



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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*** LEARNING:** "Learning used to be about a lot of things. Imagination, creativity, discovery and dreams."

So begins a TV ad paid for by the Massachusetts Teachers Association in an effort to derail the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System examinations. The ads are running on five commercial television stations, as well as several cable stations throughout the state.

Now, the funny thing is that we seem to remember when learning was actually about passing on knowledge to the next generation. While discovery is a natural part of learning, we happen to think that the learning stopped when imagination and dreams became a substitute for teaching information and facts ("Imagine what $2 + 2$ equals").

The MTA claims to be putting more than \$600,000 in dues money into the campaign to block the assessment of how well students are being taught. If only they would put that kind of money into actually helping kids learn, we might not find results like the recent ...

*** TIMMS-R RESULTS:** The results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study-Repeat were issued today – a repeat of the original TIMMS in 1995 – repeated again in order to "take stock of the U.S. position internationally in mathematics and science education." In which case, our stock has dropped faster than some dot-coms recently.

The bottom line is that there's been no real progress for our students' standing in science and math. Our 8th graders are outranked by their peers in 18 nations in math, and 17 in science. Among English-speaking nations, we're outranked by Canada and Australia in both science and math.

But the truly tragic result is the continuing evidence that the longer children stay in American schools, the worse they seem to get. Eighth graders today rank lower on an international scale in science than fourth graders did four years ago, dropping precipitously from 3rd place to 19th place. In Math, 8th graders now rank in 18th place, compared with 12th place for the 4th graders of four years ago.

Education Secretary Richard Riley trumpeted that "U.S. eighth-grade students are above the international average in mathematics and science," as if outranking Tunisia and Moldova should be a subject of national pride.

We prefer the comment of House Education Chairman Bill Goodling, who noted, "This is a disturbing trend, indicating that we are not yet adequately focused on results in the classroom. These test results are indicative that for too many years, we placed a priority on process."

<http://www.nces.ed.gov/timss>.

* **FISHER/KIPP SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:** A new opportunity has just opened for potential school founders who want to receive the school leadership and management training they need to successfully start and manage highly effective public schools for educationally disadvantaged youth.

The Fisher Family Foundation, in partnership with the KIPP Network of Schools is offering year-long fellowships helping those who want to duplicate the highly successful KIPP Academy concepts created by Michael Feinberg and David Levin. Fellows who start schools will be eligible to receive technical assistance and some financial support as well as a generous stipend from the KIPP Network.



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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