

# Center for Education Reform



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## NEWS ALERT

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### JUSTICE GETS SPANKED, MISSOURI URBAN SCHOOLS FAIL AGAIN AND THE OHIO EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

*(October 15, 1999) Parents Prevail!* The Justice Department got a spanking at a Thursday hearing by a congressional committee.

The cause for the hearing was the Justice Department's intrusion into charter schools into Louisiana. Despite the personal choice of parents in determining the best education for their child, Justice took it upon itself to restrict the flow of parental choices and demand oversight into who attends each charter school in areas where court desegregation once played a role.

So for months, charter schools in Baton Rouge have been obstructed at every step of the way. Finally, Congress took note, and told the Justice Department it had no right to interfere in the private choices of families. CER will have a full report on the resolution of the committee later this month.

*Busted.* In another tale of systems lacking accountability, St. Louis and Kansas City, Missouri school systems are about to lose accreditation for failing to educate students. Both school districts have been the recipients of millions of dollars extra in support over the last fifteen years, and despite increased funding again last year, Kansas City failed to meet any of the eleven standards for accreditation. St. Louis met only three of them. State officials called results on the state's assessment tests "substandard." St. Louis Superintendent Cleveland Hammonds didn't let school failure get in the way of using his new state money to sue the state over the charter school law, which permits charters to be authorized by universities in both KC and St. Louis. His suit comes on the heels of his pressuring all but one St. Louis area university to not charter any schools. This year, fifteen charter schools opened in Kansas City, attracting about ten percent of the enrollment of the entire school district. Only Washington DC comes close to that saturation point after two years of charter schools operating there.

*The Empire Strikes Back.* In related news about arrogance and power, a coalition of more than a dozen education special interest groups are rallying on October 23<sup>rd</sup> in Cincinnati, Ohio to protest the establishment of Ohio's community, or charter schools. Most of what the coalition opposes about charter schools is in fact untrue. For example, this group alleges in fliers it has distributed statewide that community schools don't have to take state tests, which is false. They also suggest that charters don't have to do background checks on teachers, or enroll special education children – again all falsehoods. The Ohio Education Blob of course had nothing valid to rally against. Their motto must be – when in doubt, create problems.

*A Few Good Men.* But there is good news. Wyoming Principal of the Year Norm Carrell was recognized as one of fifty National Distinguished Principals in Washington on Thursday. Carrell is principal of Ft. Casper Academy, his state's first parent-initiated public school of choice, which uses Core Knowledge, Paaulding and Saxon as the three pillars of its curriculum. That curriculum has brought the school from the fortieth percentile to the mid-nineties in just a few short years. We're delighted such reform-minded leaders are being recognized appropriately. Maybe St. Louis and Kansas City officials need to take a road trip to Wyoming and other places to see what really works and leave the lawsuits to people who really need the courts. Congratulations, Norm!