



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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\* **CHARTERS:** The bulk of charter school research shows that a) charters are serving at-risk students far better than traditional public schools, and b) parents in charter schools are immensely satisfied with their choice. The Ohio Federation of Teachers has an answer for that: "Students are being exploited ... and parents are being deceived."

That's the rationale for OFT's lawsuit charging that Ohio's charter school law is illegal. The OFT was joined by the usual round of education establishment suspects, among them the Ohio School Boards Association and several big city unions - all of whom appear to fear the growth of Ohio's 70 charter schools and the impact those schools might have on the traditional public school system.

Of particular note is the involvement of the Ohio PTA, which is trying to block a public educational reform that has wide support in the parent community. The increased involvement of the PTA on the wrong side of these issues - ignoring the best interests of its parent members - is one of the reasons the organization has witnessed decreases in its membership rolls over the years.

This is the 13th challenge to state charter school laws in the United States, and all of the others resulted in charter laws being declared constitutional. But given the broad range of litigants, this one is likely to attract more attention than most.

\* **UNIONS:** The battle is less over what's best for kids than over what's best for the education establishment. Nothing points that out more clearly than a confidential Pennsylvania State Education Association report which proposed strategies for unionizing charter teachers, noting "If we lose our grip on the labor supply to the education industry, we will bargain from a position of weakness," and "If we want to maintain our influence, our ability to do ANYTHING, we must make sure that

education remains a unionized industry."

Little is in the report about kids or learning - it's all about power and control - and that says more about school employee union priorities than all of the advertising the NEA can buy. See [full report](#). And to see the latest reports in the education reform movement, check out [the Monthly Letter to Friends](#).

\* **WINNER:** No doubt about it: The Ohio Federation of Teachers would also put the news media in the "deceived" category, as well.

TIME Magazine is out with its "School of the Year" awards and the Number One elementary school is ... a charter school! TIME chose six schools to receive "School of the Year" awards, and The Accelerated School in South Central Los Angeles was one of several top-performing schools honored. The Center for Education Reform has worked with The Accelerated School, and we nominated it for the distinction. At Accelerated, Stanford Achievement Test scores have jumped 93% since 1997, with increases of 35% in reading and 28% in math last year alone. The school outperformed the community's other public schools by 270% on last year's standardized tests and has a waiting list of more than 1,200. Check out the report at [Time Magazine website](#).

\* **CHARTERS, II:** Florida's legislative session ended with major victories for charter schools, including \$27.7 million in charter capital funding and changes that now rest final appeals with the state board as opposed to local school boards. A new alternative certification for "adjunct educators" was also approved, opening up teaching to a wider variety of professionals.

Alaska's legislature also improved its charter law, eliminating the July 2005 sunset clause, extending the allowable contract length from five to 10 years, doubling the cap to 60 charter schools, providing for a one-time start-up grant, and eliminating geographic distribution requirements. Alaska continues to have one of the weakest state laws, however, resulting from the requirement that local school boards must approve charters.

The Florida and Alaska Governors are both expected to sign their respective bills into law.

\* **CHOICE:** Although President Bush's small proposal for Title I vouchers was dropped from the education bill, Congress may this week consider a \$50 million school choice demonstration project for up to a dozen school districts that want the freedom to provide choice for their students. Districts would decide for themselves, and would submit proposals to the Secretary of Education for funding.

\* **TESTING:** The value of testing was affirmed by new scores from the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, where reading and math scores rose and writing scores held steady. While school grades aren't expected for two more weeks, widespread improvement is clear. In particular, 10th graders showed the greatest improvement, with the highest score increases of 12 points for mathematics and six points for reading. For more on this, [click here](#).



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