

For Immediate Release
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EDUCATION REFORM MAKES BETTER STUDENTS
ACHIEVEMENT GAINS NOTABLE WHERE CHOICES PREVAIL

Washington, DC - As schools wind down for summer, much-awaited spring testing results are beginning to hit the streets. Results from cities and states across the country demonstrate the power of education reform – from charter schools in the West to higher standards and more in the East. Here are a few notable success stories not seen on the front page of *The New York Times*.

UNDER PRESSURE: New York City students posted impressive achievement gains in English Language Arts this year, which most informed observers attribute to stepped up accountability, pressure from alternatives and a no-excuses attitude by Mayor Bloomberg and the Chancellor. This year 70 percent of all 4th graders met all state standards, up 8 percent from last year.

ALSO IN THE EMPIRE STATE: Charter schools in New York City posted impressive gains on the year's assessment tests. Fourteen out of 20 schools tested outperformed nearby conventional public schools. In fact, charter school 8th graders scored 16 percent higher than the citywide average. Meanwhile, state authorizers closed down three schools for failing to meet expected levels of proficiency, proof that the charter promise – accountability in exchange for freedom – works.

CALIFORNIA'S BEST: Charter schools in California outperform conventional public schools, according to a recent study by the impartial EdSource, which compared growth in scores on standardized tests between charter and conventional public schools. It also used scores from California's Academic Performance Index (API) to measure student performance. The study shows that in all grades, charter schools were 33 percent more likely to meet student improvement goals than conventional public schools. And the good news gets better. Eighty-one percent of charter middle schools met API goals as compared to 54 percent of conventional public schools.

FLORIDA'S SUNSHINE: Polk County, Florida's charter schools are posting impressive scores on this year's Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The Lake Wales Charter School District has been free from district authority for a year. In that time, it has increased most of its FCAT scores at all five schools. One of its schools, Babson Park Charter, ranked in the top ten schools in the county for third and fourth grades.

BAYOU'S BEST: Louisiana charter schools have also posted impressive state test scores. Data just released from the Spring 2005 Louisiana Education Assessment Program (LEAP) show that state-sponsored charter schools are outperforming the state average on LEAP passage rates. Fourth grade charter students outscored the state average by two percent and eighth grade charter kids outscored the state average by a whopping 13 percent!

But, of course, no report would be complete without covering the antics of the opponents who persist in selective study.

THEY'RE AT IT... AGAIN: Boasting new findings on the difference between public and private school students, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) once again supported and promoted a study that is short on facts and long on rhetoric. The report out of The University of Illinois claims to have studied 4th grade NAEP results in reading and that public school students do better than private, (once you control for socioeconomic status) a notion that flies in the face of decades of research and observation. But what the report does not say is that the demographic data used by

NAEP does not verify socioeconomic status, nor does the sample of students include children from all types of private schools. Parents choose to send their children to private schools and no one, not researchers in Illinois and certainly not the AFT, can precisely say how this changes the analysis of the data.

WHAT NAEP REALLY SAYS: Reporters continue to use the flawed data presented by the AFT last summer to suggest that fourth grade charter school students' achievement lags behind other public school students. In reality, the NAEP study did not show that. It showed no differences among students with similar backgrounds in either reading or math in the aggregate. However, when Harvard University scholar Caroline Hoxby examined 4th graders, broke them down by state and compared achievement of children in charters to their nearest neighborhood school, a much more successful picture of charter schools emerges. Charter students outscored conventional school students by 3-5 points.

To truly understand how well charter schools are succeeding, more research must be done to explore individual student progress from year-to-year. Rather than comparing conventional school students to charter school students, we should be comparing charter school students to themselves. Only then will we be able to fully measure success.

Additional research on charter schools is available at www.edreform.com. Click on Publications to read what the research really reveals about charter schools.

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