



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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\* **EDISON:** East meets West as opponents of Edison Schools, Inc. in cities on both coasts mount campaigns against Edison's involvement in their schools. The story in New York City is that five failing schools were proposed to be turned over to Edison, pending 50% of parents voting for it at each school. While the unions were able to convince more than 80% of those parents who did vote to vote against Edison, in all but one of the five schools, less than half of all parents even cast a vote. Some reasons why may lie in these reports from the New York Post on union activity over the last few weeks:

"About 20 [teacher] demonstrators at PS 66 held anti-Edison signs and chanted 'Edison go home,' and 'Our children are not for sale.'"

"At Intermediate School 111 in Brooklyn the teachers union chapter leader and other school employees were seen giving children fliers that urged their parents to attend an anti-Edison meeting," leading Enrique Montalvo, a parent leader at the school to comment, "It's outrageous. The children were supposed to be kept out of this." Replied a union official, "I'm a citizen. I can pass out literature." (Of course, we wonder if he'd have the same reply if the literature were pro-reform!)

Going West, the San Francisco School Board tried to put an official spin on their move to give Edison a 90-day probation to respond to several of the board's complaints, none of which have anything to do with the school's academic track record and all which have to do with power. It's likely that at the end of the 90 days, that unless Edison agrees to cease being Edison, there will no longer be a partnership at all. For more background on the San Francisco Edison school, go to: [our update page](#).

"Former NYC Mayor Ed Koch has offered commentary criticizing actions against Edison and urges, "Give Mayor the Reins for the City Schools." [Newsday](#), April 6, 2001.

See Also The *New York Times* article of April 7, 2001, "Edison's Fate, The City's Future", By Chris Whittle [www.nytimes.com/2001/04/07/opinion/07WHIT.html?searchpv=site05](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/07/opinion/07WHIT.html?searchpv=site05).

\* **More on the UNIONS:** Arguing that the union should be given a chance to provide a solution, Detroit, Michigan Superintendent Kenneth Burnley put his plan to hire Edison to manage as many as 13 failing schools on hold. In a city where only 29% of the children who begin 9th grade actually finish four years later, Burnley's move could only be called cowardly. As for the union, local observers and parents are wondering where the union, which is an AFT affiliate, has been during these troubled

years.

For a clue, we turn to AFT president Sandy Feldman's paid commentary which suggests there's nothing at all wrong with union dominated schools. She argues in today's Washington Post, and in other papers nationwide, that a new Harvard study finds that highly unionized states actually yield higher test scores than do states in which schools are not bound by collective bargaining. The same union leader who argues the statistics demonstrating success among charter or voucher students are without merit is relying on some questionable cause-and-effect connections to promote this piece of "research." Taking credit for high SAT test scores in Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York, for example, while ignoring the fact that the three major cities in each of those states are plagued by decades of failure is only wishful thinking.

Speaking of wishful thinking, DC Schools Superintendent Paul Vance told the Washington Times the other day that he supports charter schools, causing the Times to contrast Vance to his predecessor Arlene Ackerman (now in San Francisco) who put up firewalls for charter progress. But before anyone celebrates, a closer look at his words is in order. Vance said not that he supports charter schools, but that he supports charter schools "as long as they are answerable to the District's school system." Since the majority of the current 39 DC charter schools are not part of the District's authority chain but instead are accountable to the independent charter board, then Vance's support of charters is tepid at best.

\* **CHOICE MATTERS:** Confirming the results of previous polls taken on parental attitudes toward school choice, Parents in Charge, a group conceived by Ted Forstmann, today released the results of a major survey that found that 82% of parents want to be in charge of their children's education, and 72% believe that competition would improve education. Parents in Charge is a new non-profit, non-partisan organization that will dedicate itself to building a broad coalition of people who believe that parents should be in charge of their children's education. Of course this is a fundamental premise to which reformers subscribe but it is critical that all parents become aware of the rights they currently have. For more information go to Parents in Charge at [www.parentsincharge.org](http://www.parentsincharge.org).

\* **REFORMERS ADDRESS NATIONAL FORUM:** Arguing they will not stop until all children of lesser means have access to better schooling opportunities, a wide array of diverse school reform activists around the country addressed CER's Leader's Form last Wednesday and provided new hope for reformers and parents looking for help and support today. Kaleem Caire, Executive Director of the Black Alliance for Educational Options said, "We must radically redefine public education in this country in the ways that meet the needs of our children and our families. Give parents a choice, give kids a chance. We're going to win this fight. We're ready." Jim and Fawn Spady of the Educational Excellence Coalition in Seattle, Washington, told those assembled that, "Public schools aren't supposed to be for those who can't afford private schools - public schools are supposed to be for everyone and really improve education for kids. It can be lonely in this battle, but we're going to keep on keeping on."



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