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School Reform News

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THE MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FOR SCHOOL REFORMERS

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4,000 Rally in Florida for Tax Credit Scholarships



The fifth annual Step Up For Students school choice rally brought thousands of parents, students, religious leaders and others to Tallahassee, Florida on April 12. Gov. Charlie Crist, a school choice supporter, delivered the keynote address.

By Jill Metz

More than 4,000 school choice supporters traveled from as far as Miami and Ft. Lauderdale to join the nation's largest school choice rally in Tallahassee on April 12, calling for passage of a half-dozen bills to expand and protect school choice in Florida.

The rally—the fifth held annually by Step Up For Students, a Florida advocacy group—broke all previous attendance records. Wearing

T-shirts that read “Many Faces, One Dream,” people representing nearly 35,000 scholarship students statewide expressed their desire for legislators to view school choice as a nonpartisan issue.

Gov. Charlie Crist (R) delivered the keynote address and was applauded for affirming his support for the state's corporate tax credit scholarships and McKay scholarships for disabled students, as well as his dedication to a quality education for all Florida's children.

“We have a responsibility to ensure that all children, regardless of the financial resources of their parents, have the opportunity to realize their full potential,” Crist said. “Every child in Florida deserves an equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality education.”

Civil Rights Issue

Another speaker was the Rev. H.K. Matthews, a civil rights leader who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

RALLY p. 9

Georgia Passes Special-Needs Voucher Bill

By Karla Dial

On the last day of its legislative session, April 20, Georgia joined the parade of states that have passed voucher legislation. The measure has been sent to Gov. Sonny Perdue (R) for his signature.

Senate Bill 10 allows parents of disabled children to use the money the state would have spent educating their children in public schools to send them to the public or private school of their choice. The average voucher will be about

GEORGIA p. 10

Utah Board of Ed Won't Implement Voucher Program

By Karla Dial

The Utah state board of education on May 3 defied the state legislature by voting not to implement a law that would allow the state's new universal voucher program to take effect this autumn.

Earlier this spring, the Utah Legislature passed two bills creating the universal voucher program. The first, House Bill 148, passed by only a one-vote majority

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School District Refuses to Show Al Gore Global Warming Film

By James M. Taylor

In the weeks preceding Earth Day on April 22, schools nationwide showed Al Gore's 2006 global warming film *An Inconvenient Truth*—some as a club activity, as at Newtown Middle School in Council Rock, Pennsylvania; others as

background for classroom debates on the topic, as at Russellville High School in Russellville, Arkansas.

But not in Federal Way, Washington. School administrators there took a stand against the film, saying it could not

GORE p. 5

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Outdated Federal 'Gender Equity' Program Illustrates Need for More School Choice

By Dan Lips

In its 2008 budget proposal, the Bush administration proposed cutting 44 U.S. Department of Education programs to save approximately \$2.2 billion annually. One of these was the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA), funded at \$3 million per year.

"[The Women's Educational Equity Act] is a solution without a problem. The program wastes money that would be better spent on actual crises—boys' literacy for example—or returned to taxpayers."

KRISTA KAFER
EDUCATION POLICY ANALYST

Created in 1974, the WEEA is geared toward improving educational programs for girls to ensure gender equity in the classroom. But in a report released this April, "Taking the Boy Crisis Seriously: How School Choice Can Boost Achievement Among Boys and Girls," education researcher Krista Kafer questioned the law's premise.

"WEEA is a solution without a problem. The program wastes money that would be better spent on actual crises—boys' literacy for example—or returned to taxpayers," Kafer explained. "Girls are more engaged and ambitious in school, while boys are more likely to suffer academic and behavioral problems."

Problem: Antiquated Thinking

Michelle Bernard, president of the Independent Women's Forum (IWF), a Washington, DC-based policy think tank that published Kafer's report, concurred.

"Whether you are talking about preschool, K-12, or university level-education, our boys are lagging by every measure," Bernard said. "The conventional wisdom that our education system favors boys is just wrong."

Despite the research evidence showing



girls outperforming boys in the classroom, Kafer suspects the WEEA will be continued.

"Year after year, the Bush administration has attempted to focus taxpayer dollars on improving education outcomes for low-income and special-needs students," Kafer explained. "Congress, however, has been more interested in siphoning off dollars to special-interest programs like WEEA."

Solution: School Choice

Kafer and Bernard believe education reforms can address the crisis in boys' education in the United States.

"School choice establishes a framework for innovation, specialization, and the replication of successful strategies," Kafer explained. "There are schools—both public and private—that excel in helping boys and girls achieve. School choice enables parents to choose these schools."

Bernard pointed out how a climate of greater choice in education can facilitate implementation of innovative school models that work.

"Children are unique individuals," said Bernard. "There is no one educational environment that will work for all children. There are outstanding examples of schools that are meeting the needs of their particular students, like Western High School, an all-girl high school in Baltimore that boasts a 100 percent college acceptance rate."

"This model won't work for all girls, but we need more options like this so that parents can choose a school best suited

to their own child's strengths and weaknesses," Bernard continued.

Need: Greater Involvement

Bernard says women need to become more involved in pushing policymakers to embrace policies such as voucher programs, charter schools, and education tax credits that make it easier for parents to exercise choice.

"We need all parents, and mothers in particular, to stand up and demand greater school choice in American education," Bernard said. "The Independent Women's Forum is committed to galvanizing support for school choice among women, which is why we are launching our Women for School Choice project."

Kafer's paper is the first in a series to be published by IWF's Women for School Choice Project. IWF also plans to introduce a Web site dedicated to giving women information about the benefits of school choice.

"Whether you are talking about preschool, K-12, or university level-education, our boys are lagging by every measure. The conventional wisdom that our education system favors boys is just wrong."

MICHELLE BERNARD
PRESIDENT
INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM

"Only when every parent has the power of school choice will we ensure that truly no child is left behind," said Bernard.

Dan Lips (dan.lips@heritage.org) is an education analyst at The Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC.

INTERNET INFO

U.S. Department of Education, Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Summary, February 5, 2007, <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget08/summary/edlite-section3.html>

"Taking the Boy Crisis in Education Seriously: How School Choice Can Boost Achievement Among Boys and Girls," by Krista Kafer, *Position Paper* #604, published in April 2007 by the Independent Women's Forum, is available through *PolicyBot™*, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and search for document #21190.

Corrections

A photo in the May issue of *School Reform News* was incorrectly identified as Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff. He is correctly pictured at left.

In the accompanying story about Utah's new universal voucher law, Elisa Peterson, executive director of Parents for Choice in Education, was incorrectly quoted. She in fact said, "this program is a crack in the dike in the teachers union's monopolistic control of the system, so it's not surprising that they go to this length to stop it."



Teachers Union Is Key Obstacle to Good Education, Ad Campaign Says

By Ben DeGrow

An advocacy group's creative outreach has attracted unfavorable attention to the teachers union in one New Jersey city, the first stop in a planned national campaign.

In March, the Washington, DC-based Center for Union Facts began posting the message across Newark, New Jersey that the teachers union protects bad teachers at the expense of quality education. The message is featured on several billboards, including a mobile billboard attached to a vehicle, and 100 bus tails.

"You definitely can't be living in Newark and not have seen it," said Sarah Longwell, spokeswoman for the Center for Union Facts.

The signs direct readers to a new Web site, ProtectingBadTeachers.com.

Choosing Targets

Founded in 2006, the center aims to educate the public about union leader corruption and abuses. The organization turned its focus to education earlier this year.

"We think teachers unions are responsible in large part for many of the failing public school systems in the country," Longwell said.



The center plans to bring its aggressive teachers union advertising campaign to different parts of the country. "Others should know we could be coming to their city sometime soon," Longwell said.

The center chose to launch its campaign in Newark because its schools' performance ranks "at the bottom of the barrel," Longwell said. Research the center has conducted indicates that despite per-pupil spending of more than \$20,000 per year, fewer than 40 percent

of Newark students graduate with a standard high school diploma.

According to the New Jersey Department of Education, Newark's graduation rate is closer to 70 percent, but the center's research indicates many students counted in the total were passing only an eighth-grade equivalency exam.

In the past four years, only five tenured teachers have been dismissed—or about one a year of 3,850 employed.

"In any other business, if you had a 38.8 percent success rate, people would be fired left and right," Longwell said.

of students. In some instances, they were released with extra pay and a seal on their records so they could work with children for future employers who would not know their past conduct.

"[Teachers union leaders] are taking mandatory member dues from teachers and are using their political and financial heft to protect bad teachers and hold back the really good teachers," Longwell said.

Spreading Blame

Del Grosso contends district leaders are primarily responsible for hiring and training teachers. He said hundreds of Newark teachers are removed during their three-year probationary period and never receive tenure.

"Why does it take so long to figure out if someone is a bad teacher?" Del Grosso asked.

NTU, Del Grosso added, has sought unsuccessfully during collective bargaining to negotiate systems of teacher peer review and merit pay into the contract.

Dan Gaby, executive director of Excellent Education for Everyone (E3), a school choice advocacy group based in the city, said his group plans to publish a comprehensive analysis of the Newark teachers contract to highlight its abuses and cost to taxpayers. E3 shares the center's opinion of the teachers union as a chief obstacle to effective school reform.

"We know they are responsible for the mediocrity of education in this state," Gaby said.

Causing a Stir

Del Grosso said the center is entitled to its opinions, but he calls its campaign more of an annoyance than an effort to fix the problems in schools.

"Organizations like these, they're just flies," Del Grosso said. "They're not going to create dramatic change because they're not part of the dialogue. I think their agenda is not a very good agenda for public education in New Jersey."

NTU, Del Grosso said, is willing to "put our money where our mouth is," citing the union's partnership with Seton Hall University to implement a \$100,000 transformation of the poorly performing Newton Street School.

But Gaby said the billboard exposure has started to awaken and empower Newark residents.

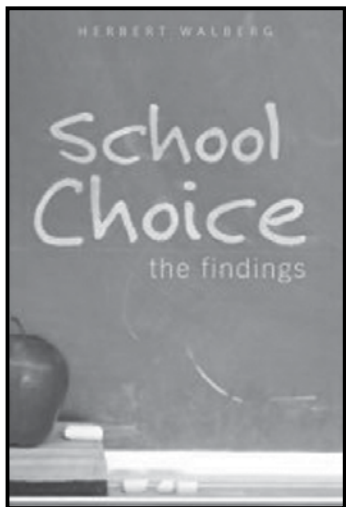
"It obviously caused quite a stir, because the union is used to being a frightening presence that silences everybody," Gaby said. "I think that's just the beginning of people waking up to what a toxic presence the union is everywhere."

Ben DeGrow (ben@i2i.org) is a policy analyst for the Independence Institute, a free-market think tank in Golden, Colorado.

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"In March, the Washington, DC-based Center for Union Facts began posting the message across Newark, New Jersey that the teachers union protects bad teachers at the expense of quality education."

Focusing Attention

Newark Teachers Union (NTU) President Joseph Del Grosso does not believe the center's charges about protecting bad teachers are fair. He said NTU does not deserve the special attention it has received.

