



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **TEACHERS:** The threat of a teacher strike ended yesterday in Philadelphia, PA when the district and union were able to finally agree on a pact that extends the school day and school year slightly, and will now make pay-for-performance a mandatory feature of future teacher salary packages. While threatening to strike, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers was pushed to act rather than disrupt the children's education by a takeover law passed last year that would have allowed the Governor -- in cooperation with the Mayor -- to seize control of the schools. Said the Democrat author of the that bill, State Rep. Dwight Evans, it "forced both sides to look at negotiations differently than they had in the past." It is about time, say reformers. For more information, go to

http://web.philly.com/content/inquirer/2000/10/31/front_page/SKUL31.htm

Pay increases and staff training days were the bones of contention in negotiations that failed to avert a strike in Neptune (NJ) Township. For two days in a row the district's 4,500 children were home, despite a Superior Court judge's return-to-work order. The strike concluded last Wednesday but not without damage to those most affected -- the children.

* **ELECTION 2000:** Just over seven days from now the nation will know the fate of several pending voter initiatives on education, not to mention of course, elected officials. It's not too late to get face to face with a candidate and get ample information on how the candidate feels on these issues to help you make your decision. Just use [CER's Candidate Questionnaire](#).

The issue of school choice remains one of the most contentious issues in the election -- local, state and national. Voters in three states will be deciding on state-wide programs next week:

- California's voucher proposal extends universally to all families with a phase in to existing private school attendees. While it certainly has made that issue come alive again in the Golden State, the odds are against it. It's not only difficult for voters to grapple with making public policy themselves at the ballot box, but because the initiative fails to address specific problem areas or children most disaffected by bad schools, even many choice supporters are agnostic or leaning against.

- Michigan's state initiative to give choice to about 200,000 children currently in failing schools (and give other communities an option to vote on whether to allow such choice) is much-better focused on improving opportunities for children who need it most. But once again, voters are reluctant to support initiatives on issues as volatile and personal as education. We'll see, but the numbers don't look good.
- Washington State has a charter school initiative backed by Microsoft guru Paul Allen and hoards of other high and low profile people, including the Urban League, ten state newspapers, Hispanic groups, grass roots groups and more. The modest measure would allow for up to twenty charters schools per year for the first four years. Charters were originally brought to the Evergreen State by Jim and Fawn Spady who themselves launched an initiative a few years ago. With public clamor for improved educational opportunities at an all time high -- and a favorable public view towards this initiative -- this new coalition looks destined to win.

While CER doesn't take positions on the candidates or initiatives themselves, staff feel that bringing the debate to the forefront has provided great value in continuing the drum-beat that education is not proportional and that millions of children are doomed to failure and a limited future because of it.

In addition to general information about choice, check out [Nine Lies About School Choice](#).

* **CHARTER SCHOOLS:** The research on charter schools is conclusive. A report reviewing the findings of the 52 research-based studies on charter schools finds that the overwhelming majority (49) conclude that charter schools have been innovative and accountable, and more often than not, successful in their missions. The report by the Center for Education Reform will be released Thursday, November 2. For more information call Mary Kayne Heinze at 202-822-9000.

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