



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

Newsire - February 28, 2001

February 28, 2001

Vol. 3, No. 9

* **CONTRACTING:** A new report from the National Education Association claims "mixed" results at schools managed by Edison Schools, Inc., according to officials there. The report concludes, for example, that Edison students' achievement was equal to or greater than students at similar public schools in "only" seven of the ten schools. Edison argues that the report ignores any data from 2000 and does not compare the progress of Edison students, most of which come from the areas in the nation's lowest performing districts. You can also view [the NEA's report](#) and [Edison Schools, Inc.'s report](#).

In another report, Peter Cookson at Columbia University's Teachers College found that Edison schools are well thought-out and functional schools with a cohesive curriculum and positive learning environment, concluding that "the Edison design does provide a blueprint for the creation of academically rigorous learning environments."

* **STANDARDS:** University of California president Richard C. Atkinson has ignited national debate over his call to drop the SAT as an admissions standard, after seeing students "studying long lists of verbal analogies such as 'untruthful is to mendaciousness' as 'circumspect is to caution.'" Atkinson did not say why verbal analogies are no longer relevant to an individual's aptitude and ability to reason.

Atkinson's call is over the top, especially since the SAT, despite several years of lowered standards, is still the only uniform gauge higher education has to help equate the mixed bag of grades and skills students bring depending on their school and background. Other schools have dismissed the SAT as a primary factor in admissions, such as Pennsylvania's Dickinson College. The debate today over the SAT, however, is really just a reflection of the continuing decline of the SAT as a standard of excellence in education, says Virginia Postrel of Reason Magazine. You can read her commentary [here](#).

* **STANDARDS II:** A new Public Agenda survey of teachers, parents, students, employers and college professors has found that raising academic standards has resulted in a steady decline in social promotion and increases in summer-school enrollment. The survey also notes that only one percent of those surveyed who know their districts are raising standards believe their local schools should discontinue the effort. In fact, despite ongoing outcry by the education establishment, 81 percent of parents, 86 percent of employers and 80 percent of rank and file teachers say their local schools are being "careful and reasonable in putting standards in place."

Forty-one percent of teachers say social promotion has decreased at their school (up from 31 percent four years ago), and 37 percent of teachers see an increase in summer-school enrollment (up from 28 percent four years ago). See [the full report](#).

* **CLASS SIZE:** A new paper by an economist at the Stanford Graduate School of Business and the Hoover Institution defies popular wisdom that class size makes a difference, suggesting instead that the key question is student behavior.

Using an economic model, Edward Lazear, shows how the key variable is the likelihood that students disrupt one another's behavior, and the relationship between class size, behavior, learning and the cost of teachers. The behavior of each student affects others in the classroom, and the more crowded the classroom the larger the problem. He suggests that across-the-board reductions in class size are a waste of money because they often reduce class is where behavior is acceptable and disruptions are minimal. He argues that class size reduction should be focused on kids with special needs or disadvantaged areas, and notes that where discipline and student behavior is stronger (i.e., Catholic schools), class sizes are larger but students still learn better. Read the [full article here](#).

For more information on class size [click here](#).

* **UPDATE:** Former outstanding Elementary School principal Nancy Ichinaga has been confirmed to the California State Board of Education by a Senate vote of 29-0, despite previous objections."

* In Verona, Wisconsin, congratulations go to the Verona Core Knowledge Charter School which, after a protracted battle with the local school board, had their contract renewed. To get it, the school had to agree to give up direct supervision of the school director, who will now be controlled by the superintendent (reflective of a nation-wide struggle for control), but as one charter parent put it, "in the best interest of the kids and the teachers, we decided this was worth it."



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
copyright © 2013