approved by the state House, will provide scholarships of up to $3,500 for low-income children to attend the public or private school of their choice.”

the state House, will provide scholarships of up to $3,500 for low-income children to attend the public or private school of their choice. All 14 members voting for the measure were Republicans; eight Democrats and one Republican voted against it.

“I think it is important we look at all avenues for providing education,” said state Sen. Carl Johnson (R-Meredith), who proposed the scholarship fund as an amendment to a bill setting guidelines for the Healthy Kids Program, which provides health care to children in low-income families.

Johnson, who has served for 12 years in the Senate after four years in the New Hampshire House, has also served as a school board member for Interlakes School District for the past 23 years.

At press time, the bill was pending in the House, and no date had been set for its consideration.

Hybrid Funding
The 21st Century Scholars Fund is a hybrid between state-funded vouchers and scholarships supported through corporate and individual tax credits. If the measure becomes law, the fund will begin with $1 million from the state’s general fund. During the second year, the state will appropriate another $1 million only after $500,000 is donated by the private sector.

Under the proposal, the state would give individuals who make contributions to the fund tax credits against state taxes on interest and dividends. Individuals would receive credits for no more than $100,000. Corporations, which are subject to the Business Enterprise Tax, would be able to receive credits for up to $400,000. Individuals and corporations would be able to donate an unlimited amount, but could receive credit only for those amounts specified in the law.

“The past, when school choice was proposed, funding would have come from the education trust fund, but this time it has come from the general fund,” Johnson said.

Usable at Any School
The 21st Century Scholars Fund has been modeled after the state’s Healthy Kids program. The Scholars Fund program will provide scholarships of $3,500 for children in families “whose income is 200 percent or less of the poverty level,” according to S.B. 131. It also provides scholarships of $2,500 for children in families with incomes between 201 and 250 percent of the poverty level.

The scholarships can be used at any public or qualified private school. Schools where tuition is less than the scholarship amount cannot provide a rebate to parents; instead, they must return the money to the state. Only students currently enrolled in public schools are eligible for the scholarships. Once a student receives a scholarship, he or she will continue to do so, provided his or her family continues to meet the income requirements.

A board, whose members will be appointed by the governor, Senate president, and speaker of the House, will oversee the program.

Demand to Increase
“The 21st Century Scholars Fund is not just about private school education—it is about providing choices,” said Kathy Getchell, director of the School Choice Center: New Hampshire.

“This bill will allow a public school student to receive a voucher to attend another public school more suited to meet his needs.

“This bill, if implemented into law, would greatly benefit many low-income families whose children have few educational choices,” Getchell continued. “Allowing more choices will increase the demand for different types of schools.”

As for passage in the state House, Johnson is optimistic.

“I’m very excited about that because [some state House members] are anxiously waiting for the bill to come over,” Johnson said.

Confident about Constitutionality
Some senators who voted against the measure said it would violate New Hampshire’s state constitution, which contains a clause prohibiting public funds from going to private religious schools.

At least one expert disagrees. In “Constitutionality of School Choice in New Hampshire,” an analysis published by the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy, a New Hampshire-based think tank, former New Hampshire Supreme Court Justice Charles G. Douglass III writes that a school choice program would be constitutional, so long as it is “religiously neutral,” “provide[s] no more than incidental benefits to a religious sect or religion in general,” and is “brought about as a result of the independent choices of parents who receive the public funds.”
Bush Education Appointee Leaves Big Shoes to Fill

By Robert Holland

Few people playing a word-association game would say “innovation” in response to the word “government.” More likely, they’d say things like “bureaucratic” or just plain “big.”

But since 2002, Nina Shokraii Rees has been busy breaking the bureaucratic mold. As the first director of the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII), acting to carry out President George W. Bush’s priorities, Rees was probably the most energetic and effective advocate for parental choice and other education innovations ever to grace the federal executive branch.

On January 13, Rees left the government to join the California-based Knowledge Universe Learning Group, a private company that invests in entrepreneurial education ventures such as K12, Kindercare, and Edsolutions. In her new position, her primary focus is on ensuring quality and quality in the movement toward pre-kindergarten schooling in many states.

Christopher J. Doherty, director of the Department of Education’s Reading First Program, has been named to fill the position as acting assistant deputy secretary.

Lasting Impact

Projects that Rees helped start while in government are likely to have an impact for many years to come. Among advances for school choice, the most significant may be the enactment and implementation of the D.C. Student Opportunity Scholarship Act—also known as D.C. vouchers. Rees speaks with enthusiasm of this advance, noting in addition to 1,700 children from low-income homes getting a chance for better education, “the evaluation of this program will give us far more information about the effects on student achievement than any other pilot we have ever launched.”

In a January 12 statement on Rees’ departure, Education Secretary Margaret Spellings mentioned how Rees had “fought hard for the nation’s first federal school choice program,” the D.C. vouchers. Among other accomplishments, Spellings cited Rees’ work in expanding charter schools by publicizing their successes in her publications, organizing the National Charter Schools Conference, and channeling $20 million to Gulf Coast charter schools to help them recover from last summer’s deadly hurricanes.

As OII director, Rees “was a catalyst for grassroots change and accountability-based reform,” Spellings said.

Tireless Advocate

None of that surprises the Washingtonians who followed Rees’ work before the George W. Bush administration. From 1997 to 2001, Rees was chief education analyst for the Washington-based Heritage Foundation and skillfully used that position to work with Congress and state legislatures to advocate school reforms, particularly those benefiting underprivileged children. She testified before congressional committees on the benefits of school choice and published extensively on that issue.

“[It] would be difficult to point out anyone in the education policy world who has been more right about more things than Nina,” said Don Soifer, executive vice president of the Lexington Institute.

