



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **CHARTERS:** Ask the teachers unions if they support the concept of charter schools, and they'll likely say yes - and then tell you all the reasons charter schools are no good. The point was driven home in an exchange on National Public Radio with Bella Rosenberg, assistant to the president of the American Federation of Teachers, who declared herself an "agnostic" on the issue, but promptly made a series of false statements about charters: They're not doing any better and in some districts are doing worse, they "tend to exclude disruptive students," and "tend to exclude special education kids," and "parent contracts have to be signed." All of which are demonstrably not true by just looking at the majority of the research CER has compiled [here](#).

Rosenberg's approach is part of the education establishment's "death of a thousand cuts" for charter schools, designed to never look like they're opposed to charters. The AFT website, for example, lists criteria for charter school legislation they would never advocate for traditional public schools and then, not surprisingly, concludes that "no state meets the criteria." Teachers unions, local school boards and school boards associations have filed scores of lawsuits challenging charter schools in the last three years - and this doesn't include suits brought by the charters in an effort to overturn administrative obstacles placed in their paths by superintendents and school boards.

All of which adds up to a growing "War on Charter Schools" being conducted by the education establishment, and one about which we're certain to hear more later.

* **OHIO:** Case in point is Ohio, where the Ohio Federation of Teachers plans a new twist on litigation efforts by challenging charter school funding on the grounds that some of Ohio's charters are run by for-profit companies. These companies have been able to bring in management expertise not generally available to parents, and it is one of the reasons some of the most successful charters are those run by education management firms. But success is irrelevant to the teachers union, whose spokesman says they're not necessarily opposed to charters - even if they're hard pressed to come up with examples of charters they do support.

* **TESTING:** Last week's scores in the National Assessment of Educational Progress demonstrated that good students are reading better, and poor-performing students are performing worse than ever before. For the CER's analysis go to:

[*The Learning Gap Widens*](#)

Monday's release of state-by-state scores shows again the need for the kind of accountability now

proposed in Washington. Only two states have reduced the 4th grade minority student achievement gap in math, and no state has done so in 8th grade math. In fact, the gap has grown as wide as 56 points in Washington, DC and 35 points in New Jersey. At best, the worst-performing eighth graders are doing math work on a third-grade level, causing education researcher John Barth, of the National Educational Goals Panel, to note: "It's rudimentary arithmetic. I don't think anyone can believe those kids are going to exit their education with the skills and knowledge they need." To view the full report, go to: www.nces.ed.gov.

The results echo the scores on the recent state-by-state TIMSS science and math tests, where states generally performed poorly. As an example, if Maryland, which has standards Education Week described as an "A," were a country, its science scores would have placed it just above Latvia - but still below such powerhouses as Bulgaria and Slovenia. In fact, there appears to be an inverse ratio between states rated high on Education Week's standards and accountability ratings and the performance of those states on the TIMSS tests.

* **MARYLAND:** In Maryland, where legislators had a last-minute opportunity to choose between a poor charter school bill and a worse one, legislators chose no charter school bill. There, the House bill would have set up near-absolute control by local boards and added more layers of supervision than the Senate bill. So its back to the drawing board in Maryland, where kids have again been denied the opportunity for innovative education, a reduction in overcrowding, and increased access to federal funding.

* **HAWAII:** About 183,000 Hawaiian public school students and 42,000 university students remain out of classes, where the teachers union has rejected the state's offer of a 14 percent salary increase over two years, holding to its demand for a 22 percent increase over four years - retroactive to 1999.

Nearly all public school teachers are on strike, except those at the six charter schools, where teachers are considered employees of the school board rather than the state. Among the charter teachers still at work are those at Lanikai Elementary School, operated by ... affiliates of the National Education Association.

* **FEDERAL POLICY:** President Bush's budget proposal was released yesterday and offers additional funding in the key areas where he has placed his priorities: A tripling of funding for reading programs to nearly \$1 billion, \$200 million to stimulate growth in the number of charter schools, \$320 million to help states develop reading and math assessment programs, \$175 million in new money for charter school facilities, and a general effort to consolidate and streamline existing education programs. The proposal also creates new State Grants for Improving Teacher Quality program of \$2.6 billion to recruit, train and support teachers - a proposal that breaks with business as usual. For more on the U.S. Department of Education budget, go to: www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/Budget02/

* **NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS WEEK is April 30-May 4.** Mark Your Calendar! CER has already announced the Congressional Salute to Charter Schools! Congress is joining the celebration for National Charter Schools Week.