"I think there are far worse unions in New Jersey," said Del Grosso. "I don't think the criticism applies to Newark as much as it does to many others."

While disputing the center's quoted graduation rate, Del Grosso said the district's academic performance is hampered because nearly 25 percent of its 41,000 students are classified as special-needs.

"It does make our test scores go down, but it's our obligation in public education to teach all students," Del Grosso said.

Hiding Abuse

The Center for Union Facts highlights several cases in Newark of tenured teachers removed for verbal abuse, physical maltreatment, or sexual harassment

INTERNET INFO

Center for Union Facts' teachers union campaign site, <http://ProtectingBadTeachers.com>

Gore

Continued from page 1

be shown unless “credible, legitimate” opposing views were also presented, the district’s school board decided on January 9.

The school board emphasized that a preexisting policy requires teachers to provide balance when presenting controversial issues.

“Al Gore’s 2006 film *An Inconvenient Truth* cannot be shown in Federal Way, Washington, schools unless ‘credible, legitimate’ opposing views are also presented, the district’s school board decided on January 9.”

Students Given Both Sides

Diane Turner, chief of communications for Federal Way Public Schools, said the policy has been in place for three years and pertains both to controversial subjects and the use of films and videos in the classroom.

“It’s the teacher’s responsibility to present all points of view, and allow students to form their own opinions on controversial topics. Students can choose not to participate in those discussions. A teacher may not present his or her own personal position as the only acceptable one,” Turner explained. “The ability to have your children think critically about the broad spectrum of ideas presented is the emphasis—making sure they get the whole picture.

“In terms of our electronic video use in the classroom, they wanted to make sure the material being presented was indeed part of the curriculum and it did indeed have a connection with curriculum and instruction, so it would be a useful tool for kids—in other words, use as much time as you can for teaching,” Turner said.

Film Criticized As Biased

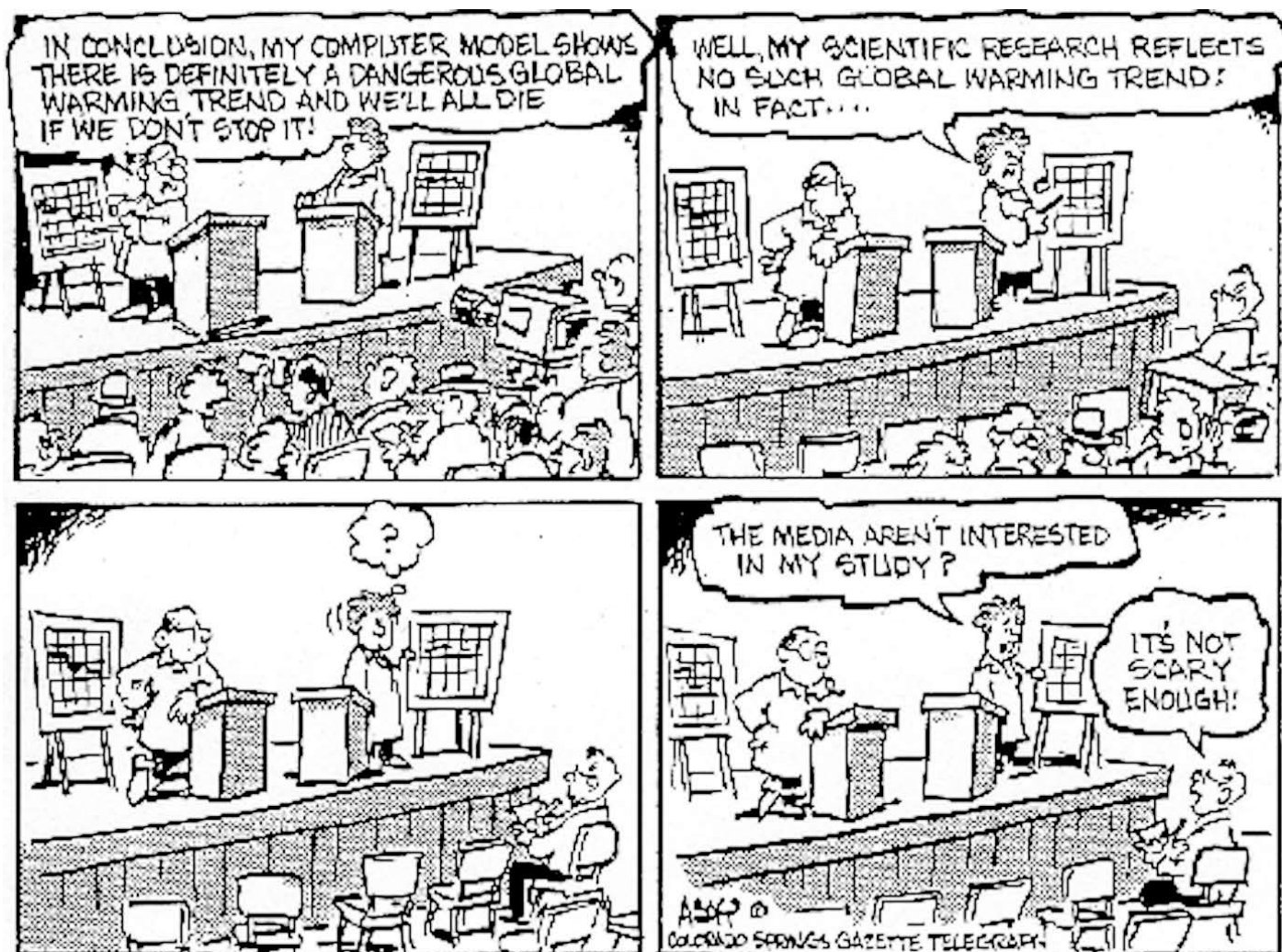
Gore’s movie, while vigorously applauded by global warming alarmists, has been criticized for a selective and often inaccurate presentation of the science regarding global warming.

“Gore’s film is a colorfully illustrated lawyer’s brief—one-sided advocacy for climate alarmism and energy rationing,” said Marlo Lewis, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute. “The only facts and arguments Gore presents are those that support his ‘scare-em-green’ agenda, and he often distorts even the evidence he cites.

“Gore’s film is not balanced, and Federal Way has ample reason to insist that teachers fairly present the other side or not show the film at all,” Lewis added.

Producer Outraged

Laurie David, a co-producer of the film,



expressed outrage that teachers are required to bring balance to the discussion if they choose to show the Gore film.

“I am shocked that a school district would come to this decision,” David said in a news release. “There is no opposing view to science, which is fact, and the facts are clear that global warming is here, now.”

“Gore’s film is a colorfully illustrated lawyer’s brief—one-sided advocacy for climate alarmism and energy rationing.”

MARLO LEWIS

SENIOR FELLOW

COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

Loaded with Inaccuracies

Science, however, calls into question numerous misleading and inaccurate assertions presented in the film.

Asserting that global warming is clearly affecting his hometown of Carthage, Tennessee, Gore claims, “Here on this farm, the patterns are changing. In the course as defined by this river, it’s happening very, very quickly.” Yet temperature stations at the nearby communities of Clarksburg, Murfreesboro, and McMinnville all show cooling temperatures during recent decades.

Gore asserts global warming is causing alpine glaciers in Glacier National Park to recede. However, temperature readings in the nearby community of Kalispell, Montana show temperatures

fell 5° Fahrenheit from 1933 to 2000.

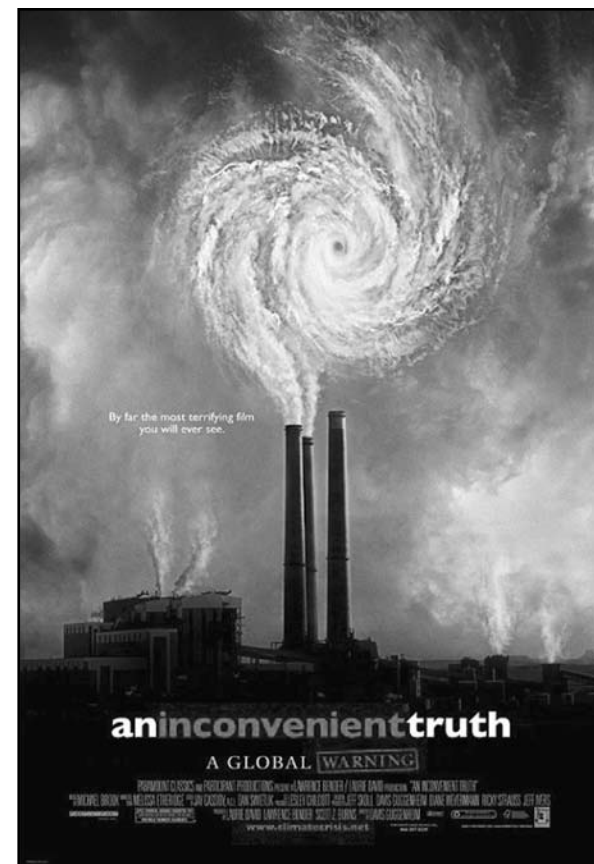
Gore claims glaciers in the Himalayan Mountains are rapidly melting, threatening the water supplies of hundreds of millions of people. However, just months before Gore’s movie was released, *Insurance Digest* reported Himalayan Mountain glaciers are as big as ever.

Rife with False Claims

Also false is Gore’s claim that declining rainfall (allegedly caused by global warming) is leading to a dramatic southern expansion of the Sahara Desert. *The New Scientist* reported as recently as 2002, “Africa’s deserts are in ‘spectacular’ retreat,” with vegetation reclaiming large expanses of barren land across the entire southern edge of the Sahara.

While showing an animated map of the planet purporting to depict ocean currents responding to a 5° F rise in temperatures, Gore claimed such an increase is “on the low end of the projections.” In fact, a 5° rise in temperatures would be on the high end of projections offered by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Gore claims the Antarctic polar ice cap is melting and that this is a “canary in the coalmine” demonstrating dramatic global warming. Actually, Antarctica has been cooling for many decades, and its ice cap is expanding, not shrinking.



Lewis noted, “Gore warns that half the Greenland Ice Sheet could break up and slide into the sea, raising sea levels by 10 feet. Yet the current rate of ice mass loss on Greenland translates into about one inch of sea level rise per century.”

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment & Climate News. School Reform News Managing Editor Karla Dial (dial@heartland.org) contributed to this report.