In looking back on her time in federal office, Rees said she was “very proud” of her office’s work with Supplemental Educational Services (SES). “Thanks to this program,” she noted, “over 250,000 low-income children are benefitting from the kind of tutoring that was once available only to those who could afford it.” Her office had to set up guidelines for, and respond to many questions from the field about, the tutoring for which families become eligible when their schools chronically fall below the standards set to comply with NCLB.

Groundbreaking Work

In expediting SES, “we have tried to walk the fine line between promoting entrepreneurship/innovation and accountability as well as a federal agency can, though the road has been and remains bumpy,” Rees said. Her office also did groundbreaking work with Parent Information Resource Centers, which help inform parents around the nation of their rights to public school choice and tutoring under the terms of NCLB.

“It’s rare to land a job in a field you love at a federal agency and grow to actually accomplish some of your goals, so I feel very blessed for the opportunity I had,” Rees observed. She was quick to add she would have not reached any goals without the support of a high-energy staff, including Mike Petrilli (her deputy, now an executive vice president at the Fordham Foundation in Washington, DC), Stacy Kreppel (who handles SES), Jack Klenk (head of the office of non-public education), John Fiegel (head of the office of parental information and choice), and Dean Kern (director of the charter schools program).

As she did at Heritage, Rees leaves behind an impressive body of literary works that will promote the essential rightness and goodness of school choice for a long time to come. These include “Innovations in Education” book series with impressive volumes on how to (1) open successful charter and magnet schools, (2) create successful district-wide school choice programs, (3) bring about strong SES tutoring programs, and (4) provide alternative routes to teacher certification. Her office also published a book offering parents detailed advice on how to choose the best schools for their children. Her weekly online newsletter, The Education Innovator, has offered a steady flow of timely news about grassroots education reform.

Unless others pick up the pace, the energy level for federal advocacy of school choice will be diminished now that Nina Rees has returned to the private sector.

Robert Holland (rholl1176@aol.com) is a policy analyst for the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Virginia.

“I would be difficult to point out anyone in the education policy world who has been more right about more things than Nina [Shokraii Rees].”

DON SOIFER
LEXINGTON INSTITUTE
Group Wants More Tutoring Oversight

By Karla Dial

As the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) turns five years old, the tutoring industry is experiencing record growth, thanks in part to the sanctions schools face under the federal law when students fail to do well on standardized tests.

But some professional tutoring organizations say the new boom can be a cause for concern—mainly, decreased quality and a glut of untrained, uncertified tutors in an unregulated field.

“Without knowing what to look for, at best parents could waste money on an ineffective tutor, and at worst they could be putting their child in danger.”

“We see things that are really horrible,” said Dr. Sandi Ayaz, executive director of the 15-year-old National Tutoring Association (NTA), a Florida-based tutor-certification group. “We see people who run tae kwon do studios who are getting their taxpayer dollars per child and calling it tutoring—they say they’re tutoring anatomy or physiology. We see people who just test students, and then say, ‘You need to focus on this or that, and that’ll be $900.’

“The worst thing we see is the companies that are serving as clearinghouses for tutors that are being referred by and used by school districts but no one really knows who these people are. People can go to these Web sites, sign up to be a tutor, and no one has a clue,” Ayaz said.

Booming Business

According to a 2004 report from investment banking firm Goldman Sachs, tutoring is a $4.6 billion business, one that’s seen 12 to 15 percent growth annually under NCLB and is expected to continue at that rate over the next decade. Parents are realizing that not only are the public schools their children attend not making the grade, but competition for well-paying jobs in the workforce begins as early as preschool. As a result, more and more middle-income parents are willing to pay $20 to $45 per hour—or more—to give their kids an educational edge through tutoring.

Though many tutors are untrained, many also realize professional certification from organizations like the NTA or American Tutoring Association looks good on the resume and can help them command a higher hourly wage.

“Without knowing what to look for, at best parents could waste money on an ineffective tutor, and at worst they could be putting their child in danger.”

“Everything we’ve done has been to defer to the states and monitor them, like we do for Title I compliance,” spokesperson Chad Colby said. “The state has a huge responsibility in all aspects of NCLB, and this is one of them. But we’re partners with them in that we expect them to do the right things for their students.”

Some Oversight

Calls to several state education boards went unanswered, but an Internet search revealed Florida has shut down several tutoring providers over the past few years for violating federal standards.

The Arizona board of education’s Web site says “tutors provided by the school must be certified by the principal to be exceptionally well qualified” in that subject—meaning, spokesman Doug Nick said, “if they’re teaching math, they have to know how to teach math, not be another kind of specialist.” The state keeps close tabs on tutoring agencies that use state funds to prepare students for the high-stakes graduation test known as AIMS (Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards).

CONTINUED at right
Differing Standards

Steve Pines, executive director of the Education Industry Association (EIA), said a growing number of states are adopting his organization’s guidelines for Supplemental Education Services (SES) tutors—“seven or eight” have them so far. But the lack of federal regulation means there’s a hodgepodge of requirements, with some states setting the bar higher than others.

“I don’t disagree that tutors should have some level of academic and professional background, and we state very clearly what those minimum qualifications should be,” Pines said. “We say, if you want to hire a tutor, they should have a college degree and teaching certification. That’s what we think defines a professional tutor.”

To help defray the cost of criminal background checks, the EIA offers members a discounted rate of $35. More than that, however, Pines said it’s important for federally funded tutoring services to be able to determine how well they’re actually doing.

“We recommend hiring qualified tutors you can find on our Web site, who adhere to the code of conduct of EIA, have a track record of performance that can be documented, use approved methods, collect data on actual performance, [and] have an evaluation mechanism that can demonstrate how tutoring affects student achievement with some assessment tool,” Pines said. “It’s important to be able to pick out the differences between tutors and regular classrooms. That’s also a whole lot different than going to school every day, so you have to have a mechanism that’s sensitive enough to pick up the small, modest effects of tutoring.”

Karla Dial (dial@heartland.org) is managing editor of School Reform News.

