

# Center for Education Reform



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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Welcome to the Center for Education Reform's weekly hot-line, this week beginning Friday October 1. The National Assessment Governing Board released the results of the 1998 writing assessment by NAEP, also known as the Nation's Report Card, and things don't look too good. Sadly, American students are still performing below expected levels, with 75% not writing up to grade level. Earlier this year similar reading results were released from NAEP. TIMSS, an international study for science and math, showed American students scoring near the bottom of the industrialized nations surveyed. Yet more proof that voucher programs are not "creaming" after all: if you remember, last week we reported figures from the San Antonio choice program. Now a local school district in Florida's Escambia County did an analysis of the kids who took advantage of the A+ program. Of the 134 children using vouchers to transfer to new schools, about half performed above their old schools' pupil averages in reading and math, and half below. They also found that more than two-thirds of participating kids scored below national averages in these two areas. A hot topic everywhere, Florida's choice program has drawn the attention of the House Budget Committee whose hearings last week focused on "cutting edge" education reforms. Vouchers, especially Florida's A+ program, became the focal point. Keeping the heat on choice once again are the NAACP and People for the American Way. These powerful national organizations are trying to dissuade people in Detroit who are looking for alternatives to district schools. They have established "Partners for Public Education", a public awareness campaign that espouses the negative consequences of school vouchers. I wonder where he gets his numbers? In his keynote address to attendees of the National Education Summit today, President Bill Clinton once again practically took sole responsibility for the burgeoning charter school numbers. His advisors need to get up to speed however: the President stated there were nearly 1,300 charter schools open this Fall, but up-to-the minute CER numbers show a significantly higher number, nearly 1,700. Thanks to scores of people, Mr. President, you are much closer to your 3,000 charter schools goal than even you thought. Governors and leaders at the National Education Summit are also stressing standards, but they are dangerously close to suggesting that there are already uniformly high standards across the country, but there are not. Additionally the tests that assess these standards vary wildly from state to state and in some instances district to district. To find out more read your soon-to-hit-the stands October issue of Parent Power! If you don't already get it, sign up by calling the Center at 202-822-9000 or [subscribe online](#). And lastly: if approved by educators, CEOs and governors at the Summit, at least ten states will test a program that ties teacher salaries to student achievement. A good step, this but must be complimented by other reforms to have any impact.



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