



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **SCHOOL LEADERS:** Superintendents are dropping like flies. Maybe it's the new Dot-Com world and the allure of easy cash. Maybe the new accountability demand is driving them to where they think it might be easier to work. Whatever the reason, it's not entirely bad, given spotty track records and complaints that more money was not more plentiful. The following leadership changes have recently been announced:

- Arlene Ackerman, from DC to San Francisco (see [May 16 Newsire](#) for more details)
- David Hornbeck, from Philadelphia to Destination Unknown
- Roy Romer, former Colorado Governor to Los Angeles

Lots of other spots are open and in need of risk-taking, non-bureaucratic leaders. The problem is that most school districts hire one of a dozen or so search outfits to help them, which guarantees that the pool of superintendents is merely a recycled lot of friendly colleagues and not necessarily the bold reformers these systems need. But perhaps we'll be surprised.

* **TESTING:** Do high-stakes tests breed cheating? That's the question that is unfortunately being put forth in newspapers nationwide because of recent, growing evidence of school officials and teachers helping children cheat to get better grades on the new generation of tests that are now before so many children. But rather than suggest, as they did in Potomac, Maryland, that "the test made me do it," the pundits should consider that cheating represents a character flaw, and is no more a symptom of high-stakes tests than cheating on your wife is a symptom of marriage! For more details, see: <http://www.usnews.com:80/usnews/issue/000612/cheating.htm>.

* **PARENT VICTORY:** The grassroots effort to bring about better schools in Wyoming has begun to

yield fruit. The home-grown Wyoming Citizens for Educational Choice announced yesterday that it received a grant from a national foundation and is on its way to creating a charter school tentatively named the Snowy Range Academy. Now the group must fulfill the state's law by getting parent and teacher signatures and then approval from the school board.

* **UNION BREAK:** A small group of teachers in Warner Unified School District in California have announced their independence from the California Teacher's Union. "For years I faced a moral dilemma when it came time to pay dues to the CTA and the NEA because I was embarrassed that they used my dues to support causes I found personally offensive," said Doris Burke, one of the teachers leading the disaffiliation effort. Burke and her colleagues intend to bargain collectively, but less militantly than their former union, the CTA. Last year, according to the Association of American Educators, this group of teachers formed their own independent local association but now they are legally incorporating to give them the ability to represent teachers' interests apart from what is required at the state and national level. For more information, visit <http://www.aaeteachers.org>.

* **CHARTERS:** Massachusetts renewed the state's first 14 charters for being "successful and holding students and teachers to high standards." The Bay State is known for having one of the most rigorous accountability processes, so a renewal is no sure thing. Congratulations to the original 14 and their families! Visit some of [Massachusetts charter schools' websites](#).

* **BUSINESS LEADERS** are embracing charter schools. From Silicon Valley's support and defense of charter schools to Microsoft executive Paul Allen's taking the rein of the Washington State charter initiative, entrepreneurial business folks are finding that reform is a good thing, and are working not just to "adopt a school" but to create new ventures in education. So it seemed natural when Bill Gates went to one of Washington, DC's most promising charter schools. Gates has helped grow and fund a cyberspace partnership between the SEED charter public school (a residential charter in DC) and Sequoia Middle School in Kent, Washington. Locally in DC, much of the greater business community has embraced charters. Such leadership is expected to draw others to publicly support reform. Link to: more information on Paul Allen's support of the [Washington charter ballot initiative](#). For more on DC charters, visit the [DC Charter School Resource Center](#), [Friends of Choice in Urban Schools \(FOCUS\)](#) and [SEED's homepage](#).



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