



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

Newsire - December 4, 2001

December 4, 2001

Vol. 3, No. 47

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* **CHARTERS:** San Francisco area charters are holding their first symposium to educate the public about their schools and the role they play in bringing genuine education reform to their community. State Board of Education president Reed Hastings and Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown will address the crowd, and school directors will be on hand to answer questions.

If you're in the area, the event is being held at the Delancy Street Foundation at 600 Embarcadero Street, from 7-9 p.m. Email garyllarson@hotmail.com for more info.

Indianapolis holds great promise for reform as Mayor Bart Peterson's review panel recommends the city's first four charter schools for approval, including two grassroots organizations and two charters partnered with private companies. The move comes just a few days after a rancorous crowd of school district superintendents demanded the legislature put a moratorium on any charters until the state can guarantee - what seems to most people an outrageous demand - that they won't lose money in their districts just because children decide to go to a charter school.

The suggestion that districts should receive money for children they don't educate is foolish, and the district's claims of financial woe might be better targeted toward school improvements and savings. But they fear that given the chance to leave their schools for another choice, many will, which should immediately raise a red flag to any good tax paying Hoosier who thought their money paid for education, not systems. The good news is that the state's legislative leaders of both parties, the governor and even their Washington representatives are wholeheartedly in favor of the charter reform model for public education.

Go to <http://projecte.org/> for more info.

* **TEACHING:** Joining the chorus of advocates for alternative certification, the Progressive Policy Institute hosted a forum in Washington last week, where Dr. Rick Hess from the University of Virginia presented his paper, "Tear Down this Wall: The Case for a Radical Overhaul of Teacher Certification." Hess says a new way of recruiting a more expansive pool of talented, qualified individuals to teach our nation's children is necessary. All candidates should possess a college degree, demonstrate mastery of skills on content knowledge exams, and complete a criminal background check. After that, districts should be free to choose qualified individuals.

Hess' proposal was applauded by Teach for America president Wendy Kopp, but mildly objected to by David Imig of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and a representative of the school employees union. The AFT rep made little effort to hide her disgust of Hess' new model.

For the full report, [click here for PDF](#)

* **URBAN SCHOOL REFORM:** Pennsylvania's plan to take over the Philly schools and allow performance-based contracts with private groups to help turn around the schools has been put on hold until December 21. Those who have a stake in the status quo have turned out to bitterly protest. Meanwhile in Kansas City, sources from the State Board of Education hinted that continued failure to meet performance standards could result in the splitting the district into smaller districts, turning it into a charter district, or a combination of both.

* **ACHIEVEMENT:** And in case it isn't clear what the fuss is all about in these communities, more evidence of American public education's continued mediocrity comes from another international evaluation of 32 industrialized countries. America's 15-year-olds perform at average levels compared to international peers in demonstrating the ability to apply reading, math and science to real-life situations. Experts have long argued as to the cause of this mediocrity, saying that the application of real learning can come only when students' knowledge is well-ingrained; deep not just wide. Finland, Canada and New Zealand scored above the U.S. in reading. In math, Japan and Korea were among the eight countries scoring higher than the U.S., with five nations significantly below. Other key findings and more details can be found [in this article by clicking here](#)

For the report, [click here](#)



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