Ohio Governor Proposes Striking Choice from Budget

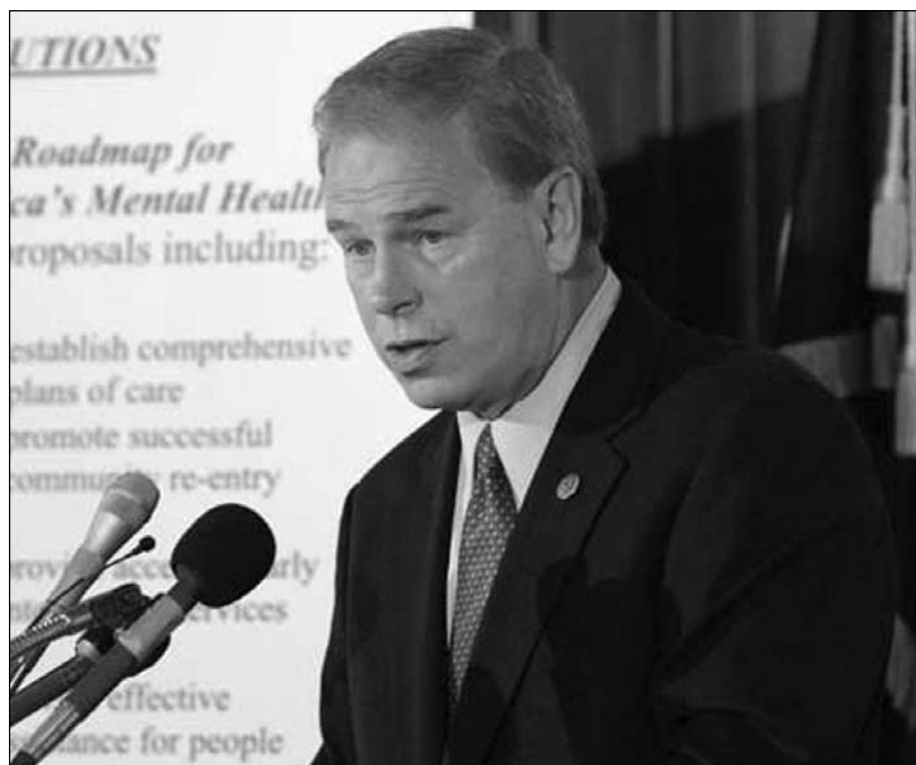
By Aaron Atwood

Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland (D) wants 3,000 students to go back to failing schools. In unveiling his two-year, \$52.9 billion budget this March, he called for the elimination of the statewide Educational Choice Scholarship program (EdChoice)—a state-sponsored voucher system.

Strickland, the first Democrat elected to the Ohio governor's office in 16 years, called vouchers "undemocratic" in an Associated Press interview shortly after release of his budget.

The thought of vouchers being undemocratic doesn't sit well with reformers.

"I think the definition of democracy is being able to voice your opinion, choose your leaders, and choose your future," said Lori Drummer, director of state issues for the Alliance for School Choice, a national advocacy group based in Washington, DC. "One of the most democratic choices a family can make is choosing a school that provides for the needs of their child."



The two-year budget proposed by Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland in March would eliminate funding for a statewide school voucher program that serves nearly 3,000 children.

"Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland ... called for the elimination of the statewide Educational Choice Scholarship program—a state-sponsored voucher system."

Vulnerable Innovation

Strickland's office gave several reasons for dumping EdChoice.

"The governor believes the answer to addressing failing public schools is not to take students out of those schools, but to focus efforts on improving the education system for all students," said Keith Bailey, Strickland's spokesperson.

"The state's voucher system is in its first year and new enough that [eliminating] it wouldn't be disruptive to the relatively few students that are using it. There is really no evidence that the vouchers are working," Bailey continued.

Popular Program

In the program's first year, an estimated 2,914 children were awarded scholarships to attend 263 participating private schools—the highest first-year participation numbers of any such program in the country. As of January 2007, the number of participating schools had risen to more than 290.

T.J. Wallace, the EdChoice coordinator for School Choice Ohio, a state-based advocacy group, said the program's popularity with parents is a good indication the state is doing something right in having it.

"We have the largest take-up of any program in the country. Even with the program being threatened, new people are calling everyday," Wallace said. "The real question is what will happen

to the kids currently in the program if EdChoice ends?"

The EdChoice program allows up to 14,000 students in underperforming schools to receive grants for tuition at the school of their choice. Elementary school students receive \$4,250 each or full tuition, whichever is less. High school students receive \$5,000 each or full tuition.

No family income requirements determine eligibility. Once the 14,000 cap is reached, new students are prioritized according to household income. April 20 was the deadline for 2007-08 applications.

Looming Deadline

Ohio law requires legislators to approve the budget before July 1. Melanie Elsey, legislative director at the Ohio Roundtable, an education and policy research organization, says EdChoice is likely safe for now.

"I believe the House of Representatives intends to protect EdChoice," Elsey said. "If they remove the governor's elimination wording, there will be no line item for EdChoice in the budget. EdChoice children are counted along with all the public school students. So, if there is no line item to veto, the program is probably safe. But we don't know if the Senate will hold the House changes."

House Bill 79, passed in December, changed the formula for counting EdChoice students to include them with public school students—essentially eliminating the line item for EdChoice in the state budget. Strickland's new budget called for revising the existing law governing EdChoice to make it a separate line item—an option House Speaker Jon Husted (R-Kettering) plans to oppose.

"Every parent should have the option for school choice," said Karen Tabor,

Husted's spokesperson. "He feels very strongly about that and would like to see the program saved. One of the options is to revert back to current law."

Fierce Debate

House Finance Committee debate was heated this spring. Wallace attended the hearings held in mid-April and said parents were coming in droves to support EdChoice.

"What I'm really enjoying is the democratic process," said Wallace. "A ninth-grade girl from Youngstown asked all the adults in the room if it was going to be possible to see the governor. She said, 'I want him to tell me to my face that I don't deserve what I'm getting in my new school.'"

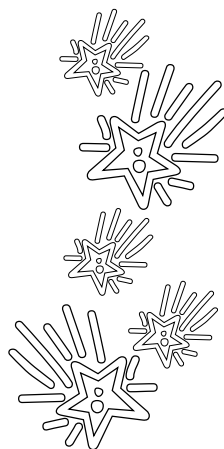
Whatever his plans for EdChoice, Strickland did not intend to eliminate Cleveland's citywide voucher system, which is also funded by the state. The city's program enrolls 6,000 low-income students and was deemed constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2002.

At press time, the House Finance subcommittee was making revisions, readying the 2,000-page budget bill for a floor vote by June 1. If passed, the Senate Finance subcommittee will hold hearings on it later this year. The Ohio Senate is generally thought to be more liberal than the House.

Aaron Atwood (aaronatwood@juno.com) writes from Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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School Choice Bill Gets Hearing in Oregon House

By Matt Wingard

A mostly black delegation of citizens from Portland traveled to the Oregon state capitol on April 5 to testify in support of House Bill 3010. The bill would create a pilot project—the Freedom to Choose My School Grant program—to allow 1,000 low-income students to take the state funding for their education to attend any school, public or private.

The bill received a hearing because state Rep. Betty Komp (D-Woodburn), who chairs the House Subcommittee on Education Innovation, believed low-income students deserve an opportunity to be heard. At press time the bill was pending in the state's House Education Committee.

With 29 Republicans cosponsoring the bill, it faced an uphill battle in the Democrat-controlled legislature.

Graduates and Dropouts

At the hearing, the Cascade Policy Institute, a free-market research group, presented subcommittee members with copies of a summary of three decades of educational failure in Portland's only primarily black high school. The report, titled "Leaving Most Children

Behind: 30 Years of Education Reform at Jefferson," details the community's poor graduation rates—nearly 50 percent of African-Americans and Latinos drop out.

The researchers estimate more than 7,000 Northeast Portland students have exited the city's public school system over the past 30 years, either dropping out or graduating without the ability to read or do 12th-grade math.

"I did graduate, but I watched more than 60 percent of my fellow minority African-American males not graduate," Portland resident Damon Miller told the committee.

Abilities and Opportunities

Esther Hinson, who helps dropouts get their general educational development diplomas, told the committee, "It's time to break the cycle, and I think school choice is the way to go."

Jomo Greenidge dropped out of school in Portland in the 1990s even though he had Mensa-level SAT scores and was tutoring other students in college-level math. His grade point average was low.

"My problem was not that I wasn't smart or that I didn't love to learn,"



H.B. 3010 delegation (left to right): Sreya Sarkar, Esther Hinson, Bina Patel, Jomo Greenidge, Sandra Nelson, Renee Kimball, Hugo Schultz (front), Smith Williams (back), Abel Araya (front), Matt Wingard (back), Tony Stacy, Pastor Fred Woods, Geoffrey Koprowski, Ryan Poffenberger, Ben Araya.

Greenidge testified. "My problem was that my school was a bad fit for me. And I did not graduate, and I did not go to college for seven more years."

Greenidge still tutors kids in the area who feel trapped in a public school that doesn't work for them.

"Sometimes as educators, we have to look at ourselves and say maybe we are not the best solution for the kids we are dealing with," Greenidge said. "H.B. 3010 will provide an opportunity for some kids to thrive in an environment that would suit them. Because without this bill, and bills like it, you take a position of arrogance that says, 'We are the best at what we do, and what we do will serve all of our kids.'"

"A mostly black delegation of citizens from Portland traveled to the Oregon state capitol on April 5 to testify in support of House Bill 3010 ... [which would] allow 1,000 low-income students to take the state funding for their education to attend any school, public or private."

Choice and Achievement

Also at the hearing, Katherine Hickok, director of the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) of Portland—a program facilitated by the Cascade Policy Institute—described the privately funded partial-tuition scholarships CSF provides to hundreds of low-income families. She submitted letters from several grateful CSF students.

"Low-income families care about their children very much, and they will make any sacrifice they can to choose the best environment for their children," Hickok said.

Abel Araya, 16, who uses his CSF scholarship to attend a private high school in Portland, testified that he

plans to attend college after graduation.

"Growing up, my parents always wanted me to be successful and get a good education," Araya said. "CSF has put me in an atmosphere where that is possible. They have given my family a sense of relief and provided me with a better education and the confidence that I will succeed."

Grades and Crime

Pastor Fred Woods discussed his 18 years of work with juveniles in the parole and probation system. One thing they all had in common, he said, was low academic achievement.

"What I found was that if you're low academically, there's an increase in pregnancy, crime, violence, drugs, homelessness," Woods said. "Is it fair because I come from a low-income family that I can't receive a quality education?"

Maura Ciota runs a nonprofit program for low-income youth in northeast Portland.

"I'm an Irish Catholic Democrat. This is a bipartisan bill. It's not a Republican thing," Ciota said. "Competition isn't bad. I've got a lot of union members in my family, and I support this bill."

Matt Wingard (jobs_and_power@yahoo.com) directs the Cascade Policy Institute's School Choice Project.

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INTERNET INFO

Freedom to Choose My School Grant program, <http://www.portlandschoolchoice.com/HB3010.html>

"Leaving Most Children Behind: 30 Years of Education Reform at Jefferson," by Matt Evans, published in April 2006 by the Cascade Policy Institute, is available through *PolicyBot™*, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and search for document #21189.

Florida Launches Improved Performance Pay Plan

By Jill Metz

Florida's merit-based pay program for teachers, previously known as Special Teachers Are Rewarded (STAR), has been modified and now encompasses the missing components that ignited a lawsuit by the Florida Education Association (FEA) late last year.

The Merit Award Program (MAP) was signed into law by Gov. Charlie Crist (R) on March 29. It is the result of the Florida legislature's efforts to modify the previous merit-based pay program in an attempt to satisfy all affected parties.

"The two big issues that STAR failed to address were that any kind of incentive program has to be understandable by the people it affects, and there must be some level of buy-in for the people it benefits," said state Sen. Don Gaetz (R-Niceville).

