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HOT-LINE

July

1999

Hello and welcome to the Center for Education Reform's weekly hot-line, this week beginning July 14.

The assault on social promotion in the Waco Texas public school district is succeeding. At the end of the 1997-98 school year, more than 19 % of students in third through eighth grade failed the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test , or TAAS. This spring, scores rose to all-time high. The TAAS failure rate dropped to 9% following two rounds of testing. By the time students are re-tested at the end of summer school, district officials hope to lower that figure still further.

In California over the objections of Republicans, the state Senate sent Gov. Gray Davis bill SB 434 intended to halt the growing practice of charter schools providing distance learning. Even though the bill, part of the budget, will increase the amount of state aid received by many charter schools, it is clear that the charter school community has an enormous amount of work to do to convince skeptical legislators that charter schools using non-classroom instructional methodologies are both fiscally prudent and educationally effective.

Also in California we are still waiting to learn if Proposition 227 -- the ballot initiative that curtailed bilingual education in the state's classrooms -- is improving student achievement. Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement company, is expected to provide definitive results to the state this week.

Meanwhile, California test scores show that phonics instruction is working. Since signing on with an intensive phonics program and receiving a grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, scores for the Sacramento City Unified School District rose from the 35th percentile nationally in reading for first-graders two years ago, to the 54th percentile last year, and the 62nd percentile this year.

In New York City, accountability is a pointed word. At the close of the school year superintendents, principals, and even entire schools have been sacked by Chancellor Rudy Crew. The school board approved shakeup includes shutting down 13 troubled schools over two years, with 4 this summer. Rudy also assumes direct control of 43 low-performing schools, more than quadrupling the number of such schools under his supervision. In the 40 schools being taken over, teachers will receive 15 % higher pay in exchange for longer hours, and implementing extensive curricular changes under an agreement with the teachers' union.

Colorado continues to lead the way in charter school capital financing. The Core Knowledge Charter School, located outside Denver, became what many experts say is the first charter school in the country to be rated by Standard & Poor's. The roughly 300-student school received an investment-grade rating for a \$2.8 million bond. The company's top rating is AAA; the charter school received a BBB rating. The rating signals a stamp of approval of sorts for investors and is likely to bring with it a lower interest rate. The school, now housed in a strip mall in Parker, CO, plans to break ground in the fall on a nearly \$3 million building.

Thanks for calling the Center's hot-line, for further information call the center directly at 800-521-2118. Thanks and have a great day.

Hello and welcome to the Center for Education Reform's hotline for the week of July 5, 1999.

The results are coming in, and parents across America are celebrating school choice.

According to a study released by Harvard and the University of Texas, parents receiving tax-funded tuition scholarships to send their children to private schools are more satisfied with the education their children receive. They also report fewer classroom disruptions than parents with children in the public school system.

In addition, half of the voucher parents reported being "very satisfied" with classroom discipline.

Nearly twice as many voucher parents were "very satisfied" with moral values being taught to their children as compared to public school parents.

In Michigan, students at charter schools have surpassed statewide averages on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program in science and writing.

For example, the average charter school eighth-grader scored seven points higher than their public school peers.

And Colorado charter school students did ten points better in reading and a staggering 20 points higher in writing than their counterparts in traditional public schools. 22

Examples of excellence from school choice abound, and it's clearer every day that parents will no longer accept the status quo.

And don't forget, the Center is sponsoring a forum called Lessons from the Front, where you can join leaders from across America who are bringing school choice to children traditional public schools have left behind. For more information, contact the Center at (202) 822-9000.

Charter Schools Achievement 1999

Arizona

... June 1999

Grades nine through ten at **Prescott High School** took the Stanford 9 examination. Prescott high school students consistently score above the national level on these types of standardized tests. The ninth grade scored in the 91 percentile in all three reading, language and mathematics sections of the test. The eleventh grade did as well, while the tenth grade scored in the 88 percentile and the twelfth grade scored in the 82 percentile. Prescott's attendance rate in grades nine through twelve is 87.74 while the dropout rate is a mere 8.76%.