INTERNET INFO

For more information about how to find a qualified tutor, see the recommendations issued by the NTA and EIA at the following links:

“What to Consider Before Hiring a Tutor,” http://www.ntatutor.org

“Guidelines for Qualifications of the Tutor/Educational Service Provider (ESP), approved 3-2-05,” http://www.educationindustry.org/documents/QualsforTutorsESP_3-2-05.pdf


Journal Helps Raise Historians, Scholars

By Nancy Salvato

William Fitzhugh was on sabbatical from his job as a high school history teacher in Concord, Massachusetts in 1986 when he was struck with an idea.

Acutely aware of the growing concern for educational “outcomes”—what did students know and what were they able to do, after all their years of schooling?—he determined students worldwide might be writing tens of thousands of very good research papers. Why not gather the finest ones into a journal, with the purpose of recognizing the good academic work of a few ... and perhaps inspiring others to make more of an effort?

And with that, The Concord Review—the only quarterly academic journal in the world to feature exclusively the work of high school students—was born.

“If writing means academic writing,” said founder Fitzhugh, “there is really only one opportunity to be published at the high school level: The Concord Review.”

Obvious Benefits

Since 1987, 65 issues have been published. Any high school student in the English-speaking world may submit a research paper on any historical topic, ancient or modern, domestic or foreign. Submissions are considered for at least the next four issues; only about 8 percent of the submissions are published. The 11 essays published in each issue are chosen from a pool of about 200 each quarter.

Marcia Naziger, an 18-year-old home-schooled student from New York who will be attending New York University this fall, is one of the 11 authors showcased in the Winter 2005 issue. She spent about a month working on her essay, “Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.”

“If I spent around two hours per day, minus weekends, reading sources and documenting information,” she said. Because she became so familiar with the topic and knew what she wanted to say about it, “writing and revising took less time than the researching.”

Ongoing Success

All students submitting essays benefit from doing the reading, thinking, and writing needed to produce a serious research paper, Fitzhugh said, but the published authors see another bonus: Publication in The Concord Review often increases their chances of being accepted into the college of their choice. About one-third of the authors published so far in the review have been accepted into Ivy League schools.

Five authors, selected from the 44 published in each volume year, are eligible to receive $3,000 Ralph Waldo Emerson Prizes, awarded to students showing outstanding academic promise in history at the secondary level. Notably, three authors published in the journal to date have won Rhodes Scholarships. The most recent winner, Jessica Leight, from Northampton, Massachusetts, currently a senior at Yale University, told Fitzhugh the Rhodes committee asked about her Concord Review essay.

Once they arrive at college, many of the Concord Review authors find that, unlike too many of their peers, they have the advantage of having done a serious history research paper while they were still in high school. It’s a skill that will help them get an edge not only in the academic world, but also when they enter the workforce.

Growing Problem

“Students come to college with no experience in writing papers, to the continual frustration of their professors, and employ- ers of college graduates,” Fitzhugh said.

“If writing means academic writing, there is really only one opportunity to be published at the high school level: The Concord Review.”

WILLIAM FITZHUGH

THE CONCORD REVIEW

The problem has gotten so bad, he said, that Ford Motor Company and other busi- nesses now hold writing classes for recent college graduates to teach them to produce readable reports and memos. According to a report issued by The College Board in September 2004, American companies spend more than $3 billion a year in remedial writing courses for their employees.

Ultimately, some jobs are exported to other countries because of the lack of qualified Americans. “Motorola, Hewlett-Packard, Cisco Systems, and other tech giants now rely on their Indian teams to devise software platforms and dazzling multimedia features for next-generation devices,” MSNBC reported last August.

Nancy Salvato (nancysalvato@basicsproject.org) is president of The Basics Project, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and educational group whose mission is to promote the education of the American public on the basic elements of relevant political, legal, and social issues.

INTERNET INFO

To read the Emerson Prize-winning essays published in The Concord Review over the past 11 years, visit the Review’s Web site at http://www.tcr.org.
Stupid in America

Why your kids are probably dumber than Belgians

By John Stossel

For “Stupid in America,” a special report on ABC that [aired January 13], we gave identical tests to high school students in New Jersey and in Belgium. The Belgian kids cleaned the American kids’ clocks. The Belgian kids called the American students “stupid.”

We didn’t pick smart kids to test in Europe and dumb kids in the United States. The American students attend an above-average school in New Jersey, and New Jersey’s kids have test scores that are above average for America.

The American boy who got the highest score told me: “I’m shocked, ’cause it just shows how advanced they are compared to us.”

The Belgians did better because their schools are better. At age 10, American students take an international test and score well above the international average. But by age 15, when students from 40 countries are tested, the Americans place twenty-fifth. The longer kids stay in American schools, the worse they do in international competition. They do worse than kids from countries that spend much less money on education.

Unable to Fire

This should come as no surprise once you remember that public education in the USA is a government monopoly. Don’t like your public school? Tough. The school is terrible? Tough. Your taxes fund that school regardless of whether it’s good or bad. That’s why government monopolies routinely fail their customers. Union-dominated monopolies are even worse.

In New York City, it’s “just about impossible” to fire a bad teacher, says schools chancellor Joel Klein. The new union contract offers slight relief, but it’s still about 200 pages of bureaucracy. “We tolerate mediocrity,” said Klein, because “people get paid the same, whether they’re outstanding, average, or way below average.” One teacher sent sexually oriented emails to “Cutie 101,” his 16-year-old student. Klein couldn’t fire him for years. “He hasn’t taught, but we have had to pay him, because that’s what’s required under the contract.”

They’ve paid him more than $300,000, and only after six years of litigation were they able to fire him. Klein employs dozens of teachers who he’s afraid to let near the kids, so he has them sit in what they call “rubber rooms.” This year he will spend $20 million to warehouse teachers in five rubber rooms. It’s an alternative to firing them. In the last four years, only two teachers out of 80,000 were fired for incompetence.

