

Center for Education Reform



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

Newsire - September 24, 1999

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Welcome to the Center for Education Reform's weekly hot-line, this week beginning Friday September 24.

New figures released this week in Maryland show that in 1997, of the high school graduates who enrolled in college, 27% needed remedial math, 15% remedial English and 17% remedial reading. Of the most recent totals available, from 1995, Maryland alone spends \$17.6 million on remediation, while its neighbors Virginia and the District of Columbia spend \$40 million and \$1.2 million respectively. Maryland is not alone - 75% of the nation's colleges need to offer remedial courses. As one college professor found, of the 17 students in his first year English class who took a test he gave, none had 12th grade skills, some demonstrated skills no higher than 5th and 7th grade!

Parents are speaking out on education all over in unprecedented percentages. In a recent ABC News/Washington Post poll 79% of Americans feel improving education is of the highest priority. In Michigan's Inkster school district parents tired of poor performance are speaking out with their feet and choosing charter schools, private schools and choice schools in other school districts to gain access to a better education for their children. The Inkster district, like other failing school districts across the country, has been struggling for years and has some of the worst test scores in the state.

The choice "creaming" argument takes another blow. In a recent look at the Horizon voucher program in San Antonio, a cooperative Harvard University study shows that there are remarkable similarities in district and voucher students. Only a 2% difference was demonstrated between voucher kids and district kids on math scores. 23% of voucher kids were previously in gifted and talented programs and 29% of district school kids were. And only 3% more of the voucher students mothers were Latino. In short - there is no "creaming" going on in this program!

In the southeast the ripple from Florida's A+ program is growing, with Broward County spending millions to reduce class size to 18-20 students per class in low-performing schools. An associate superintendent told a local paper that "Contrary to public opinion, the schools have been really energized by this!" The Hillsborough County Superintendent put a portion of his salary on the line if any school in his district gets an F. Miami-Dade is reviewing how to spend the \$11 million of its federal funds to increase intensive math and reading instruction at schools with low grades. And lastly in Penscola a sign posted in Superintendent Jim May's office reads - "Non-negotiable aim is: Both schools must come off the F list WHATEVER it takes!"

Our website has grown, so if you haven't visited lately, look around now! Recent papers and analysis, reviews and opinions as well as our usual wave-cresting reports are all there. (See [what's new](#))

for a quick rundown.) Thanks for checking into the Center's hotline - for further information please call our offices at 800-521-2118.



The Center for Education Reform
910 Seventeenth Street, NW, Suite 1120 • Washington, DC 20006
800-521-2118 • 301-986-8088 • Fax: 301-986-1826

www.edreform.com • cer@edreform.com

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