



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

Newsire - April 19, 2000

April 19, 2000
Vol. 2, No. 15

MATH: Real Math proponents are claiming a modest victory — at least in the court of public opinion — with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' latest comments that emphasize they do believe computation and facts in math are important. NCTM's newly revised standards place renewed emphasis on acquiring basic skills. This may only be a Pyrrhic victory, but at least it shows that the pressure against fuzzy math is building. Link for more info on the [Math Wars](#).

CHARTER SCHOOLS: New York charter school fans have reason to cheer with the establishment of the New York Charter School Resource Center. With charter schools in New York under increasing attack by the status quo, this Center comes at an especially good time. New York will have 13 schools by the fall. For information on New York charter schools, visit: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org>.

In the Evergreen State, the battle for charters continues, and accelerated last when the president of the Washington Education Association surprised charter onlookers with her public push for the charter school bill currently awaiting final action in the legislature. In her *Tacoma New Tribune* Op-Ed, Lee Ann Prielipp says the bill before the state is "a reasonable, thoughtful bill that will provide more academic options for public school students, and we hope that it passes this year." She continues: "After spending 26 years as a classroom teacher in Federal Way public schools, I believe our existing public schools are doing a great job, and that they're improving every day... [E]ducators are always looking for ways to provide new learning opportunities for students. Public charter schools may be one way to provide those new opportunities." Link here for all [About Charter Schools](#).

STANDARDS & TESTING: In Atlanta, President Clinton pointed out the need for standards and testing. Exams are essential for propelling all schools toward greater achievement for all students. Clinton, however, noted that students are burdened with too many tests and that there is a potential downside to testing if it reduces lessons to cramming to boost scores. But he also said that testing students' progress must not be abandoned. Exams let us know what material students have covered and what work remains. While they may not be perfect, they help schools improve and that's what reform is all about. For information visit: <http://www.whitehouse.gov>

AFT wants to test teachers now, and has called upon fellow educators to embrace more rigorous standards. The AFT's recommendations for prospective teachers, released last week, include a national test, a longer college-degree program that includes a fifth year in the classroom as an intern, a requirement to maintain at least a B average, and an academic major in the subject in which the teacher will specialize. Teacher candidates would also be required to demonstrate college-level knowledge in

math, science, English, history, and geography by the end of their sophomore year in college. The concern of reformers is over who would administer such requirements. For additional information link to: www.aft.org/higher_ed/reports/K16report.html.

TEACHER QUALITY BULLETIN: Speaking of teachers. Don't you wish you had the time to track ever-changing state policies, news, commentaries and research on the hot—and supremely important—topic of teacher quality? The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is doing this for you. The Foundation has just launched *Teacher Quality Bulletin*, a weekly electronic newsletter that summarizes research findings and tracks smart (and not so smart) teacher quality initiatives in the states. Think of it as the chief alternative to the dubious policy propositions of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. To join the mailing list, email TQBulletin@aol.com.

PUBLICATION: Now Available! *The Academic Achievement Challenge: What Really Works in the Classroom?* by Jeanne S. Chall (published posthumously) Hardcover - 206 pages (January 21, 2000) Guilford Press; ISBN: 1572305002

This book addresses one of the most essential issues in education: how best to instruct our students. Systematically analyzing a vast body of qualitative and quantitative research, Chall argues that instruction-based approaches result in higher achievement overall, with particular benefits for children of lower socioeconomic status and those with learning difficulties. Offering clear recommendations for practice, the book makes a strong case for basing future education reforms and innovations on a solid empirical foundation.



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