The **Flagstaff Arts & Leadership Academy's** Stanford 9 Achievement Test scores were in the 62 percentile. Only grades ten and twelve were ranked. Grade ten fell into the 66 percentile ranking and the twelfth fell into the 56th percentile ranking.

Colorado

... June 1999

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is a program, which measures student's ability to Colorado's model standards. This year third and fourth graders were tested, scoring higher than the state schools in both the reading and writing section of the test. On average, the charter schools scored a 68% in the reading and a 59% on the writing, while the state schools scored a 58% on the reading and 37% on the writing. Out of the 25 charter schools tested, 19 of them scored higher than the district schools.

Colorado charter schools seem to be improving quickly. **Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences** shows a good example of fast improvement. These students went from a 26% to a 66% in reading and 3% to a 37% in writing.

Florida

... June 1999

Police Academy Charter Middle School located in Brenton, Florida made recent gains in statewide test scores this year. The eighth grade took the Florida Writes Tests and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). During the first year of the school, the students scored a 2.1 on the Florida Writes Test, 6.0 being a perfect score. This year the students brought their score up to a 3.2.

Immediate Release

July 1, 1999

**For More Information, Contact: For
MAPSA at 517-374-9167**

CHARTER SCHOOLS SURPASS STATEWIDE MEAP AVERAGES FOR FIRST TIME

LANSING - Students in Michigan's public school academies have surpassed statewide averages on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program in science and writing, just four years after the state's first charter schools opened.

"Charter public schools are models of constant improvement; they are raising the standards of learning for schools across the state," said Dan Quisenberry, president of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA).

In the most significant showing, numbers posted this morning on the Michigan Department of Education web site show that the statewide average of satisfactory scores in eighth grade writing is 63.5 percent. The average for all charter schools is 70.4 percent, and that is up dramatically from an average 45.5 percent satisfactory last year, Quisenberry said. (See Chart)

A comparison of charters to urban school districts also shows striking results. In Detroit, where more than 30 charter schools are located, science and writing scores are higher than in the traditional district. In Flint - where several new charters will open this fall - charter schools scored higher in every grade and subject except fourth grade math. In that category, charters had nearly the same score.

MAPSA's initial analysis found that more than 90 percent of the state's charter schools posted gains in at least one grade and subject.

"We're proud of the students, teachers and parents," Quisenberry said. "The very essence of charter public schools is a commitment to better education. Their progress is closely monitored by parents and authorizers; charter staffs keep working for improvement even after the annual MEAP headlines fade.

"These scores are just the start. Thousands of parents who are flocking to charters know that student achievement goes far beyond the MEAP," he said. "Achievement in charters also means students who want to be in school, who have a passion for learning, who respect themselves and others."

Quisenberry cited a few examples of bigger stories behind the MEAP results:

* Scores at Oasis Academy in Southfield increased 5 points to 73 points depending on grade and subject. School leaders report that their success is tied in part to the decision to keep elementary-age children with the same teacher year after year.

* At The Learning Center Academy in Byron Center, scores in each grade and all but one subject increased as much as a whopping 71 points. School leaders report especially good scores among students who have attended the center more than one semester.

* Chatfield School in Lapeer saw a 20-point increase in fifth-grade writing, but a 24-point decrease in fifth-grade science. The school's continuous improvement process had identified science as a curriculum priority even before the MEAP scores were issued.

* Black River Public School in Holland had a 3- to 26-point improvement in scores. Like most charter schools, those numbers include all students - even those with special learning needs. No waivers are given.

"Behind every charter public school and every score, there's a story," Quisenberry said. "You could look at Sankofa Shule's scores in Lansing and say some went up and some went down.

"Your reaction is likely to change once you know that Sankofa groups children according to skill level. They had 9- and 10-year-olds taking the eighth-grade MEAP usually given to 14-year-olds," he said. "These individual success stories make charter schools increasingly and incredibly popular."