Simpler Formula

Under MAP, participation is optional and will allow each of Florida's 67 school districts to decide whether its teachers and administrators will be able to earn up to \$4,000 each in bonuses. The bonus amount is limited to 5 to 10 percent of the average teacher pay from the district, preventing long-term teachers from having an advantage over those who are newly employed.

"STAR was convoluted, chaotic, and confusing," said Gaetz, chair of the Senate Education Pre-K-12 Committee

and former superintendent of Okaloosa County schools. "MAP is straightforward, and teachers I have spoken with across Florida are able to grasp the essentials of the program."

School districts were responsible for submitting locally developed plans by May 1 this year. In the future, those plans will be required each year by October 1.

"Florida's merit-based pay program for teachers ... has been modified and now encompasses the missing components that ignited a lawsuit by the Florida Education Association late last year."

Administrative Flexibility

Districts have the flexibility to reward as many deserving teachers as they wish, as long as each recipient is awarded at least 5 percent of the average teacher pay from that particular district.

Under MAP, testing must account for no less than 60 percent of the educator's assessment of student performance; the better students perform on their tests,

the better teachers' overall evaluations.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), which measures performance in 30 percent of the courses taught in Florida public schools, will be used for evaluating teachers' performance in those courses. The remaining 70 percent of courses that are not tested on the FCAT can be measured by International Baccalaureate exams, Advanced Placement exams, National Industry Certification exams, or locally developed, comprehensive end-of-course exams approved by the school districts.

"The remaining 40 percent of the teacher's bonus depends on observable, specific measurements of teacher effectiveness, such as whether the teacher is using research-based instructional methods as opposed to educational fads," Gaetz explained. "Is the teacher developing a specific plan to help a student who is struggling, and is that plan working?"

Intangible Elements

In addition, the non-testing-related 40 percent will gauge how well a teacher engages and disciplines his or her students, as well as administrators' abilities to retain and recruit quality teachers to the state.


The FEA believes MAP is better than previous performance-pay programs, but it remains dissatisfied with what it characterizes as Florida teachers' low

salaries, ranking 29th in the nation with an average salary of \$42,702, as well as the inability of bus drivers, teacher aides, secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, and other support staff to qualify for bonuses under MAP.

"The [Florida Education Association] ... remains dissatisfied with ... the inability of bus drivers, teacher aides, secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, and other support staff to qualify for bonuses under [the Merit Award Program]."

"MAP represents a big improvement over STAR because it provides far more flexibility and local control than either of its predecessors," said FEA spokesman Mark Pudlow. "MAP removes layers of bureaucracy from the Department of Education and provides both school districts and teachers with options for this school year and future years."

Jill Metz (jillian.metz@gmail.com) writes from Florida.




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Rally

Continued from page 1

Matthews said he determined over the past year that the fight for school choice is an extension of his life's work.

"This is a flashback of the old movement," said Matthews, who has been jailed 35 times for staging various protests. "All of us who are here want what's best for our children, our parents, and our state."

State Sen. Alfred "Al" Lawson (D-Tallahassee) pledged his support for school choice and promised to continue representing his constituents' interests on the issue.

Moving testimonies were given by Sharonda Perkins, the mother of a scholarship recipient from Tallahassee, and Alberto Garrido, a Hialeah student who has received scholarships for the past five years. Both discussed how the corporate tax credit scholarship program has affected their lives.

"If it were not for the second chance this scholarship has given me, I might have slammed the door to my future by dropping out of school, joining a gang—and to be quite honest, I don't even know if I'd still be alive," Garrido said. "I am making my parents proud, but more importantly, I am proud of myself for the strides I have made."

"More than 4,000 school choice supporters traveled from as far as Miami and Ft. Lauderdale to join the nation's largest school choice rally in Tallahassee on April 12, calling for passage of a half-dozen bills to expand and protect school choice in Florida."

Varying Needs

Rally organizers, including the Black Alliance for Educational Options, Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools, National Coalition of Latino Clergy & Christian Leaders, Florida Alliance for Choices in Education, Florida Chamber of Commerce, and Florida State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said the event demonstrated to the state legislature



the programs' success. They asked for additional support of the bills.

"The Step Up For Students Scholarship Program offers low-income children the opportunity to choose an educational setting that best suits their learning needs," said Susan Story, chief executive officer of Gulf Power—a Pensacola-based company that is one of the largest electricity companies in the world.

"Education should not be a one-size-fits-all [thing]," Story continued. "Offering parents educational options encourages creativity and student achievement similar to how competition in the business marketplace drives innovation and success. We must help all our struggling students step up to success, regardless of their socioeconomic class."

Florida's corporate tax credit program—also known as "Step Up For Students scholarships"—provides K-12 vouchers to 17,000 low-income Florida students to attend a private school or out-of-district public school. Every cent of corporate contributions goes directly to funding scholarships. Under the law, none can be used for administrative costs.

Jill Metz (jillian.metz@gmail.com) writes from Florida.



School Choice Bills Pending in the Florida Legislature (as of May 10, 2007)

SB 2470	Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Jacksonville)	Provide additional protection to the Corporate Tax Credit (CTC) and John McKay Scholarship programs and expand them to include children in foster care. The bills would also add increased attendance flexibility to enable homebound disabled children to utilize the McKay program.
SB 1212		
HB 7145	Rep. Joe H. Pickens (R-Putnam)	Provide CTC scholarships for children in failing schools, and help provide additional legal protection for the CTC program.
HB 465	Rep. John Legg (R-Pasco)	
SB 2380	Sen. Daniel Webster (R-Winter Haven)	
SB 2382		

(top photo) Florida Gov. Charlie Crist (right) greets student Alberto Garrido at the fifth annual Step Up For Students school choice rally in Tallahassee. (above) Garrido, a student from Hialeah, Florida, told rally-goers, "If it were not for the second chance this scholarship has given me, I might have slammed the door to my future by dropping out of school."

NewSchools Venture Fund Reaches \$100 Million Landmark

By Aricka Flowers

One year short of its 10th anniversary, NewSchools Venture Fund—a California-based organization that raises venture capital for education entrepreneurs—has raised \$100 million in total over the past decade. It's an amount Chief Executive Officer Ted Mitchell said will continue going to organizations that support its mission to improve public education.

"It's important to note that this capital has been channeled toward a variety of entrepreneurial organizations, including for-profits and nonprofits," Mitchell said. "Some of these organizations have developed new approaches to preparing teachers or leaders, such as Teach for America and New Leaders for New Schools. Others have developed charter management organizations [CMOs] in urban areas across the country."

Expanding Charters

The entrepreneurs NewSchools supports are either working to expand charter schools or pushing for the betterment of current schools through performance-driven strategies. NewSchools has helped create more than 100 new public charter schools serving more than 30,000 students nationwide, Mitchell said.

According to Mitchell, creating multiple schools in a concentrated region helps them exhibit high student achievement and may lead to overall district improvement.

"Early results [for the schools] are promising," Mitchell said. "Low-income

students in our charter management organizations' elementary and middle schools are on average achieving 44 percent higher proficiency rates in reading and 23 percent higher proficiency rates in math than those in their host districts. Low-income students in our CMOs' high schools are, on average, achieving 52 percent higher proficiency rates in reading and 36 percent higher proficiency rates in math than those in their host districts."

Answering Critics

Critics such as Alex Molnar, director of the Education Policy Unit at Arizona State University, say the organization is not bringing any new school reform models to the table. In a January 17 *Education Week* article, Molnar wrote, "There's absolutely nothing new here," in reference to NewSchools.

"It's the same tired rhetoric about competition, the same identification of high-performing schools that are going to serve as models, the same idea that somehow, magically, the presence of these schools is going to make schools that are underperforming into performers," Molnar continued.

Brian Carpenter, chief executive officer of the Michigan-based National Charter School Institute, disagrees. He said the \$100 million that NewSchools has apportioned to building schools and education reform has done much for the education system in an environment that is unfriendly to innovative newcomers.

"[The \$100 million] is less than a

tenth of a penny of all the money that is spent in K-12 education in this country," Carpenter pointed out. "When you are trying to assess the impact of \$100 million against a total spending pot of a half-trillion dollars, it's extremely difficult to do. I would argue that [NewSchools'] impact is disproportionate to [its] contribution. [It's] supporting tremendously important organizations that have a disproportionate impact for good."

The National Charter School Institute acts as a resource organization for charter schools.

"One year short of its 10th anniversary, NewSchools Venture Fund—a California-based organization that raises venture capital for education entrepreneurs—has raised \$100 million in total over the past decade."

Finding Acceptance

NewSchools has one thing in common with the charter schools it supports: Both are outsiders struggling for mainstream acceptance.

"The reason why it is hard for organizations like NewSchools," Carpenter added, is that the education establish-

ment has "helped themselves to the whole half-trillion dollar pie, and there is no room at the table for entrepreneurs and new schools to get a bite of it."

Expanding Nationwide

Most of NewSchools' work has been concentrated in California. Mitchell said the next step for the organization will be geographic expansion.

"Today, the urban areas that we are focused on are Oakland/Bay Area, Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, and Washington, DC," Mitchell explained. "These areas have been chosen because of their national prominence, magnitude of student need, and potential for transformative change."

"Within each of these areas, we hope to support charter management organizations, but also other organizations that address the most fundamental needs of public education today, including the need to address recruitment and preparation of high-quality teachers and ways to facilitate the use and usefulness of student assessment data," Mitchell said.

NewSchools plans to raise \$60 million for its expansion into new communities.

Aricka Flowers (atflowers@hotmail.com) writes from Chicago.

INTERNET INFO

"Venture Fund Fueling Push for New Schools," by Erik W. Robelen, *Education Week*, January 17, 2007, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/01/17/19newschools.h26.html?qs=alex+molnar>

Georgia

Continued from page 1

\$9,000, and an estimated 4,100 students will use them when they become available this autumn.

The Georgia Senate passed the bill in early January. The vote in the state General Assembly—which ultimately passed it 91-84—was a horse race, witnesses said.

"You usually know how the vote's going to go, and we really didn't," said Lori Drummer, state project director for the Alliance for School Choice, a national advocacy group based in Washington, DC. "We thought we could lose by two [votes]. So we are definitely celebrating. This was just a pure victory."

Riding High in April

Jamie Self, vice president of public policy for the Georgia Family Council, agreed. Heading into the final day of the session, she said, advocates knew they had 89 solid votes for the bill, but they would need 91 to reach the required majority.

"It was a little touch and go right up

until the very end," Self said. "In the last 30 minutes, we were running around getting people out of bathrooms and their offices, because we knew if even one of them wasn't there, we wouldn't get it. It was a little bit dramatic."

The Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation spent five months taking Georgians' pulse on school choice in conjunction with four other groups. The result was a poll released in the weeks before the vote, showing 59 percent of Georgians favored the special-needs voucher legislation and only 20 percent opposed it.

In addition, 58 percent of Georgians said they favor vouchers in general, while only 22 percent oppose them. Perhaps most importantly, 54 percent said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports school choice than one who does not.

