



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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\* **CYBER SCHOOLS:** While some education groups fret over this new innovation (see last week's Newsire), others urge that we embrace it. A new report from the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) offers a robust set of proposals for using cyber-learning to free education from its traditional restrictions, urging policy changes that will create greater flexibility in administration, and calling for "a transformed system that measures student achievement" instead of how long students are in class.

The report stops short of supporting cyber-charter schools as a way of using e-Learning to improve education. Indeed, while arguing for freeing traditional public schools from regulations, NASBE seems to lean toward greater regulation of cyber-charters. One reason may be some misleading data it has acquired: NASBE says that the Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School receives \$5,000 but only costs \$895 per student. That figure represents only curriculum costs - not teachers, computers, printers, Internet, administration, proctored exams, field trips, or anything else.

Still, the study is worth reading for anyone seeking support for greater choices for children. You can find the [report here](#).

\* **MR. CHIPS VS. MR. HOFFA:** While the NEA is too-often viewed by the public as a warm and fuzzy "teacher's union," the reality is that 12 percent of its members are not teachers at all. And more justification for a revised look comes from Nevada, where the local NEA affiliate is locked in a representation battle with ... The Teamsters Union! Clark County's ESEA represents 7,000 food service and maintenance workers, bus drivers and other support personnel, but when the Local's health trust collapsed with a debt of \$10 million, the Teamsters Union moved in. The Teamsters have announced that they plan to organize teachers, too, which seems fair since so many of the NEA's members are truck drivers.

For more, [click here](#)

\* **THE RIPPLE EFFECT:** Two new reports to the Boston School Committee show that the city's "pilot schools" are generally outperforming the rest of the city's public schools, with higher attendance rates, lower suspensions and higher test scores. Pilot schools are operated by the traditional school system, but freed from bureaucratic restrictions like teacher hiring rules. What is often missed is that the schools were started in 1994 to keep students from bolting for charter schools, and if charters had never been allowed to start, the school system would never have given students an opportunity for better

schools. Chalk it up to yet another "ripple effect" that charters have on traditional systems.

For more, [click here](#)

\* **FIGHTING HURTS KIDS:** For four months this year, the parents of San Francisco's Edison Academy Charter School had to fight the School Board to keep their school alive, and it had an effect on the children. After three years of rising test scores, the school's scores dropped precipitously, and many parents blame it on the fact that instead of being able to spend time checking their children's homework, they had to spend time at night meetings to keep the school open. "There are people in San Francisco to this day who continue to wage a campaign to discredit us and harass us," said Parent Teacher Council co-chairwoman Heather Mobley. "We're trying to focus on our children and their success." Interestingly, a review of test scores also indicates that, among children who have been at the school at least two years, test scores continue to rise.

\* **MILWAUKEE CHOICE:** The number of Milwaukee children opting to use public scholarships to attend private schools has broken 10,000 for the first time, and enrollment in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's charter schools has jumped by more than 50 percent with the opening of a new charter sponsored by the city's Urban League. But choice opponents who claim such choices "drain" the traditional public school system will find their argument undercut by the fact that enrollment in Milwaukee Public Schools held stable this year (despite a spring prediction forecasting a decline of more than 1,200). Former MPS Superintendent Howard Fuller attributes the picture to improvements and hard work by the MPS schools. "It looks like the parents in Milwaukee are pleased with the choices they have," said Fuller. Which is exactly the point of school choice and one of the points CER will be making in its Amicus brief to the Supreme Court defending the Cleveland school choice program.

For the full story, [click here](#)

\* **STATE RANKINGS:** The new ranking of 38 state charter school laws comes out next week, including a state-by-state profile providing key information about each law's strengths and weaknesses. Because of legislative changes over the summer, the rankings have changed since CER's preliminary report in May 2001. You can order a pre-publication copy today for \$23.95 (including shipping and handling) by calling The Center for Education Reform at (1-800) 521-2118.



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