When I confronted union president Randi Weingarten about that, she said, “they [the NYC school board] just don’t want to do the work that’s entailed.” But the “work that’s entailed” is so onerous that most principals just give up, or get bad teachers to transfer to another school. They even have a name for it: “the dance of the lemons.”

Wasting Money

The inability to fire the bad and reward the good is the biggest reason schools fail the kids. Lack of money is often cited as the reason schools fail, but America doubled per-pupil spending, adjusting for inflation, over the past 30 years. Test scores and graduation rates stayed flat. New York City now spends an extraordinary $11,000 per student. That’s $220,000 for a classroom of 20 kids. Couldn’t you hire two or three excellent teachers and do a better job with $220,000?

Only a monopoly can spend that much money and still fail the kids. The U.S. Postal Service couldn’t get it there overnight. But once others were allowed to compete, Federal Express, United Parcel Service, and others suddenly could get it there overnight. Now even the post office does it (sometimes). Competition inspires people to do what we didn’t think we could do.

If people got to choose their kids’ school, education options would be endless. There could soon be technology schools, cheap Wal-Mart-like schools, virtual schools where you learn at home on your computer, sports schools, music schools, schools that go all year, schools with uniforms, schools that open early and keep kids later, and, who knows? If there were competition, all kinds of new ideas would bloom.

Impressing Parents

This already happens overseas. In Belgium, for example, the government funds education at any school—but if the school can’t attract students, it goes out of business. Belgian school principal Kaat Vandensavel told us she works hard to impress parents, “If we don’t offer them what they want for their child, they won’t come to our school.” She constantly improves the teaching. “You can’t afford 10 teachers out of 160 that don’t do their work, because the clients will know, and won’t come to you again.”

“Talk’s normal in Western Europe,” Harvard economist Caroline Hoxby told me. “If schools don’t perform well, a parent would never be trapped in that school in the same way you could be trapped in the U.S.”

In early January, Florida’s Supreme Court shut down “opportunity scholarships,” Florida’s small attempt at competition. Public money can’t be spent on private schools, said the court, because the state constitution commands the funding only of “uniform, ... high-quality” schools. But government schools are neither uniform nor high-quality, and without competition, no new teaching plan or No Child Left Behind law will get the monopoly to serve its customers well.

A Gallup Poll survey shows 76 percent of Americans are either completely or somewhat satisfied with their kids’ public school, but that’s only because they don’t know what their kids are missing. Without competition, unlike Belgian parents, they don’t know what their kids might have had.

John Stossel is an ABC News correspondent and co-anchor of 20/20. His special program, called “Stupid in America,” aired Friday, January 13, at 10 p.m. This column originally appeared on Reason magazine’s Web site, http://www.reason.com.
Houston Approves Merit Pay Plan

By Connie Sadowski

During its January 12 meeting, the Houston Independent School District’s (HISD) nine-member school board unanimously approved a merit pay “Teacher Performance Plan,” which the board touted as a “pay plan based on how well students learn.”

Effective immediately, Houston teachers will receive bonuses when students make progress on state and national achievement tests compared with students in similar classrooms and schools around Houston and Texas. Teachers could receive bonuses as early as this December.

“For the first time ever, we are able to pay our best teachers more money, as it should be,” said HISD Superintendent Dr. Abelardo Saavedra. “Teachers who work hard and whose students show academic improvement will be rewarded for their dedication to excellence.”

DR. ABELARDO SAAVEDRA
SUPERINTENDENT
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Saavedra said HISD, which employs nearly 12,300 teachers who teach more than 210,000 students, is the largest school district in the country to adopt such a plan.

Plan Outlined

In a January 13 statement, Saavedra explained the “earning potential in the performance pay plan could be as high as $3,000 for core teachers and as high as $1,500 for non-core teachers.” The plan has three levels, each of which would offer a maximum of $1,000 to teachers whose students perform well. The first two levels—called “strands”—are open to all teachers, Saavedra said. About half of the teachers in the district would be eligible to compete in the third strand, depending on the grades and subjects they teach.

Non-core teachers, such as art and music instructors, will have an opportunity to earn up to $1,500 in bonuses this year, HISD spokesperson Terry Abbott said. In a resolution dated December 29, the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP), the area’s chamber of commerce, outlined the pay plan. Patrick Oxford, chairman of the GHP education advisory committee, said the group supports the new plan and has encouraged the district for 13 years to adopt a program to reward teacher achievement.

Oxford said in the resolution the average pay for a Houston teacher is $41,947; the new pay plan provides for bonuses on top of the base pay, just as the private sector offers merit bonuses as pay increases for exceptional performance.

“For the first time ever, we are able to pay our best teachers more money, as it should be. Teachers who work hard and whose students show academic improvement will be rewarded for their dedication to excellence.”

Makes Learning Top Priority

The plan takes into account the individual school’s rankings (exemplary, recognized, or acceptable) and the amount of student improvement in his or her classroom,” Oxford wrote in the resolution, explaining the plan will keep good teachers teaching instead of leaving the classroom for competing private jobs.

The district has “allocated $14.5 million for the first year, and $8 million will be added each year for the next five years,” Oxford said. GHP staff will be available at no cost to the district to help implement the plan.

Oxford said any performance pay program must be part of a comprehensive effort to improve the district as a whole. The Houston school board developed the Board Monitoring System, adopted in September 2005, for that purpose. The monitoring system provides a mechanism for administrators to formally report progress or lack of progress to the school board at least annually.

“The monitoring system is ambitious and holds school trustees and administrators accountable to the community for strategies and results,” explained Jim Windham, a Houston education consultant who supported the pay program. “Public accountability is a necessary first step for growth in student achievement. Every district should have similar monitoring systems in place.”

Speaking for Teachers

Ensuring improved student learning is a priority in Houston—no easy task considering that 82 percent of HISD students live at or near the poverty level, a proven factor negatively affecting student learning,” Windham said. “However, the board and entire HISD staff are determined to succeed.”