"I know that poll had an effect on a couple of votes in particular," Self said. "There were a couple of people who really wanted to come our way and vote for this, but were afraid for an election back home. It was great to have that data so we could tell them what the numbers were in their area."

Rejected in March

Elsewhere in the South, school choice did not fare as well this spring: A bill that would have combined tax credits and vouchers in South Carolina, the Educational Opportunity Scholarship Act, was defeated in the legislature in late March by seven votes.

School choice advocates said they will continue bringing the bill back for consideration.

"This is a parental loss, not a political loss—but it's only a temporary setback for those who care about making our students and our state more competitive," Randy Page, president of South Carolinians for Responsible Government, said in a March 29 news release.

"Regardless of today's outcome," Page noted, "the past few days demonstrate



On April 20, the Georgia Senate sent to Gov. Sonny Perdue a special-needs voucher bill for his signature.

that support for school choice is growing, and that more and more House members are showing the courage to stand up to the education establishment."

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

Pennsylvania Legislator Wants Schools to Teach Founding Documents

By Fran Eaton

Freshman state Rep. Todd Rock (R-Franklin) introduced a bill this spring that would make Pennsylvania the second state to require public schools to teach foundational American documents as part of its American History requirements.



Todd Rock
State Representative
Franklin, Pennsylvania

California passed a similar law in 2003. Rock said schools should not leave out the nation's founding principles in order to

focus on other more "politically correct" topics.

"As a parent and former teacher, I want to do everything I can to ensure that Pennsylvania's students explore American history from the Declaration of Independence to the present day, rather than a limited number of topics that certain special-interest groups deem as politically correct," Rock said in a March news release.

"We're working on adding co-sponsors to the legislation right now and hope to introduce the bill sometime this week or next," said Debbie Finney, Rock's legislative aide, in late April. At press time, a bipartisan coalition of 30 co-sponsors had signed onto the bill.

Californians passed a similar law in 2003. Rock said schools should not leave out the nation's founding principles in order to

Divided Attention

Critics say reading George Washington's Farewell Address is like reading the King James Version of the Bible, and that teachers competing with MTV,

YouTube, and iPods find it difficult to keep students interested in 200-year-old documents.

High school graduation requirements are often vague about social studies criteria, and most four-year colleges require only one class of American History and one semester of American Government.

Rock argues it is important for the next generation to learn about the Founding Fathers' vision because it affects their participation in civic duties.

"Requiring that schools teach these materials will reignite the flame of civic passion within our young people, [which is] needed to sustain our great nation," Rock said.

Historical Ignorance

Rock's concern is backed by a 2000 study conducted by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), which

found college and university upper-classmen to be embarrassingly ignorant of basic historical facts.

The ACTA study showed four of five seniors from the nation's top 55 universities and colleges could not identify Valley Forge as a Revolutionary War battle zone, nor recognize a Gettysburg Address passage. Most were unfamiliar with basic principles of the U.S. Constitution, and less than 25 percent knew James Madison was the person who drafted it.

By contrast, 99 percent of the students knew well the cartoon characters Beavis and Butthead, and nearly as many readily identified rapper Snoop Dogg.

Greater Participation

A study with similar findings was released in September 2006 by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), a nonprofit group based in Delaware, which with the University of Connecticut surveyed 14,000 randomly selected college freshmen on their knowledge of American government and history. Seniors at 22 of the 50 colleges surveyed failed to answer 50 percent of the questions correctly, on average.

The report, *The Coming Crisis in Citizenship: Higher Education's Failure to Teach America's History and Institutions*, predicts serious ramifications from this ignorance.

"Students who demonstrated greater learning of America's history and institutions were more engaged in citizenship activities such as voting, volunteer community service, and political campaigns," the authors noted. But students can't learn what universities don't teach, the report observed, and prestigious schools did just as poorly in the survey as state schools. Seniors on average scored only 1.5 percent better than incoming freshmen.

Even more troubling, according to the survey, was the fact that 16 of the colleges showed a negative learning trend—students knew even less about the Constitution and other historical documents when they graduated from college than when they entered.

Fran Eaton (featon@illinoisreview.com) writes from Illinois.

Students: Some High Schools Teach History Well, Others Do Not

Some political science students say they have learned enough about American history in high school. Others, however, say they had to study outside high school or wait for college in order to learn about American history, in states without laws requiring study of the nation's founding documents, like one currently under consideration in Pennsylvania.

"I've definitely acquired a knowledge of U.S. history primarily within the walls of my high schools and colleges ... not from outside reading or research I've had to do independently," said Erin Joyce, a 2006 Elmhurst College graduate who attended St. Viator High School in Arlington Heights, Illinois. "American political thought classes have allowed me to read great American historical works, like the Federalist Papers, or books like [Alexis] de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*."

Joyce, now headed for graduate studies at University of Colorado, attributes some of that to individual school requirements. Michigan's Hillsdale College, which Joyce attended her freshman year, is known as one of the nation's most conservative.

"While at Hillsdale, one of my required [political science] courses allowed me to intensely study the Constitution and Declaration of

Independence, so thoroughly that I ended up having much of them memorized by the completion of the class," Joyce said.

"[General knowledge of] basic U.S. history is terrible unless you are a history major. Even in a history class, students do not read the great works of U.S. history."

DAENA STANEK
JUNIOR

BRADLEY UNIVERSITY

Opinionated Teachers

But for every case like Joyce's, others note, there are many others where high school teachers focus on less-important historical subjects in which they have more expertise or interest.

"I had a U.S. history teacher in high school who talked about how dumb George W. Bush was—and when I challenged him on it in class and asked where he got his information, he said it was common knowledge," Bradley University junior Daena Stanek recalled.

Bradley University, in Peoria, Illinois, allows students to fulfill

the school's Western Civics and Social Forces graduation requirements with classes such as "Race, Ethnicity, and Minority Relations," "Gender and Society," and "Marxism and Critical Perspectives."

Unreliable Curricula

Stanek said she learned about the Constitution when she studied abroad in 2005.

"[General knowledge of] basic U.S. history is terrible unless you are a history major," Stanek said. "Even in a history class, students do not read the great works of U.S. history."

Many professors with whom she studied, Stanek said, incorrectly assume incoming freshmen know the basics.

Stanek shares Pennsylvania state Rep. Todd Rock's (R-Franklin) concerns about the selective teaching of historical documents (see story this page), and she is somewhat cynical about public high schools' current history curricula.

"History or political science classes are basically a teacher spinning the stories any way they want and telling them as fact," Stanek said.

Other states, such as Illinois, have considered legislative proposals similar to Rock's but have not yet made them state law. On the other hand, at press time New Jersey was considering legislation that would no longer require teachers to discuss the history of Columbus Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and other traditional holidays.

— Fran Eaton

INTERNET INFO

"Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century," published in February 2000 by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, is available through PolicyBot™, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and search for document #21188.

"The Coming Crisis in Citizenship: Higher Education's Failure to Teach America's History and Institutions," Intercollegiate Studies Institute, September 2006, <http://www.american.civilliteracy.org/report/summary.html>

Pennsylvania Tax Credit Program Celebrated for Six Years of Choice

By Ben DeGrow

After six years of increasing educational opportunities, Pennsylvania's tax credit program remains the state's best hope for expanding school choice, says a leading reformer.

Since its inception in 2001, more than 2,300 businesses have taken advantage of the incentive provided by the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC). Businesses have donated more than \$260 million to approved organizations that give private education scholarships to needy students or that develop innovative public school programs.

The REACH Foundation, a prominent Pennsylvania advocate for school choice, hosted a May 8 rally at the state capitol to celebrate the EITC's sixth anniversary. More than 2,300 attended the rally—an increase over the 1,600 that attended the 2006 rally.

"We do it to thank the legislature for the program," said Andrew LeFevre, executive director of the Harrisburg-based REACH Foundation. "We don't necessarily call for new programs, but use [the rally] to highlight the success of the EITC program."

Giving Thanks

Some lawmakers, LeFevre added, find it a relief to show up at an event where they are showered with gratitude rather than complaints.

While REACH has considered promoting targeted voucher programs for autistic and foster care children, LeFevre believes tax credit expansion holds the most hope for enhancing school choice in Pennsylvania.

"At this stage in the political climate here, EITC is the best vehicle we have," LeFevre said.

LeFevre estimates more than 33,000 students in Pennsylvania currently receive tuition assistance through EITC-funded scholarships. The current \$54 million cap on EITC contributions represents a \$36 million cap for scholarships and an \$18 million cap for public school innovations.

The original 2001 program had a \$30 million total limit (\$20 million for

scholarships and \$10 million for innovations), which has been expanded by legislative action several times. LeFevre believes there is plenty of room for the tax credit to continue growing. He said the contribution cap has been met every year except the first.

"We're clearly not meeting demand from the business community," said LeFevre. "Last year [the tax credits] were out on the very first day."

Expanding Cap

One piece of legislation that would further expand EITC was under consideration by the Pennsylvania General Assembly at press time. Senate Bill 680, sponsored by state Sen. Jane Orie (R-Pittsburgh), would raise the cap by \$20 million.

Other prominent state lawmakers applaud the tax credit's effectiveness.

"The Education Improvement Tax Credit program is an important and successful state program that benefits both businesses and the local school community," said state Rep. Mario Civera (R-Upper Darby). "This program empowers parents to choose the best educational setting for their children."

The REACH Foundation began working to promote school choice in Pennsylvania in 1991. Several attempts to enact school



A May 8 rally celebrated Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit program, launched in 2001.

vouchers fell short before EITC passed with the support of then-Gov. Tom Ridge (R) in 2001. Current Gov. Ed Rendell (D) has signed two expansions of the tax credit during his tenure.

"EITC is very popular and has strong, bipartisan support in Pennsylvania," LeFevre said. "It's a great program. It has the support of parents and legislators and a good chance of increasing."

Ben DeGrow (ben@i2i.org) is a policy analyst for the Independence Institute, a free-market think tank in Golden, Colorado.

INTERNET INFO

Educational Improvement Tax Credit,
<http://www.paschoolchoice.org>

S.B. 680, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/>



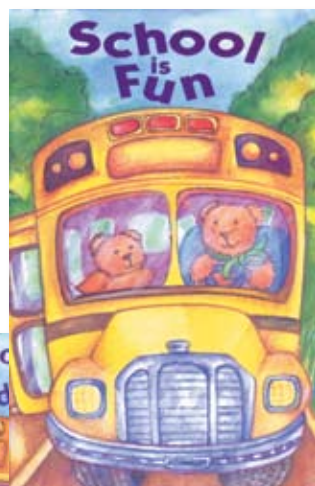
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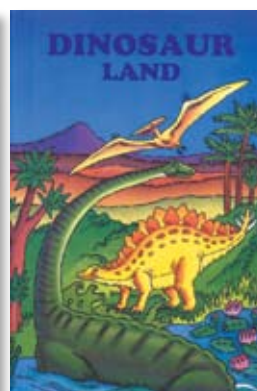
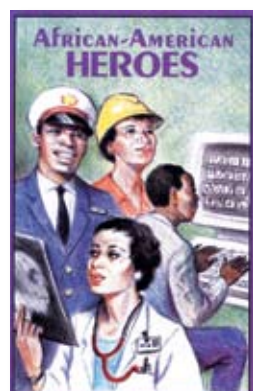
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West Virginia Salary Posting Raises Unions' Ire

By Ben DeGrow

A decision to post teacher salaries on the Internet has irked the teachers union in West Virginia, but an experienced reformer said such policies are needed to expose the current education system's ineffectiveness.

