



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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\* **SCHOOL CHOICE:** Florida brought great news to countless parents and teachers nationwide who believe it's not radical to suggest that children in failing schools should get a chance to be educated somewhere else. The Florida Court of Appeals decision on October 3rd found that the Florida Constitution "does not unalterably hitch the requirement" for public education funding to "a single, specified engine, that being the public school system." In other words, "public education" is redefined as using public funds to support children, not a "system."

CER was pleased to submit an amicus brief in the case on behalf of choice leaders nationwide and has worked hard to debunk the myths that commonly surround choice, among them, that vouchers are unconstitutional. Wrong, said the court. Nothing in the Florida constitution "clearly prohibits the Legislature from allowing the well-delineated use of public funds for private school education, particularly in circumstances where the Legislature finds such use is necessary." Interestingly, hundreds of special education children are being helped in private schools using a different voucher program in Florida, but the teachers unions and PTA chose only to take poor parents to court.

\* **UNIONS:** Hands in the cookie jar? A while ago a Washington law firm found that the NEA wasn't reporting any political activity despite bragging at their events and to members that they were heavily involved in efforts to influence education efforts in most states. Now, they are dipping into new funds – a \$5 per member fee increase, creating a pool of more than \$6 million to fight state school choice ballot initiatives and nearly \$1.4 million to oppose state tax reduction initiatives.

It's no surprise that some teachers are fed up. One recently wrote to us about his state's voucher initiative: "I work public, but would never send my kids here. What a mess. We're voting for vouchers. If I can't get things to improve with public schooling so I can do more than collect the paycheck, I'll probably try to do something politically."

\* **STANDARDS:** Finally, parents do know best, which we are reminded from time to time, including this week when Public Agenda realized another interesting survey about attitudes toward testing. Those who read the Center for Education Reform's Monthly Letters know that we've questioned regularly the sincerity of those leading the charge against standards and testing with consequences. So it was no surprise that a recent Public Agenda survey of public school parents revealed the following: Only 2 percent want the standards/testing programs to stop; 87 percent support the standards/testing program as is or with some adjustments; 85 percent would accept their child being advised to attend summer school if he or she fails to meet the standards; and 68 percent would accept their child being held back a grade under those conditions.

Deborah Wadsworth, president of Public Agenda, said it best: "Based on this research – and surveys by other organizations – reports of the 'death' of the standards movement have been wildly exaggerated." Find the report at [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org).

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