



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **AND THE VP GOES TO....** The news abounds about Senator Joe Lieberman, a stalwart education reformer from way-back-when who was tapped by candidate Al Gore to be his running mate, providing plenty of reformers with a lot to think about. Unlike Gore, Lieberman is pro-school choice, unabashedly pro-strong charter law and not much concerned about the views of the establishment. Now, among the two teams running to take over the country in November, all but one individual has strong education reform tendencies. Let the games begin!

* **CHARTER SCHOOLS:** Massachusetts lawmakers lifted the cap on charter schools, after two years spent trying to reform the 1993 law to allow more than just 37 charters to exist. While they succeeded in granting seven new schools each year, the unions won a provision that explicitly encourages the charters to be organized after 60% of teachers agree. All states with charter laws allow collective bargaining as an option, and some require it of conversion schools, as in New York State. This move explicitly gives the unions a leg up and a bigger presence in securing a connection to traditionally non-union charter schools. For more information go to <http://www.pioneerinstitute.org>.

As many of the nation's newest charter schools prepare to open their doors for the first time, they are all 'a flurry' training teachers, organizing lesson plans and acquiring all the things they've learned make for good learning. The St. Louis Charter School reports that it is 30 days away from providing terrific kids the world class education they deserve in the most positive, nurturing, safe, challenging learning environment there is! ..Says Kindergarten Teacher Rene Mills, "The most exciting thing about being a St. Louis Charter School Team Member is 'being part of history in the making!'" The entire team has spent the last week training in the Core Knowledge sequence, and heads off to a 3-day retreat to focus on necessary processes and procedures. They have enrolled 423 students and have recently canvassed all the neighborhoods to let them know that an additional 101 spaces are left so that their lottery is widely representative of their area.

Imagine that this same pattern is repeating itself 300 times over in the new charters opening this fall! It's not too late to adopt a local charter school, offer help or even financial support. Just consult your handy, dandy CER National Charter School Directory 2000 for a school near you! Or go on line to our [Charter School page](#) to find out more.

* **SCHOOL CHOICE:** More ripples! A report on **Michigan** school choice finds that choice and competition have been the powerful catalyst behind district improvements – improvements that weren't made during decades of increased spending and additional regulations. The report, "The Impact of Limited School Choice on Public School Districts," released by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy

found that rather than harming the cause of better education, competition has resulted in a more customer-oriented focus in some districts.

Dearborn City School District met the challenge when faced with four charter schools in the district and additional charters and "schools of choice" in adjoining districts by creating a popular "Theme School and Academies Program." View a copy of the report at <http://www.mackinac.org/S2000-04>.

* **SCHOOL SIZE:** Small is Still Beautiful...Last October [Parent Power!](#) featured an article called "Why We Need Small Schools," making the case for smaller schools where children would feel less alienated and achieve more. One year later, research continues to grow in support of the idea for small schools. The latest study, out of Chicago, points to better academic results, less student dropout and less student violence in schools with low enrollment. Despite the current trend of building "bigger and better" schools for the growing population, experts agree that the ideal enrollment for an elementary school is no more than 300 students, and 600-900 students for a high school. Not only do smaller schools offer children more opportunities to succeed in academics and extra curricular activities, but as we reported in Parent Power! they also encourage "an environment of equity for all children."

* **CONFERENCES:** The Wisconsin group Parents Raising Educational Standards in Schools (PRESS) is holding its Education Conference on September 30th! For serious parent reformers in Wisconsin and surrounding states this is the opportunity to network with parents and like-minded reformers. There is strength in numbers! For more information or to obtain a registration form go to: <http://www.execpc.com/~presswis/> or call 414-607-3950

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