In February, the Kanawha County Schools Board of Education adopted a plan to post all employee salaries on its official Web site for public inspection. The policy change was introduced by board member Pete Thaw and approved unanimously by the five-member body.

At press time, Kanawha County appeared to be the only school district in West Virginia with the Internet-posting policy. But the decision was a logical one for district leaders, they say.

"School system salaries are a matter of public record. Anyone can view the salaries upon request," said Superintendent Ron Duerring. "We just decided to do it at the request of a board member since it was public information."

"A decision to post teacher salaries on the Internet has irked the teachers union in West Virginia, but an experienced reformer said such policies are needed to expose the current education system's ineffectiveness."

Easier Access

West Virginia law requires county boards of education to publish annually the names and amounts paid to "all school personnel by the board." Local residents are entitled to view the records upon request.

The policy change for Kanawha County Schools, the largest public school district in West Virginia, followed the practice of other nearby government bodies. The Kanawha County Commission posts its employees' salary information on the Web, and the state auditor's office unveiled its online database in February.

Though the state's information was already available by request, the change improved access to it and eliminated the need to print a 20-pound paper report. It also came as a revelation to many whose names and annual earnings are now displayed on the Internet.

"Some folks who work for the state didn't know their information was public already," said Justin Southern, spokesman for the state auditor. "Three days after it was put online, we had a million hits. Obviously, there's been quite a bit of interest."

'A Nuisance'

A spokeswoman for the West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) said the practice has been troubling for state



employees, and Kanawha County teachers are not comfortable with it, either.

"For teachers, this is just a nuisance. But nobody likes to see their salaries published on a Web site," said Kym Randolph, director of communications. "It's different if it's an anonymous scale."

The West Virginia Department of Education posts online the salary schedule for every county in the state. Knowing a teacher's years of experience and how many academic degrees he or she holds can give an observer a fairly accurate idea of an individual's actual salary.

Randolph said both the WVEA and the local Kanawha County Education Association made presentations before the school board to register their protests, to no avail, but downplayed the significance of the posting.

"I think it's an issue that still will arise on occasion, but it's not like salaries are super-secret," Randolph said. "I don't think there's going to be a big rush to see that changed."

Pioneering Transparency

Entrepreneur Jack Roeser has pioneered and honed the work of posting teacher salary information on the Internet. His Champion Foundation Web site has chronicled public education employee payouts in Illinois since 1999.

Roeser launched the project after a telephone conversation with a Chicago reporter who quoted to him incorrect teacher salary figures provided by school district officials. Having collected the data from the Illinois Department of Education for many years, Roeser decided in 1999 to give the information a bigger platform.

In 2006, more than a million unique visitors searched the Champion database for Illinois public schools employee salary information.

"It's building a grassroots following. People in districts around the state have picked up their fights," Roeser said.

Roeser believes his project has lifted the fog of confusion and misinformation surrounding public educators' compensation. The site shows the average 2006 employee salary exceeded \$60,000 in more than 100 Illinois school districts. In nine districts, the average salary was greater than \$80,000, excluding fringe

benefits.

"It's exposed the myths that teachers are paid poorly," Roeser said.

Different Salary Trends

WVEA officials point to a different trend in their state. National Education Association (NEA) statistics show West Virginia has fallen from 30th to 46th in the nation in average teacher salary, at \$39,897 in 2004-05. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, West Virginia's average pay to all workers ranked 50th out of 51, including the District of Columbia, at \$35,467 per year for 2004-05, the most

recent year for which statistics were available. Only Mississippi's pay was lower.

In March, more than 5,000 teachers picketed West Virginia's state capitol to demand legislators raise statewide minimum compensation.

"Obviously, our salaries are moving in the wrong direction," said Randolph.

The NEA places Illinois at the other end of the spectrum, with the nation's fourth-highest average teacher salaries at \$57,989.

Using the hard numbers has enhanced the Champion Foundation's credibility.

"The easiest argument to win is where you're mathematically correct," Roeser said.

Ben DeGrow (ben@i2i.org) is a policy analyst for the Independence Institute, a free-market think tank in Golden, Colorado.


INTERNET INFO

Kanawha County Schools employee salary information, <http://kcs.kana.k12.wv.us/empinfo/empsalary.html>

The Champion Foundation, <http://www.thechampion.org>

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Bill Would Require Greater Accountability from Texas Charter Schools

By Mary Susan Littlepage

Texas's high-achieving charter schools could receive more money, and charters statewide could be required to be more accountable for their finances, if state Senate Bill 4 is approved. The bill was introduced by state Sen. Florence Shapiro (R-Plano) in late February.

Proponents of the plan, such as Shapiro and state Sen. Kyle Janek (R-Houston), say the bill would make it easier to close failing charter schools and would create a financial incentive for well-managed schools in the form of additional funds for facilities.

About 20 of the state's approximately 190 charter schools could close by early next year if the bill passes, according to estimates by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Twenty-five charter schools would have been closed down if the bill were already in place, according to an analysis by the Charter School Policy Institute (CSPI), an advocacy group in Austin.

Many of the state's publicly funded charter schools have mismanaged funds, used fraudulent practices, and delivered low performance by students, the bill's supporters say. For example, the TEA has reported that the McCullough Academy of Excellence, an Austin charter school, has not turned in required audit reports on time for five years and has failed to document its expenses.

Charter schools, which tend to enroll more at-risk students than regular public schools, are subject to fewer state laws than other public schools.

Facility Funds

Under S.B. 4, all charter school campuses would have to be rated by the state commissioner of education as "recognized" or "exemplary" for two consecutive years to be eligible for facilities funding. The commissioner also could close charter schools

that receive unacceptable academic or financial ratings for two years.

Charter schools also could close if their total liabilities exceed total assets by more than 20 percent of total annual expenditures, or if their passing rates on the math or reading section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills dip below 25 percent, though extensions may be given for recent improvement.

"There have been many incidents, with both good and bad schools, that motivated this legislation," Shapiro said.

Over the past few years, the bill has been a work in progress, with Shapiro fine-tuning it with input from other senators, parents of charter school students, charter school administrators, the TEA, teachers, and the media.

S.B. 4 addresses charter schools' financial behavior well, but it is deficient in measuring academic improvement, says Jamie Story, an education policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a free-market research group in Austin.

"It would shut down a school that doesn't have a balanced sheet, schools that are operating in the red," Story said. However, the bill does not reward schools whose students are making good academic progress.

School Ratings

Although "25 percent sounds like a low standard," Story said, "the problem you have is that you have these charter schools with [some] students who are three and four grades behind" their grade levels.

Even if those students improve their reading levels by two grades within a year, their schools still could close under S.B. 4, Story noted, adding that they should be judged on achievement.

Alternative-education charter schools enroll at-risk students to expedite their



Texas state Sens. Florence Shapiro (left) and Kyle Janek (above) are promoting a bill that would toughen accountability measures for charter schools, while rewarding those that excel.

progress toward performing at grade level and high school completion. Under the bill, charter schools in the alternative system can be rated by the state commissioner of education as academically acceptable or unacceptable based on their financial data, regardless of students' test scores.

Of the 25 charter schools the CSPI estimated would close for academic and/or financial reasons under the bill, 17 are alternative-education campuses.

Better Programs

If financial incentives are offered to charter schools, all public schools should be eligible for additional facilities funding for meeting similar requirements, Story said.

The bill also could make long-term financial planning for schools difficult, as funding could be dropped if a school gets an academically unacceptable rating.

S.B. 4 also calls for the TEA to complete a \$500,000 study of dropout recovery programs in Texas and other states by December 1, 2008. The report is to include the best practices in dropout recovery, the geographic areas where students are at greatest risk of dropping out, and recommendations for a dropout recovery pilot program in charter schools.

"There are some issues I wish we could address in more detail, such as how

to define a 'dropout recovery' school," Shapiro said, "but the bottom line is that we don't have enough information and data on this topic to define it at this time, which is why we included [an] interim study on this topic in the bill.

"Hopefully, after this in-depth examination, we will be better able to identify these programs and help them to reach more students in the future," Shapiro said.

Senate action on S.B. 4 was still pending at press time.

Mary Susan Littlepage (mslp@mylittlepages.com) writes from Chicago.

INTERNET INFO

S.B. 4, <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=80R&Bill=SB4>

"State takes steps to close Austin charter school," by Jason Embry, *Austin American-Statesman*, February 23, 2007, <http://www.statesman.com/news/content/news/stories/local/02/23/23charter.html>

Utah

Continued from page 1

in the state House. Voucher opponents quickly launched a petition drive to give voters an opportunity to repeal the measure.

Shortly thereafter, House Bill 174, which amended and clarified H.B. 148, passed by a referendum-proof two-thirds majority. It became law at midnight on April 30.

H.B. 174 charged the state board of education with creating regulations for the program's implementation this fall. At its May 3 meeting, the board voted to defy that provision, even though Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff has said H.B. 174 is strong enough to implement the voucher program on its own.

Petition Drive

Voucher opponents were faced with a tight deadline to oppose the program after H.B. 148's passage, and so they targeted only that bill in their petition drive. Utahns for Public Schools, the anti-voucher group, needed 92,000 signatures and collected 124,000 valid signatures.

"It was too late for the opponents to change course," explained Chip Mellor, president of the Institute for Justice, a national civil liberties law firm that has been following the case. "They got plenty of signatures, but they're stuck with a petition drive that cannot legally address the program they want it to address. They are not happy."

Future Lawsuit

The next step in the process was for the state to draw up the ballot language. Under state law, referendum descriptions cannot be more than 100 words long and must accurately depict for voters the law

being challenged—in this case, H.B. 148. The deadline for preparing the ballot language was May 15.

"The Utah state board of education on May 3 voted not to implement a law that would allow the state's new universal voucher program to take effect this autumn."

Leah Barker, spokeswoman for Parents for Choice in Education, a local pro-voucher group, said the group would determine its next actions after seeing the language.

"The local newspaper asked us if we're going to sue," Barker said. "Are we the only ones interested in suing? What

about the attorney general's office, or the state legislature, or the sponsor of the bill? [The board of education] was talking [May 3] about the attorney general's opinion as if it was [just] anyone's opinion. Finally, one of the board members said, 'The attorney general is our superior, and we owe him some respect. We may not agree with his opinion, but it's still one we need to respect.'

"They're cheating our kids out of a great education, and by stalling this program, they're killing the hope of thousands of families," Barker continued. "We've had more than 5,000 families sign up for this program within two months, all of them eager and desperate for a school that works for them. The state board proved it will safeguard the [current] system above all else—above moms and kids, and above the law."

