



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **FOR THE KIDS:** The Education Establishment is fond of declaring their efforts as exclusively "for the kids," but it seems there are times when the children are simply fodder for their own agendas:

- In Fairfax, VA the local NEA affiliate leadership is asking their teachers to "work to the rule" - meaning no after-school events or taking work home to grade - because the jurisdiction is offering only a 2% pay raise, which is below some surrounding counties. The union's disagreement may be with adults, but they seem willing to put kids into the line of fire, as is the union in
- East Detroit, MI, where teachers have worn badges that say "No contract, low morale" in the classroom and removed drawings and lists of student achievements from hallways and classrooms. Noted one parent: "My third-grader came to me crying today that her accomplishments were taken off the board." Another parent accused the union of trying to use kids as "bargaining chips." Using kids isn't confined to unions, as we see in
- San Francisco, CA, where the school board voted to let high school students skip school to attend a protest rally for its pet cause: affirmative action. The merits of affirmative action aside, one would think that an educational board would urge its students to focus on academic achievement - especially in a district where a majority of the students still perform below the midpoint on the Stanford 9 exams. This is, by the way, the same school board moving to oust Edison Schools, Inc. after its management dramatically raised scores in the failing school it took over. The plan to let students skip was abandoned, however, when the system couldn't figure out the logistics of transporting all those kids in taxpayer-supported school buses.

* **TEACHER QUALITY:** Is the subject of a new report released by the Milken Family Foundation and Chairman Lowell Milken. The MFF's Teacher Advancement Program is a new way of developing quality teacher leaders, and financially rewarding those teachers based on performance (as opposed to across-the-board cost of living increases for all teachers, bad and excellent). You can review the TAP program at <http://www.mff.org>.

* **CHOICE:** Good news for 4,000 Cleveland kids, who won't be forced out of the Cleveland Scholarship Program that has provided them a lifeline for better education. The U.S. Court of Appeals

has decided that the program can continue operating while supporters seek U.S. Supreme Court review of an earlier decision striking down the program. Observers are optimistic about the probability that the Supreme Court will both grant review and overturn the lower court decision. As we near the possible hearing dates, likely activities will include a DC rally, and The Center for Education Reform will coordinate the filing of an amicus brief in support of the effort. For more information, see the [School Choice page](#).

* **STANDARDS:** Despite the opposition of folks like Alfie Kohn, parents have already decided: Education standards are improving math and reading instruction in public schools. That's the conclusion of a national survey by the nonpartisan Public Agenda organization in its fourth annual survey on the effect of national standards. According to the group, parents now rate public schools about the same as private schools. Thirty-four percent now believe public schools have higher standards, compared with 35% who think private school standards are higher.

Also noted are that a) employers and college professors find significant deficits among public school graduates, b) students are neither resentful or anxious over testing, and c) teachers say standardized tests help them diagnose problems and motivate students. Review the report at <http://www.publicagenda.org>.



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