Developers of the teacher performance pay plan acknowledge “financial incentives linked to testing could give teachers greater incentive to misrepresent student testing performance,” Oxford said. He added the plan may not “completely measure teaching ability” and “could be seen as unfair to weak teachers.”

Houston Federation of Teachers (HFT) President Gayle Fallon said the new plan is not what teachers want—they want a higher base pay. When pressed, however, Fallon said the HFT did not formally survey its members to prove they don’t like the bonus plan. Abbott pointed out the HFT does not speak for all HISD teachers—it represents only 40 percent of them, he said. Approximately 7,300 others belong to the Houston Congress of Teachers or the Houston Classroom Teachers’ Association—“neither of which came out in opposition to the pay for performance program”—and many don’t belong to any organization at all, Abbott said.

Connie Sadowski (connie@ceoaustin.org) is director of the Education Options Resource Center at the Austin CEO Foundation.

Keeping Teachers Well-Informed

While the Houston Federation of Teachers, a local teacher union, claims teachers want higher base pay instead of merit bonuses, some teachers are pleased with the Houston Independent School District’s (HISD) new plan, as well as how the district developed it.

Monica Ramirez, a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Anderson Elementary, said while the new program has some unknown elements, teachers are “excited that excellent teachers are going to receive a bonus for the first time. HISD has taken risks, has been innovative, and has believed in change.”

“Everything is continuously changing around us; school districts cannot live in the past. We need to have strong leaders that build stronger leaders for the future.”

MONICA RAMIREZ
BILINGUAL KINDERGARTEN TEACHER
ANDERSON ELEMENTARY, HOUSTON

While developing the plan, the district kept teachers informed through intra-school emails and invited their comments. Teachers appreciated that, Ramirez said. They also appreciated the fact that the board was willing to look at teacher pay differently.

“Everything is continuously changing around us; school districts cannot live in the past,” Ramirez said. “We need to have strong leaders that build stronger leaders for the future.”

HISD Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra agreed.

“If we are going to continue to improve academic achievement, we must change the way we compensate teachers,” Saavedra said. “We cannot continue to pay every teacher the same based solely on how many years they have been on the job and regardless of what kind of job they do in the classroom.

“The new pay program comes after years of strong commitment by HISD to raise the base salaries of teachers,” Saavedra continued. “Teacher base pay has increased by 36 percent over the last seven years,” he noted, adding the new plan “does not erase the need for across-the-board increases in base pay.”

— Connie Sadowski
Scholarships could be a breakthrough for school choice," noted Heritage Foundation education analyst Dan Lips. “The initiative could benefit tens of thousands of children across the nation and help build a constituency for school choice reforms. It will be up to Congress to carry this initiative forward. This sets the stage for an important debate over school choice on Capitol Hill.”

Global Economy
Bush proposed private vouchers in the first draft of NCLB early in 2001, but dropped the proposal after congressional leaders objected. Along with public school choice, private tutoring became available through NCLB to children in chronically failing schools. The new proposal makes the tutoring grants more extensive.

In proposing an American Competitiveness Initiative in his 2006 State of the Union Address, Bush acknowledged U.S. schools need to do a far better job of encouraging children to take rigorous science and math courses that will prepare them to succeed as workers in the global economy. International studies have shown American students tend to fall further behind those from other developed countries in math and science as they move into secondary school. By high school, many U.S. students are still taking refresher arithmetic and introductory science courses, while students in other nations are delving into physics, chemistry, geometry, and calculus.

Proposing to build on NCLB, the president called for $380 million in new federal support that would (among other things) train 70,000 high school teachers to conduct advanced-placement math and science classes, recruit 30,000 math and science professionals to become adjunct high school teachers, and help elementary and middle-school students struggling with math.

Higher Standards
NCLB requires states to test children for proficiency in math and reading in grades 3 through 8, and once in high school, according to yardsticks adopted by each state. It does not require testing in science. At the start of his second term, Bush proposed expanding NCLB accountability more extensively into high schools, but that idea encountered stiff resistance in Congress, even from Republicans who supported NCLB’s passage in 2001.

With NCLB up for reauthorization in 2007, the president’s call for raising the bar in science and math education is likely to provoke lively debate about how to do it. “NCLB creates perverse incentives for states to set low standards and dumb down their tests,” said Michael J. Petrilli, vice president for national programs and policy at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and former Bush administration education department official. “This is already happening in reading and math.

“According to our foundation’s research, only three states—California, Massachusetts, and New Mexico—have both rigorous math standards and passing scores on their eighth-grade math tests that are anywhere near the national ‘gold standard’ of proficiency.”

MICHAEL J. PETRILLI
THOMAS B. FORDHAM FOUNDATION

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“The effectiveness, not to mention constitutionality, of centralizing control over K-12 education is in serious question for those who believe in the power of the marketplace and the rightness of leaving decisions close to home.”

Robert Holland (rholl1176@aol.com) is a policy analyst for the Lexington Institute, a think tank in Arlington, Virginia.
Florida Group Pushes for Uniform School Start Date

By Jenny Rothenberg

Florida is one of 11 other states, Sherri Sturner, a Miami mother, last year founded Save Our Summers, a nonprofit organization that is encouraging the Florida legislature to pass a bill requiring public schools to return from summer break no earlier than the week before Labor Day. A poll released in December revealed 75 percent of the people surveyed agree with that idea.

The bill (H.B. 177) passed the House Pre-K-12 Committee unanimously Jan. 10; at press time, it still needed to pass the Education Appropriations Committee and Education Council before the full House of Representatives could vote on it.

Sturner, who describes herself as "just a regular mom who got fed up with schools starting earlier and earlier every year," began researching the issue on the Internet. When she found other states—Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—had adopted a uniform start date, she started emailing her friends and asking them to tell their friends. By August, the Save Our Summers Web site had 8,000 supporters contacting their legislators to ask for a uniform school start date.