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

Texas Schools to Receive State Grants to Improve Science, Math Teaching

By **Connie Sadowski**

On March 9, the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Initiative (T-STEM) awarded \$2.3 million in state-funded Acceleration Grants to 56 public and charter high schools, creating the T-STEM Best Practices Network.

Network schools will learn and implement more effective teaching strategies, then share them with other campuses statewide, said Texas Education Agency (TEA) spokeswoman Debbie Ratcliff.

Only schools showing academic need are eligible for the grants, Ratcliff said—those where 50 percent or less of ninth graders passed the math section, or 50 percent or less of 10th graders passed the science section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test administered in April 2006.

Those low-performing schools will receive a one-time grant of \$125 per student, with a maximum of \$50,000 per campus, to be used to better evaluate student test data. Each school will then create an education plan specific to each student's individual strengths and weaknesses.

"Poor math and science performance were two of the most common reasons a

school was rated 'academically unacceptable' in 2006 in the state accountability system," said Ratcliff.

"On March 9, the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Initiative awarded \$2.3 million in state-funded Acceleration Grants to 56 public and charter high schools ..."

Improving Individual Performance

The TAKS is given each spring to all high school juniors statewide. In 2006, 94 percent passed the social studies portion, and 88 percent passed the English language arts test. However, only 77 percent of the students passed the mathematics portion, and 75 percent passed the science test.

The Acceleration Grants will make high school science and math a priority, Ratcliff said.

The Texas High School Project—a \$261 million public-private initiative committed to increasing graduation and college enrollment rates in each town statewide—developed the T-STEM Initiative in partnership with the TEA, the governor's office, and the Dell, Gates, and Wallace Foundations. Launched in December 2005, the initiative now has five regional centers for teacher training and 17 academies for students.

T-STEM Regional Centers provide and develop instructional materials, offer professional development, and create best practices to be disseminated to teachers and administrators statewide.

The Texas Tech University (TTU) T-STEM Center's design team has been researching current science, technology, engineering, and math curricula by visiting "successful and not so successful" districts, said spokesman Robert Waller.

TTU will hold its first professional development workshop August 6-10.

"This will be educators' first look at the engineering design process that our center is using as a model for designing



STEM curriculum and teaching STEM concepts," said Waller.

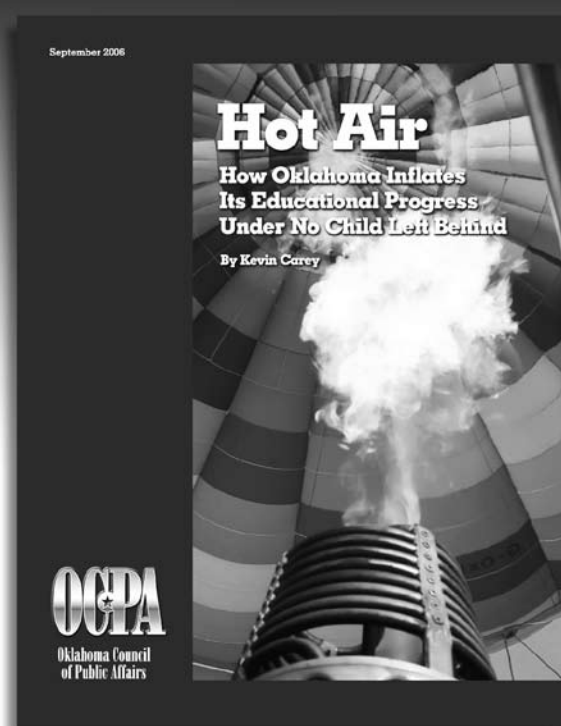
Recognizing Success

T-STEM Academy designation is given to a school receiving a rating of Exemplary or Recognized under the 2005 state accountability rating system, provided its student body is more than 39 percent economically disadvantaged.

The program administrators hope to alter the curricula of 35 existing schools across Texas by 2009, each with a maximum of 100 students per grade, giving them a personalized learning environment with high expectations for each student.

Connie Sadowski (connie@ceoatx.org) directs the Education Options Resource Center at the Austin CEO Foundation.

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FIELD NOTES

Information Counts for School Choice Parents

By Brian Kisida and Brent Riffel

Anyone familiar with debates about school choice proposals knows both sides agree parents need accurate information to be effective choosers. What is not agreed upon is whether it is realistic to expect parents to be well-informed.

Truth be told, an abundance of evidence in various academic disciplines suggests that for most people the cost of gathering information often outweighs the perceived benefits.

Skeptics of school choice highlight these general findings as reasons to doubt the possibility that consumers can drive an effective market for quality education—especially because many voucher programs target low-income families, who researchers often find have less access to information than higher-income families.

“Anyone familiar with debates about school choice proposals knows both sides agree parents need accurate information to be effective choosers. What is not agreed upon is whether it is realistic to expect parents to be well-informed.”

Making Choices

School choice critics fear parents will choose bad schools for lack of good information, or will select schools based on criteria that don't act as a catalyst for enhanced learning—such as choosing a school based on racial or religious concerns rather than academic quality. Some studies have shown these fears are not without merit.

Other studies, however, give school choice advocates good reasons to be optimistic.

A study by Mark Schneider, Paul Teske, Christine Roch, and Melissa Marshall conducted in the late 1990s concludes it is not necessary for all parents to possess quality information about their community's schools in order for everyone to reap the benefits of a competitive market. So long as a critical mass of “marginal consumers” makes quality choices, they argue, everyone can benefit from information-driven forces.

Releasing Findings

While this notion potentially lessens the burden of proof for choice advocates, it does not remove it. To date it has not been widely demonstrated that parents gather and store more information when they are given more schooling options.

While plenty of studies report parents say they gather and use quality information, such self-reports are not considered reliable measures of reality.

Studies that actually measure parental information about their children's schools in a choice environment are rare. A study completed this year by Patrick Wolf and Brian Kisida (one of the authors of this column) at the University of Arkansas sheds new light on the question of how informed school choosers are compared to non-choosers.

Using data from the Washington Scholarship Fund, which provided partial tuition scholarships for District of Columbia families at or below 270 percent of the federal poverty line in the late 1990s, the researchers examined two specific questions of fact that were asked of both choice and non-choice parents via survey. Because everyone in the study had applied for a voucher, which was then awarded by a random lottery, the only thing that differed between choosers and non-choosers was the actual offer of a voucher.

Testing Parents

The parents were asked to estimate the number of children in their child's class and in their child's school. The researchers expected that being offered a scholarship would lead parents to become better informed about their children's schools, and that parents' information levels would rise the longer they were in the program.

When the data were compared to actual school records, the researchers found statistically significant confirmation of both hypotheses. In the case of parents' ability to exhibit knowledge about their child's school, the choice parents were more accurate, and their level of accuracy increased over time.

While the findings are especially important given the nature of the data—randomized experiments are considered the “gold standard” in social science research—they have important limitations.

As the researchers note, while increasing choice apparently leads to higher levels of accurate information, “questions remain about what level of information is sufficient for a consumer-driven school marketplace to operate effectively.”

While proof that choice leads parents

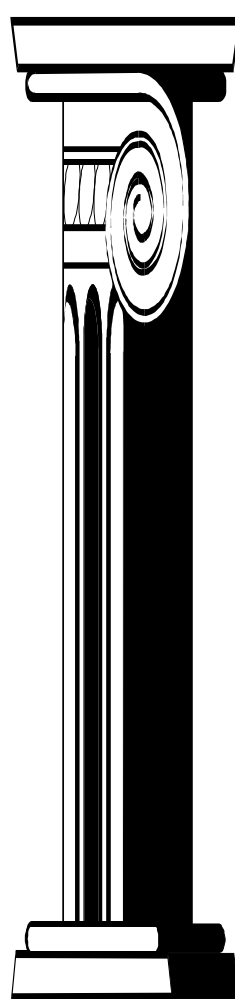


to learn more about their child's schools is encouraging news, evidence of students' educational outcomes is the ultimate test of the policy's effectiveness.

Brian Kisida (bkisida@uark.edu) is a

research associate for the School Choice Demonstration Project, and Brent E. Riffel (briffel@uark.edu) is the deputy director of the Office for Education Policy, both at the University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform.

PUBLIC INTEREST



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North Carolinians Rally for School Choice

By Richard G. Neal

More than 1,000 North Carolina parents, children, legislators, community leaders, and clergy met to express their desire for more choice in their children's education in North Carolina at a Raleigh church on March 6.

The two-year-old advocacy group Parents for Educational Freedom of North Carolina (PEFNC) sponsored the event, which featured keynote speaker Dr. Howard Fuller, a nationally renowned choice activist who founded the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) and helped usher in Milwaukee's school choice program in 1990.

As superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools, Fuller facilitated the transformation of the city's education system, which now provides more than 17,000 low-income children with vouchers to attend a school of their parents' choice. In 2000, Fuller founded BAEO, which he currently serves as chairman.

BAEO has chapters in several states working to improve educational options for the nation's black children.

"The real hurdle [to school choice] is the lack of political will to do what must be done for other people's children," Fuller said at the rally. "Every day I see children suffer because we don't have the political will to change the institutions that continue not to serve them well."

Similar Goals

PEFNC President Darrell Allison said the time is right for school choice in the Tarheel State.

"This is a movement that is building in North Carolina," Allison said. "Frankly speaking, the turnout literally overwhelmed our staff of volunteers."

Church buses transported many of the attendees from 20 different counties.

PEFNC's goal, Allison said, is to replicate the successes of Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Utah in building demand for parental choice.

"More than 1,000 North Carolina parents, children, legislators, community leaders, and clergy met to express their desire for more choice in their children's education in North Carolina at a Raleigh church on March 6."

According to its position statement, "PEFNC hopes North Carolina will also add its name to the list of states that have taken bold steps in providing parents greater freedom to choose and children more options which will improve education for all in our state. PEFNC is committed to help bring this fundamental change to our state

by creating greater awareness of the need for parental choice, by serving as a resource for school choice information and by building diverse partnerships to support expanded educational options for North Carolina families."

Honest Desire

One attendee at the rally—a local construction worker—summed up why so many people turned out for it.

"I want to be able to march up to my local failing school," he said, "and tell the principal that I am pulling my child out and I want my money so I can go someplace else." This man had never attended any seminars on choice, nor read any books or articles about it. He simply spoke from his heart a hope for self-evident justice.

The defining characteristic of the 95 percent African-American gathering was its spontaneous display of enthusiasm for the idea of choice. It was not your normal (boring) conference of educators. These people had passion, justice, and common sense on their side—and they knew it.

Many large American cities have core populations of black people. Their children, many already victimized by deplorable family and community conditions, are forced to attend crumbling government education warehouses. In all of these communities, there are good people who want the best for their children.

Many of them faithfully attend their

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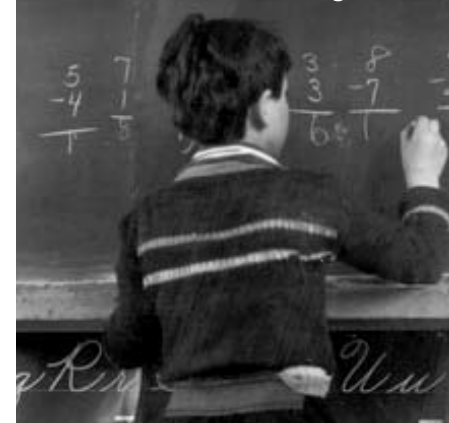
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community churches—churches that serve as important bases for unification on critical issues. It is in these churches that organizations like PEFNC and BAEO find much of their strength.

