



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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Vol. 3, No. 3 * TRANSITION: Outgoing President Bill Clinton is making as much policy as possible before President-elect Bush's education program can take effect. When most people are getting ready for the real "transition," executive orders are commonplace almost on a daily basis. For education, it means vestiges of status quo thinking, as the President issues an executive order yesterday establishing a new Commission on Educational Resource Equity (because Washington does not have enough commissions!). The alleged purpose (beyond making sure unions still have a leg in the next administration) is to "collect and review information about the current status of gaps in the availability of education resources, including the underlying causes and effects of such resource gaps.... Not later than August 31, 2001, the Commission shall prepare and submit a report for the President and the Congress... which shall include...an analysis of the status of resource equity in education... how resource gaps in education affect the success of individuals and our Nation... and examination of the effectiveness of targeted Federal resources toward disadvantaged students... a summary of best practices and short and long-term recommendations for local, state and Federal officials." So what's wrong with that, some may ask? After all, don't we need to know how resources effect education and what to do about it? The answer is yes, but of course, this nation has produced an overwhelming amount of research and literature into precisely these issues. But because of the typical arrogance of the federal government, none of this private research is apparently deemed as good as government authored work. Because the incoming Bush Administration may want to put its resources into more productive uses of time and push for changes in policy that we know will work, here's a brief bibliography of where the information asked for by Clinton's new Commission can already be found:

- Hanushek, Eric A., "School Resources and Student Performance." In *Does Money Matter? The Effect of School Resources on Student Achievement and Adult Success*, G. Burtless, ed., Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1996, <http://www.brook.edu>.
- *It Takes a City: Getting Serious about Urban School Reform (2000)*, Paul T. Hill, Christine Campbell, James Harvey, with Paul Herdman, Janet Looney, Lawrence Pierce, Carol Reed, and Abigail Winger. <http://brookings.nap.edu/books/0815736398/html/index.html>.
- Diane Ravitch, *National Standards in American Education* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995), esp. "Achievement: A Review of the Evidence," pages 59-97.
- *Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations*, The Education Trust, <http://www.edtrust.org>.
- Hoxby, Caroline Minter, "All School Finance Equalizations Are Not Created Equal," 1998, a working paper available from the Taubman Center's Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard, Kennedy School of Government.

* **STANDARDS:** For the first time, California is making schools accountable to the public by

publishing each school's Academic Performance Index (largely based on the renowned Stanford 9 test scores), and the result is that schools are working harder and test scores are rising. Good news, right? Not for California teachers, who complain that they are actually being required to focus on reading, grammar and math. And not for *Education Week*, which complained in its annual Quality Counts survey that "Many states may be rushing to hold students and schools accountable for results..." Lost in the whirlwind of complaints is the fact that the rigorous new standards and tests - especially those with consequences - are driving improvements in the public education system. And when the results are isolated from the rhetoric, teachers approve: A 1999 survey of more than 1,000 teachers shows that a majority now have more rigorous curricula and higher expectations of their students as a result of new standards. * **CHARTER SCHOOLS:** The risks inherent in letting local school boards act as the only chartering agencies is underscored by the recent attacks on charters in New Mexico, where charter advocates have feared the possibility that charter school legislation might be repealed. The knock on charters? Local school boards have accused them of being "too difficult to work with," and "not innovative" - charges that come straight out of a recent National School Boards Association paper that is refuted by the [vast majority of charter studies](#). The handful of charters permitted to form in New Mexico are striking back, though, with a Charter School Day in the state capitol on February 7, where they'll have an opportunity to show their stuff.



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