While schools in Florida do not have a uniform school end date, most complete classes in May. Sturner and her supporters believe a shorter summer and longer school year have several negative effects on the state, including that students do not have time to fully recuperate from the previous school year before beginning the next.

Summer's Value

Sturner says the arguments for a uniform start school date are compelling. For example, 60 of Florida's 67 counties started their 2005-06 school year during the first two weeks of August, the hottest month in Florida, leading to significant energy costs. An Oklahoma school district that moved its start date back a few weeks to miss the hottest part of the year saved $500,000 in cooling costs alone, according to a November 2002 Tulsa World news article posted on the Save Our Summers site.

August is also the peak of hurricane season, which interrupts school years that begin earlier. "Some school districts even schedule fall breaks now [to give students a rest]. We are just spreading the school year out," Sturner said.

A second economic consideration is unique to Florida: The state thrives on tourism, particularly during the summer months. Many tourism businesses rely on high school students to fill the temporary need for more help. When these employees have to return to school in the middle of the summer, Florida businesses are understaffed for the remainder of the season, Sturner said.

Standardized Test Fairness

Early school start dates prevent teachers from taking full summer courses to pursue advanced degrees. Moreover, making the start date uniform across the board would ensure fairness on state tests, Sturner said.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)—the test administered every March that determines funding and school ratings—is affected by school start dates. The earlier a school starts classes, the better its odds of improving students' scores, Sturner said, which provides a powerful incentive to start earlier each year. A uniform school start date would mirror those already in effect for sports teams, which cannot begin practice before a certain date to ensure no team or player has an unfair advantage.

Districts cite different reasons for earlier start dates. In Orange County, Lin Wright, senior manager of media relations, confirmed that the FCAT plays a role. "One reason the start date is earlier is FCAT preparation," Wright said. "The earlier you start the school year, the earlier you can prepare children. (An earlier start date) also puts exams before winter break instead of after."

But in Hillsborough County, spokesperson Linda Cobbe said, "We started moving it up in response to requests from a student group called the Student Forum that makes recommendations to the school board. The forum said they would like to have an equal number of days in each semester and have semester exams completed before the end of the semester." She said the move to an earlier start date began with the 1998-1999 school year.

"[Pollsters] found many of the people ... have an emotional attachment to summer: Adults want their children to experience the same kind of school schedule they did while growing up."

Widespread Support

To gauge whether the public would support a floor on the school start date and, if so, for what reasons, Save Our Summers contracted with the Kitchens Group, an Orlando-based opinion research firm, to find out where Floridians stand on the issue. The results were surprising, even to president Jim Kitchens.

"As a pollster, you tend to think you know what people's opinions are," Kitchens said. "I was surprised by the widespread support we found. It is not just parents with school-aged children who are interested."

According to the poll, released in December, 75 percent of the 400 Floridians surveyed support an end-of-August start date; 62 percent of those surveyed considered it an important issue. Aside from the economic and fairness factors, Kitchens also found many of the people he polled have an emotional attachment to summer: Adults want their children to experience the same kind of school schedule they did while growing up.

Local Control

Those who do not support a uniform start date cited the importance of each school district maintaining independence as the key argument against the legislation. "It's the responsibility of Seminole County's elected officials to make that decision," Seminole County School Board member Sandy Robinson told the Orlando Sentinel on Jan. 15. "It falls under local control."

By Jenny Rothenberg (rothenberg@stepupforstudents.com) is a public relations associate at Step Up for Students, a Tampa-based initiative of the Florida Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program.
With the halfway point in the school year quickly approaching, parents might begin to notice their children are suffering from “morning sickness”—headaches, sniffles, sore throats, or stomachaches—more and more often. Oddly, however, the symptoms seem to disappear not long after the child gets permission to skip school for the day ... only to reappear the next morning.

With 100 days of school already down, it is common for children to become less motivated and excited about the remainder of the school year, a problem that can be highly frustrating and challenging for a parent.

In the following list, Smilemakers, a Chicago-area business supply company owned by Staples, Inc., offers tips for keeping your kid in school and smiling about it, even when the doldrums hit.

- **Hit the mall.** Take your child shopping for new school supplies. Back-to-school items often signify a new beginning and fresh outlook.
- **Learn together.** Read a book or watch a movie with your child about a subject he or she is learning about in school.
- **Reward your child.** Create a rewards system for academic performance by using prizes and stickers for good grades (check out [www.smilemakers.com](http://www.smilemakers.com) for the coolest stickers).
- **Role play.** Have your child teach you what he or she learned in school during the week.
- **Play games.** Play educational games with your child to reinforce the fact that learning can be fun (Monopoly, Life, and Scrabble are great choices).
- **Challenge your child.** Make vocabulary and math flash cards and hold a friendly competition at your home.
- **Host a study group.** Invite a group of your child’s classmates over for homework and after-school snacks.
- **Visit a museum.** Go to a local museum and teach your child about a subject such as history, nature, or art to generate excitement about this in the future.
- **Turn to the tube for educational programming.** Watch “Jeopardy” or “Wheel of Fortune” to stimulate your child’s mind.
- **Have a 100th day of school celebration.** Send your child to school with a special snack to share with classmates.

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**Internet Info**

For more information, visit the Teaching That Makes Sense Web site at [http://www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org/).
Being Seen Through the Eyes of a State

By Michael Strong

Managing Editor’s note: This is the third of a seven-part series showing why charter schools do not have the freedom needed to create significant educational improvements through innovation.

The first few years at Moreno Valley High School (MVHS), a charter school in Angel Fire, New Mexico, were rough. There were discipline problems, controversy in a conservative community over the innovative and liberal atmosphere at the school, and various failures to conform to state requirements.