Richard G. Neal (rneal1@triad.rr.com) writes from North Carolina.

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sity, says, "Students usually find it to be an eye-opener." The Woodbury Junior High School Social Studies Department in Minnesota calls it the "world's *smartest* political quiz."

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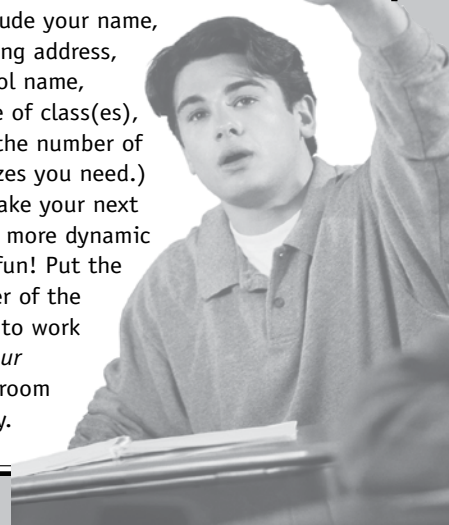
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IN OTHER WORDS

The Issue: Corporate Tuition Tax Credits

By The Arizona Republic

Of all Arizona's attempts over the years to provide education options for poor students, the law allowing corporations to take a dollar-for-dollar credit on their taxes is the best-structured reform effort so far.

So why are education institutionalists fighting so hard against it in court?

Capped at a fund totaling \$10 million, which can grow 20 percent per year until 2011, the tax credit program would help the children of lower-income families afford private school tuition. Only families earning no more than 185 percent of the income level allowing participation in free school lunch programs may participate.

Similar Threshold

Some critics have complained that the income threshold allows too many middle-income families to qualify. But the program's maximum income threshold—\$68,450 for a family of four—is in line with the income qualifications Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) is seeking for enrolling families in the state's health insurance program for kids. Like quality health insurance, a quality education need not be the exclusive purview of the well-to-do.

Despite the indisputable value it provides students and their parents—that of real education options—the program's

opponents have gone to court against it and other education choice programs based on First Amendment arguments regarding separation of church and state. And despite losing their most recent court battle, the opponents insist they will continue battling education reform in federal and state appellate courts.

"Of all Arizona's attempts over the years to provide education options for poor students, the law allowing corporations to take a dollar-for-dollar credit on their taxes is the best-structured reform effort so far."

This March, a Maricopa County Superior Court judge ruled that the corporate tuition tax credit program was "legally indistinguishable" from existing tax credit programs, and so passes the same constitutional muster. That hasn't dissuaded opponents—including the Arizona Education Association, the Arizona School Boards Association, People for the American Way, and the Arizona chapter of the American Civil

Liberties Union—who contend that organizations directing the flow of funds to the private schools are overwhelmingly religious in nature.

Arizona State University law professor Paul Bender says his group will continue battling the program all the way to the Arizona Supreme Court, if necessary.

Failed Arguments

Their arguments have failed before. In Milwaukee and Cleveland (and now in Arizona), legal arguments based on issues of separation of church and state have stumbled on the critical fact that it is parents, not the state, who are making the decisions on where the kids go to school.

This myopic battle is anchored in fear. Its proponents fear that perfectly defensible programs for poor kids may metastasize into something bigger. But dread of what the future may hold is a mighty poor argument for denying a quality education to kids right now. It is not just the corporate tax credit they are fighting against. Last year, the state legislature approved, and Napolitano signed, bills creating education voucher programs for disabled kids and children in foster programs. Those programs also are tied up in court by many of the same opponents.

Voucher programs traditionally have had a tougher time in the courts than



Last year, Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano signed bills creating voucher programs for disabled students and foster care children. Those programs are now tied up in court.

tax credit programs, so the future of these valuable tools may be more in doubt.

It would be a shame to see such programs flounder on the specious fear that if you give vouchers to disabled kids, or to kids at the rocky bottom of life's well, that public education itself will crumble.

Simply put, it won't. Education choice strengthens the underlying system. Someday, with luck, opponents of reform will figure that out.

This editorial originally appeared in the March 23 issue of The Arizona Republic. Reprinted with permission.

Education and Capitalism

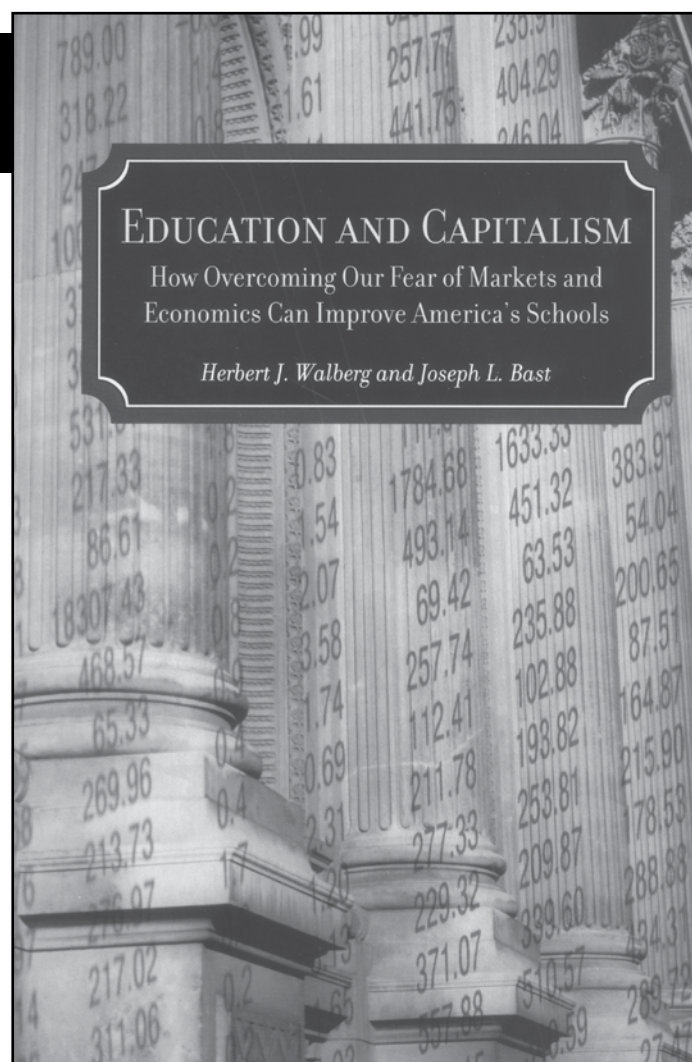
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Audio recordings from the 2006 Educational Choice Speaker Series are now available online.

The luncheon series is hosted by the Illinois School Choice Initiative (ISCI), a project of The Heartland Institute. The mission of the initiative is to enable all parents in Illinois to choose quality schools for their children. For more information, please contact Michael Van Winkle, The Heartland Institute's legislative specialist for education policy, at 312/377-4000, email mvanwinkle@heartland.org.

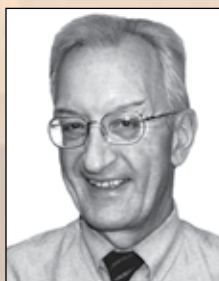
Since January, the ISCI has hosted a monthly luncheon at the Metropolitan Club of Chicago, where business and civic leaders and school

choice supporters have heard from some of the movement's most important leaders, including Robert Enlow of the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, Rebeca Nieves-Huffman of the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options, and Lawrence Patrick III of the Black Alliance for Educational Options.

The audio recordings can be listened to online or downloaded to an iPod or MP3 player by subscribing to the Educational Choice Speaker Series Podcast. Visit The Heartland Institute's online audio center at <http://www.fromtheheartland.org/live/audio.html> and scroll down to the ISCI Educational Choice Speaker series.



THE FOLLOWING PRESENTATIONS ARE AVAILABLE:



JANUARY: George Clowes, The Heartland Institute

On January 19, Clowes kicked off the new monthly Educational Choice Speaker Series with a talk titled, "Competition as an Effective Education Reform: What Works and What's Ahead."



FEBRUARY: Ken Johnson, Milwaukee Public Schools

(Audio Only) On February 16, Kenneth L. Johnson, Milwaukee School Board president, addressed "Milwaukee Public School Reform: Rethinking of Parents as Our Customers."



MARCH: Virginia Gentles, Florida Department of Education

On March 16, Virginia Gentles, executive director of the Florida Department of Education's Office of Independent Education and

Parental Choice, described the school choice programs available to parents in the Sunshine State.



APRIL: Lawrence Patrick, BAE0

On April 20, Lawrence Patrick III of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) addressed the need for educational choice for black parents and students.



MAY: Rebeca Nieves-Huffman, Hispanic CREO

On May 18, Rebeca Nieves-Huffman addressed the education crisis and how it affects Hispanic children. Huffman is president and CEO of the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (Hispanic CREO).



JUNE: Robert Enlow, Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation

On June 15, Robert Enlow, executive director of the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, gave an overview of the school

choice movement, assessing the strength of the movement.



JULY: Lisa Snell, Reason Foundation

On July 27, Lisa Snell, director of education and child welfare at the California-based Reason Foundation, spoke about the pitfalls of universal preschool and the benefits of weighted student funding as a viable and effective K-12 reform.



SEPTEMBER: David Brennan, White Hat Management

On September 21, David Brennan's speech, "The U.S. Education System Is Perfectly Aligned with Cuba and North Korea: Do We Really Treasure Individual Rights? Don't We Value the Power of Consumer Choice?" stressed the importance of innovation in our education system.



OCTOBER: Clint Bolick, Alliance for School Choice

On October 19, Clint Bolick closed the ISCI's

2006 Educational Choice Speaker Series with a discussion of school choice cases currently in the courts, and what the future holds.

SOLD OUT

SCHOOL CHOICE ON DVD

DVD recordings from the 2006 Educational Choice Speaker Series are also available for purchase.

SCHOOL CHOICE ON CABLE TV

"School Choice," a cable program featuring presentations from the ISCI's luncheon series, is broadcast on Comcast's public access channel in the following suburban Chicago, Illinois communities:

Channel 19: Buffalo Grove, Elk Grove Village, Hoffman Estates, parts of Inverness, Lincolnwood, Maine

Township, Morton Grove, New Trier Township, Niles, Northfield, Northfield Township, Palatine, Rolling Meadows, and Wilmette

Channel 35: Arlington Heights, Bartlett, Des Plaines, Glenview, Golf, Hanover Park, Mount Prospect, Northbrook, Park Ridge, Prospect Heights, Schaumburg, Skokie, Streamwood, and Wheeling



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2007 Editorial Calendar

January	Technology in Schools
February	School Safety
March	National History Month
April	Catholic Education
June	National Science Month
June	Higher Education
July	skip month
August	Literacy
September	Back to School
October	Math Education
November	Private Schools
December	Homeschooling

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