



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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*** TEACHING:**

In another sign that part of the problem with education may be America's schools of education, the latest data filed with the Massachusetts State Department of Education shows that nearly half of the teacher training programs there failed to have at least 80 percent of their students pass the state teacher examination. Nineteen out of 41 programs failed to meet the 80 percent mark required by state and federal agencies. Programs that do not reach the mark by 2002 face the loss of accreditation and federal funding.

The good news is that the testing requirement and goal is having the same impact testing and goals have on a K-12 program: At Northeastern University, for example, a failure rate of more than 50 percent on the 1998 teacher test resulted in a revamp of their education program, and last year 84 percent of its students passed the exam.

*** MATHEMATICS:** Despite the fact that teachers told the Los Angeles Board of Education in February that their use of Saxon Math textbooks was "effective in raising students' test scores," the board and school Superintendent Roy Romer did not include the basal series among those approved to be used in the troubled school system. Although the state approved a far wider group of texts (including Saxon), subdistricts within the Los Angeles system will be forced to request a waiver to use anything other than two specified series in elementary school and books published by only three publishers in middle school. Romer, who some believed might shake the system up, is proving himself to be no more of a reformer than he was as Governor of Colorado. Reformers would support a textbook series that demonstrably works; Romer's defense of his decision is to maintain uniformity - whether it works or not. Saxon CEO Frank Wang is speaking at the LAUSD Board meeting tonight to protest the earlier decision.

Wang is also rocking boats in Texas, where he has called for the elimination of textbook middlemen running book depositories, whose existence is protected by law in 15 states. Wang has pointed out that Saxon paid the Southwest Book Depository \$650,000 to handle its textbooks last year, even though modern distribution systems would allow them to ship the books directly for a quarter million dollars less - at no additional charge to the schools. The result of the antiquated law is a more expensive product for schools, and fewer books for kids.

*** CHARTERS:** Indiana is one step closer to enacting the nation's 38th charter law. Late Friday afternoon, the state House passed the much stronger Senate version of a charter bill by an 81-15

margin. The bill allows for multiple sponsors and an appeals process, liberal enrollment options, and also permits mid-career professionals to transition into teaching under a fast-track program (all charter teachers would need to be certified or in the fast-track program). Both new starts and conversions are allowed under the bill. While the Senate is expected to support the measure (possibly as early as tomorrow), significant opposition is still coming from the local school boards and superintendents associations. Following Senate passage, the bill will go to Governor Frank O'Bannon, who has indicated he will sign the bill. See CER president Jeanne Allen's commentary at [the Editorial Desk page of our site](#).

* **STANDARDS:** Rules adopted by the Michigan State Board of Education require at least 25 percent of students to pass the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests in reading, math and science in order for a school to receive accreditation, starting this year. But 25 percent of Michigan students were unable to pass all three tests in many schools and, as a result, one in five Michigan schools (or 600) are expected to go unaccredited. The Michigan education establishment, who had a two year warning on these standards, immediately attacked the tests, calling them "shallow," "not a solid system of measuring success or failure," and complained that the tests were too hard for students from a low socio-economic background - as if the education system should be excused from the requirement to educate poor children to the same standards as wealthy children.

Noted Paul Bielawski, of the Michigan Education Department's school excellence unit: "For some schools, this is the first time anyone has told them science is very important."
<http://detnews.com/2001/schools/0104/11/a01-210687.htm>

* **FEDERAL POLICY:** President Bush addressed a non-partisan gathering of education reformers at the White House Thursday, April 12th, speaking out strongly for charter schools and parental choice. The full text of the President's remarks are available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news>

VOICES FROM THE FRONT:

"We say to the poorest, most vulnerable Americans that they cannot choose (their school). We as a government force them into failing institutions. I hear some of our largest national politicians say we are going to bleed the public schools and kill public education if we allow children out. These people would never ever send their children into public education, but they are going to tell my friends in the Central Ward of Newark that their children have to go there."

-- Newark City Councilman Cory Booker

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.



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