Charter schools have exactly the same reporting requirements to the state as do school districts. But while districts have a full-time central office staff devoted to maintaining long-established reporting systems, charter schools often have volunteer or part-time personnel struggling to create new, unfamiliar systems while also engaged in other duties.

At MVHS, there were mysterious bugs in the software that prevented the timely reporting of student data to the district. On one occasion, founder Michael Strong placed state-required tests in a closet, thinking they were to be administered in November. The lapse resulted in the school receiving a low rating on the state report card.

MVHS received citations in its audit for items such as providing a faculty member a three-week travel advance for items such as providing a faculty member a three-week travel advance rather than the legally mandated two weeks. MVHS had contracted with the school district. But under charter school law, many charters explicitly require employee representation on the charter board. This appears to be a legitimately gray area; 18 months after MVHS requested a formal ruling to clarify which law applied, the state legal counsel had still not made a decision.

Strong never intended to require teachers to teach to state-mandated standards. His strategy as a pedagogue had for some time been to focus primarily on developing a culture of learning and intellectuality. To measure results, he favored Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Advanced Placement (AP) test scores. Because they are the most important objective measurements for admission into elite colleges, they are also highly respected in the private school community.

Taking AP tests in high school is one of the best predictors of success in college; but preparing students to do well on the SAT and AP tests is entirely different from preparing them to do well on state-mandated tests.

The safe strategy for preparing students to do well on state-mandated tests is to teach to the test, especially in the age of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

While preparing students to perform well on SAT and AP tests by developing a culture of intellectuality might result in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as mandated by NCLB, it might not. In the age of NCLB, focusing on SAT and AP performance is not prudent; that is not the way the state ‘sees’ academic performance.

Indeed, the SAT and AP achievements of MVHS were and are perfectly invisible to the state of New Mexico.

Discourages Creativity, Variety

In national rankings of education performance, New Mexico typically shows up somewhere between 47th and 50th, depending on the measure used. One might hope and expect the state would be highly interested in raising academic performance. And, indeed, the rhetoric of politicians is consistent with this expectation.

But NCLB has imposed harsh consequences on states that do not measure academic performance against state standards. For several years there has been a national “standards movement” resulting in hundreds of committees (at least one per academic discipline in each state) meeting to pound out “academic standards.”

NCLB, based on research that concluded teaching to explicit standards was a good thing, institutionalized this approach. At a cost of tens of millions of dollars, states contracted with testing companies to produce custom tests that measure progress against state standards. There is now a major national commitment to measuring academic progress against state standards by means of these custom tests.

Socratic Tradition Works

But what if that is not the only way to measure academic progress? The Socratic Practice approach Strong developed focuses on close reading of sophisticated prose, followed by a Socratic discussion.

The close study of difficult texts has been a fundamental component of many educational traditions, including Jewish, Chinese, and some Christian sects, for thousands of years, and the discussion of ideas in texts has a similar hallowed lineage. Moreover, if one examines the verbal portion of the SAT, especially the newer version in which the analogies section has been dropped, the ability to read and interpret sophisticated prose is largely what is being tested. The ability to read at a college level is a crucial prerequisite for success in science courses as well as humanities.

If one cares about long-term educational success, progress on the SAT verbal test is arguably one of the best measures available. But while SAT math scores have been improving nationwide, the verbal scores remain flat. One might expect a more Socratic approach would be highly valued.

Michael Strong (michael@flowrealism.org) is CEO and chief visionary officer of FLOW, Inc., http://www.flowrealism.org, a group working to achieve world peace, prosperity, happiness, and sustainability in 50 years.
Controversy Heats Up Over NEA Spending, Donations

By Neal McCluskey

Education politics started the new year with a bang, courtesy of the Wall Street Journal and the nation's largest labor union, the National Education Association (NEA).

“The NEA gave $65 million in its members' dues to left-liberal groups last year,” the paper declared in a January 3 editorial. “We wonder if the union’s rank-and-file stand in unity behind the laundry list of left-liberal recipients of money that comes out of their pockets.”

The NEA reacted quickly, with President Reg Weaver writing in a January 13 letter to the editor that “the $65 million figure was the total amount the NEA spent on grants and contributions. Of that, $64.2 million—about 98 percent—went straight to our state and local affiliates for education programs and member services.”

An examination of the “contributions, gifts, and grants” section of the NEA's LM-2—a financial report the NEA and other unions must file with the U.S. Department of Labor, which recently started to require the kind of detailed information the WSJ used for its editorial—revealed that, in addition to the money given to local and state affiliates, many NEA contributions did indeed go to groups commonly considered left-leaning.

Trading Barbs

In addition to recipients listed in the WSJ story, such as Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow PUSH Coalition and Amnesty International, the NEA sent contributions to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), which defends affirmative action and opposed Judge Samuel Alito’s nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court; the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), which opposes Social Security privatization and seeks universal health care; and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation Media Awards.

Despite donations to these and other groups, however, the reports suggest Weaver was right. Most of the items on the list were grants from the NEA’s national headquarters to state affiliates and “UniServs”—state-based offices, employing about 1,800 people nationwide, that serve as local administrative offices for the union.

But while the WSJ and NEA exchanged accusations, others who defend teacher union finances began to look not just at where the NEA sent contributions, gifts, and grants, but at the nature of all union expenditures.

Deceptive Disclosures

On January 5, Mike Antonucci, who runs the Education Intelligence Agency (EIA), an organization that tracks teacher unions, wrote on the group’s blog that the WSJ “was wrong to portray the $65 million as a total amount distributed to liberal political groups.” He went on to say, however, that many NEA contributions to political organizations were not accounted for under contributions, gifts, and grants, so the union’s number, too, was deceptive.

“NEA’s contributions to political advocacy groups do not reside solely in the ‘contributions, gifts, and grants’ category,” Antonucci wrote, pointing out that “sums like $25,000 for the National Coalition for Health Care and $40,000 for the Consortium for Educational Change were listed by the NEA in the ‘representation activities’ category.”

