

THE Center for Education Reform



1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 204 Washington, DC 20036

Tel 202-822-9000
Fax 202-822-5077

Back-to-School Alert 4th in a series from CER

NOTABLE SUCCESSES EMERGE IN REFORM

*Evidence of improvement among children is joined
with policy victories in several venues*

(9/17/99) A month that has seen conflicting polls and studies released has produced abundant evidence that reform successes are waxing strong.

Contrary to the “**creaming myth**” that is argued by choice opponents, the Escambia County School District found that the children using the scholarships are actually below the national and district average on standardized basic skills tests. Rather than the school choice program causing the best and brightest to flee as some suggest, the scholarships are serving children whose scores closely parallel those children still in the public schools.

“It took competition to make improvements” at Spencer Bibb Advancing Learning Academy, the parent of a child using a scholarship, told *Education Week*. Bibb was one of the two **Pensacola, FL** schools given an F for two consecutive years. “Everyone’s focus now is on the kids. It’s a totally different scene. Why didn’t they do it before?” asked the parent?

That question is being asked today in **Cleveland**, where a new study by the researchers at Indiana University found 12.5% and 11.1% gains respectively for scholarship students in language arts and science. The researchers concluded that being in the program for two years produced positive gains.

And now: a bittersweet ending to a five-year battle over **Colorado’s charter school law** has charter advocates celebrating. Back in 1994, the Denver school board refused to allow the Thurgood Marshall charter school to open, despite an order to do so by the State Board of Education. The Denver board sued to fight the Board’s authority, and just this week, the Colorado Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the state’s law. Unfortunately, it may be too late for teacher and charter founder Cordia Booth, who watched all of her best efforts to open up this school for at-risk children be dismissed.

Up north to **Washington State**, Governor Gary Locke relented in his opposition to having choice-friendly people on his special education commission, and chose Veteran Washington State reformer Jim Spady and education researcher Patricia Lines to bring a reform perspective to the commission’s deliberations.

#