



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

Newsire - February 6, 2001

February 6, 2001

**Vol. 3, No. 6**

\* **FEDERAL POLICY:** Leading state school superintendents released their policy recommendations for federal lawmakers at the Capitol Monday. More than two dozen reporters crowded the Education Leaders Council press conference, where the state leaders argued for flexibility for state education programs and an end to federal micro-managing. "Give the states the freedom, the flexibility and the opportunity to get the job done," said ELC Chairman and Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Eugene Hickok, "and we will." To learn more about the ELC or to read their policy recommendations, go to: <http://www.educationleaders.org>.

\* **CHARTER SCHOOL SHORT-TAKES:** Indiana is plowing ahead with charter legislation, but is finding plenty of "false friends" of charters, ranging from school superintendents to school boards.... In Washington, DC, Mrs. Irasema Sacido, principal of the Cesar Chavez Public Charter School, was awarded the "Use Your Life Award" on Oprah Winfrey Monday for her dedication to education. The award, affiliated with "Oprah's Angel Network" is worth \$100,000 and honors the efforts of individuals using their lives to make a difference in the lives of others. For more information visit [http://www.oprah.com/uyl/angel/uyl\\_angel\\_award.html](http://www.oprah.com/uyl/angel/uyl_angel_award.html) or, to learn more about the Cesar Chavez Charter High School go to: <http://www.cesarchavezhs.org/>.

\* **STANDARDS:** Those who "pooh-pooh" the idea of raising minimum standards in grades K-12 are obviously not admissions officers in California's state university system. A recent report notes that 45 percent of Cal State's enrolling freshmen needed remedial classes in Math and 46 percent in English. The numbers went as high as 79 percent in math and 76 percent in English at CSU Dominguez Hills in Southern California. To solve the problem, Cal State has engaged a \$9 million remedial program to help students in 150 high schools learn math and English skills, which Governor Gray Davis is proposing to double. Remediation is expensive. Would a more appropriate response be to get it right the first time, and not socially promote students who have not mastered their coursework?

\* **STANDARDS II:** An analysis of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) is currently making the rounds, and the news is not good for Maryland students or those who want higher standards. One sample: "Suppose Mary and John are two fifth graders taking the MSPAP. In the first question of a math task they are asked to compute the area of a room. Mary does the right calculation and get 1 point. John does the wrong calculation and gets 0 points. In the second question of the task, Mary and John have to explain the process they used for arriving at their answers. Mary, not much of a writer but a whiz at math, gives a brief, incomplete answer and gets 0 points from the scorer. John, who cannot multiply but who remembers the formula for the area of a room, explains

the process clearly and correctly. He gets not 1, but 2 points for his great explanation for a wrong answer."

Also in Maryland, the Baltimore School Board recently approved Victory Schools to take over a failing school, but the education establishment is creating problems for the three failed schools given to Edison to operate. This is not unlike the mischief ongoing in San Francisco, where school board members are threatening to take back control of the Edison Charter Academy from Edison, not because the kids aren't learning, you see, but because they don't like Edison! So much for grownups being good role models.

\* **TEXTBOOKS:** In 1996, parent Charles Beavers led the charge against Old Adobe Elementary School District's adoption of "Mathland", a textbook he argued would result in decreased test scores. The district ignored his research, preferring to stick with the standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Comes now the word from Old Adobe is that the 1999 math scores have improved – but only because teachers in the district have moved AWAY from Mathland. Last year, 80 percent of Old Adobe's teachers used the Saxon math textbook, and Patricia Raney, director of curriculum, now notes: "It seems to work better."

\* **SCHOOL CHOICE:** Enacted and implemented out of the spotlight, Florida's Scholarship Program for Students With Disabilities has now placed more than 1,000 students at 101 private schools in 36 counties. Although opponents to school choice have generally been silent about the program, their hope is to see it disappear if they win the court case on Florida's A+ program for children in failing schools. For parents like Karen Ciampini, whose 8-year-old daughter is developmentally delayed with speech impediments and receives physical, occupational and speech therapy, such a loss would be disastrous. "She (her daughter) was not meeting any of her goals that had been set through the public system, and I was wanting a more one-to-one relationship teaching method. Her speech has improved. I see progression slowly, but it's coming. I'm listening to her sing now."

## SAVE THE DATE!

Join CER for its **Third Annual Leaders Forum**, "Lessons From the Front: Grassroots Spring Into Action" on March 28, in Washington, DC. For more information, contact CER at (800) 521-2118.



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