The question of where NEA dollars go becomes even more difficult to answer when it pertains to the union’s state affiliates and UniServs, the primary recipients of the national organization’s contributions, gifts, and grants.

Tangled Web

The law requires that union expenditures on political activities be publicly identified, both because unions have to pay taxes on that money and so members will know when their dues are being used for political purposes. According to past statements by NEA officials, that’s not an issue with contributions to state affiliates and UniServs, because the money they receive is used to help with functions such as collective bargaining and communicating with members—not working for or against political candidates. (NEA officials did not respond to repeated requests for comment for this article.)

Critics, however, note NEA officials in the past have acknowledged spending millions of dollars on political activities, and they suspect the money going to state organizations is being used for forbidden practices.

In an email to the author, Antonucci said most of the “contributions, gifts, and grants” money that goes to UniServs is used to pay their directors, who “negotiate contracts, process grievances, do research, etc.” He added, however, that “they are also the NEA’s front-line troops for political activities,” noting that recently, “dozens were pulled from other states and sent to California to help in the special election campaign,” which dealt with such issues as teacher tenure and unions’ political expenditures.

Murky Details

The problem in proving NEA misdeeds, Levin said, is that while his organization has been trying to track both the amount and nature of money going to state affiliates for years,” even with the new reporting rules the picture “is still murky.”

Levin did say, though, that things have gotten a little clearer with the new detailed reports unions have had to send to the Labor Department.

“There are good building blocks in place now to help us get to the bottom of this,” Levin said. Nonetheless, the cat-and-mouse game being played over NEA money isn’t likely to end any time soon.

Neal McCluskey (nmccluskey@cato.org) is a policy analyst at the Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom.

INTERNET INFO


The National Education Association’s Web site is at http://www.nea.org/index.html.

The Education Intelligence Agency’s Web site is at http://www.eiaonline.com/.


http://www.4allfree.com

I swear I didn't use a calculator.
Developing a School Choice Program, from the Grassroots Up

Managing Editor’s note: In late October of last year, Virginia Walden Ford—executive director of D.C. Parents for School Choice, the organizing force behind the two-year-old and at-capacity school voucher program in the District of Columbia—spoke at a luncheon hosted by The Heartland Institute about the D.C. School Choice Incentive Act, passed by Congress in 2003. Her comments are excerpted below—the third in a several-part series.

W e started this challenge, and we started working with Congress to develop a school choice bill. We started in the U.S. House of Representatives, and it became a real project and a real commitment from several congressmen. Most elected officials want to get involved with something that is going to be successful. But there was still something missing.

We had a strong group of people, like ourselves, and everybody had their role. And so a cake was being made—that’s kind of the way I’ve always put it, we had this great cake that was being made but it was missing the icing, the parents, the grassroots group. We can’t do this without all the cake together, with icing and everything.

It became very clear to us that we had to mount a strong grassroots attack. I told this group of wonderful people I was working with that I could do it. I didn’t have a clue what the heck to do, but I knew I would certainly try with all my heart.

We started going out into communities. Working with low-income families can be a little interesting, mainly because you go into communities where there are a lot of fears. I always figured I could go into any African-American community and be welcomed. I found out I was wrong.

Building Trust

They didn’t know me. They didn’t know anything about me. They didn’t know if they could trust me. They didn’t know what I was bringing to them; I could’ve brought a lot of lies, many of which they’d been involved with before. My first meeting, which had 100 people there, I was pretty much run off the stage and told, “You come back when you can tell us the truth, when we know who you are.”

It became real clear I had to build a relationship before I stood up in front of groups and promised to do something to change their children’s educational direction. These were families in the worst schools in D.C. These were schools that were just not serving their needs. Who was I to go into these communities, stand up in front of large crowds, and tell them we were going to do something different and that they had to be involved in it?

So we began what we called the period of developing relationships. Almost every day of the week, I was at some community meeting, just sitting there—not making a presentation, just talking to families, just getting known, telling my story. I actually had a story to tell. But I didn’t realize that I needed to tell it at the beginning.

I was a single mother raising kids in the district, wondering like every single parent in the district what was going to happen—especially to my boys, struggling to make sure they had everything they needed, oftentimes not. I had gotten a scholarship; I had seen my son stand up in front of large crowds, and take up the rest of the fight.

We began to get out there and start identifying parents. We actually trained 100 parent leaders. The Institute for Justice did the media training, and a lot of the other training, and we had this one group of parents who became our first line of defense. They each went into their communities to talk to other people.

Virginia Walden Ford
D.C. Parents for School Choice

“And so a cake was being made ... but it was missing the icing, the parents, the grassroots group. We can’t do this without all the cake together, with icing and everything.”

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Make a Difference is both a compelling memoir and convincing proof that we now know important answers to help solve America’s poverty problem—without spending any more of the taxpayers’ money.

Author Gary MacDougal spent years working in Illinois inner cities and rural communities—talking with “ladies in the backyard,” befriending community leaders, and working with local organizations in his quest to find solutions that have long eluded academic researchers and politicians. As chairman of the Governor’s Task Force on Human Services Reform, MacDougal was the catalyst for the complete overhaul of the state’s welfare system, which included the largest reorganization of state government since 1900.

Eight years after MacDougal’s suggestions were implemented, Illinois now stands well ahead of California, New York, and other big-city states, with a spectacular 86 percent reduction in the welfare rolls since reform implementation in 1996, second only to Wyoming among all fifty states. The welfare rolls in Chicago’s Cook County have been reduced an amazing 85 percent, with studies showing that most who left the rolls are working, and at pay above minimum wage.

MacDougal’s extraordinary journey shows the way for the rest of the nation and proves there are ways we can all help provide a ladder of opportunity for those in poverty. We each can Make a Difference in the ongoing effort to end America’s poverty problem.

Make a Difference
Gary MacDougal
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