



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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The Ultimate Ripple comes in Breaking News from Inkster, Michigan: The community plagued by a 20 year decline in enrollment and poor educational results (which was also the subject of a U.S. News & World Report news article late last year) is finding itself both the victim and beneficiary of competition in education. Because of years of educational failure, Inkster's first charter schools attracted thousands of children, causing them instant financial stress when parents took their business elsewhere. Rather than face a state takeover, Inkster's school board voted February 15 to hire the [Edison Schools](#) to manage its district and will have the ability to reconstitute entire staffs.

On one hand, it's sad that it took the advent of charter schools for the district to recognize that if you gave people a way out, they'd take it. On the other hand, Inkster school officials should be commended for boldly going where few folks have.

One would wish such revolution would make its way to Washington State, where for several days lawmakers have been engaged in an effort for the fifth year in a row to bring about charter schools. The effort picked up steam last week when former Microsoft partner Paul Allen took an active role as a concerned business leader and had several representatives helping to lobby for the new program. Unfortunately, the Washington Education Association won out in the end, and just yesterday, the bill died for failing to come to a vote in the full House prior to 5 pm, a parliamentary procedure that only the unions and other vested interests knew enough to bank on.

Charter school skeptics there need look no further than three amazing publications on charter schools all released in the same month! The Center is proud to announce the release of *Charter Schools Today: Changing the Face of American Education*, which is a comprehensive report with hard data on a variety of factors. Scholar Chester E. Finn, Jr. authored *Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education* (available soon), along with Bruno Manno and Greg Vanourek; and the US Department of Education has released its 4th year report, [The State of Charter Schools 2000](#), that its own research team has been compiling.

Florida's choice program is being evaluated not for its effects on improving public education in the Sunshine State, but on whether the program technically works with current constitutional law. That was the premise for the Tallahassee trial court judge's rejection of an amicus brief sponsored by CER on behalf of national choice groups. The brief provides evidence that choice positively impacts the delivery of public education while simultaneously helping provide needed alternatives. The judge held open the possibility that the amicus may be used in later hearings.



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