Quisenberry said MAPSA will continue its analysis of MEAP scores in the coming weeks, taking a more in-depth look at year-over-year progress, trends and regional comparisons.

A LOOK AT STATEWIDE AVERAGE MEAP SCORES

		Charter 99	State 99	Detroit 99	Flint 99	Lansing 99	Grand Rapids 99
Writing	5 th	57.6	54.8	36.0	32.6	58.1	36.9
	8 th	70.4	63.5	47.9	20.3	61.4	51.8
Science	5 th	36.3	37.5	28.6	13.8	25.4	15.2
	8 th	29.0	23.0	11.9	3.8	14.2	10.4
Math	4 th	44.9	71.7	58.5	52.7	53.2	49.7
	7 th	33.3	63.2	36.0	23.4	39.5	37.7
Reading	4 th	37.6	59.4	45.4	36.5	40.6	37.6
	7 th	31.1	53.0	34.5	26.7	37.5	33.0



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FAX COVER SHEET

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FROM: Dan Quisenberry
President

NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER SHEET: 4

Message:



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Voucher parents happy with schools they picked

A study indicates that parents aren't as pleased with Cleveland's public schools.

Wednesday, June 16, 1999

By Catherine Candisky
Dispatch Statehouse Reporter

Low-income Cleveland parents receiving tax-funded tuition vouchers to send their children to private schools are more satisfied with the education and report fewer classroom disruptions than parents with youngsters in the public school system, researchers say in a study released today.

Researchers from Harvard University and the University of Texas surveyed 505 parents of voucher recipients and 327 parents of students in the Cleveland public school system last summer and fall.

"I think the parents look like they really like their voucher schools. They find it's a less disruptive place and that their children are getting a better education there," said Paul E. Peterson, director of Harvard's Program on Education Policy and Governance and a study author.

"I think it is important for the state legislature to know that if they are thinking about whether to keep it in place or not."

The Republican-controlled General Assembly is debating the 3-year-old pilot program after the Ohio Supreme Court ruled 5-2 earlier this month that it was unconstitutional. Justices said lawmakers violated the single-subject rule in the Ohio Constitution by enacting the program as part of a state budget bill that included hundreds of unrelated programs.

The House kept the program in its version of the education budget that was approved before the court ruling, but the Senate-passed bill caps the program at the fifth grade, leaving 280 students entering the sixth grade in the fall no longer eligible.

Republican Gov. Bob Taft is urging lawmakers, who began working on a compromise yesterday, to allow the program to expand to the sixth grade this fall as planned.

The program in Cleveland provides 3,700 mostly poor students in kindergarten through

fifth grade with vouchers of up to \$2,250 a year to attend one of 57 participating private schools. Most schools have a religious orientation.

Championed by former Gov. George V. Voinovich, a Cleveland Republican, the program started out with grades kindergarten through third and plans to add a new class each year through eighth grade.

Voinovich and supporters say poor parents in the ailing district deserve to choose where to send their children to school, but opponents say the program siphons tax dollars and attention from public schools.

According to the study, nearly half of the voucher parents report being "very satisfied" with the academic program of their child's school compared with less than 30 percent of public school parents.

As for discipline in the classroom, about half of the voucher parents reported being "very satisfied" while only one-fourth of public school parents were.

For example, only 12 percent of voucher parents reported fighting was a problem in their child's school while 27 percent of public school parents said it was a problem.

Racial conflict was reported to be a problem by 10 percent of public school parents but only 5 percent of voucher parents. Likewise, vandalism was a concern of 13 percent of public school parents, but only 3 percent of voucher parents.

In addition, 55 percent of voucher parents were "very satisfied" with moral values being taught to their children as compared to 30 percent of public school parents.

But public school parents reported being just as involved in school activities as voucher parents did, and the numbers of students changing schools during the year were nearly identical.