



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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**\*CHARTER SCHOOLS:** Charters made big news last week with visits by presidential candidate George Bush to **New Jersey's** acclaimed Northstar Charter School in Newark and a similar tour to choice schools in **Milwaukee**. Northstar Charter director Norm Atkins made sure that his visit from Bush and New Jersey Governor Whitman had lasting impact: they both heard about the need for solutions to charter school funding inequities and facilities, and both promised to work to resolve these issues.

A recent study on charter schools in Pennsylvania revealed high margins of support by parents and students, but concerns by teachers that the charter experience was less positive than their initial expectations.

**\* TEACHER QUALITY:** Good news for people concerned with the issues surrounding **teacher recruitment** and quality: [The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation](#) has begun the *Teacher Quality Bulletin*, a weekly electronic update on teacher-related issues. The first TQ Bulletin offered this pearl:

### **CHARTER TEACH MATCHES COLLEGE GRADS WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS**

...Charter Teach Organization, which connects accomplished and motivated college graduates with jobs in charter schools, steering recent grads through emergency credentialing and providing them personalized on-the-job training. Charter schools offer innovative opportunities for staffing schools and Charter Teach will hopefully draw in smart, driven candidates who might not otherwise go into teaching. For more information, see: [www.charterteach.org](http://www.charterteach.org).

To subscribe to the *Teacher Quality Bulletin*, e-mail [TQBulletin@aol.com](mailto:TQBulletin@aol.com).

**\* TESTING:** What's it all about, Alfie? It looks like some anti-testers are having influence on Capitol Hill. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, "States would effectively be prohibited from using **high-school graduation tests** under legislation introduced Tuesday by two Democratic members of Congress.

"The measure would bar states and school districts that receive federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act from relying on any one standardized test in making decisions related to the graduation, promotion, tracking, or grouping by ability of students. Sen. Paul

D. Wellstone of Minnesota offered the Senate version of the bill, while Rep. Robert C. Scott of Virginia is sponsoring a companion measure in the House."

Individuals such as author Alfie Kohn have long suggested that testing is anathema to what school is all about. While not all tests are created equal, the idea that we should set standards, measure and account for those standards in order to promote children is a concept whose time is long overdue. Those who oppose this concept are denying children the benefit of a real education, and destining them to failure - although with Kohn's prescription, they might feel pretty good about their failure.

\* **REPORT CARDS:** States like **Colorado** are finally beginning to measure children, rather than retreat as the federal legislators above would have them do. Governor Bill Owens pushed through a new education reform package that will evaluate school progress with report cards much the way individual children are graded. Children in grades 3 through 10 will take the Colorado state test in reading, writing, science and math. Schools will receive report cards and consistently failing schools can be made subject to bidding by contractors, for conversion to charter schools. Local school boards of failing schools will be given three years to develop improvement plan, including, if they choose, conversion to charters.

\***SCHOOL CHOICE:** Some disadvantaged children in Chattanooga, **Tennessee** did not have to wait for their state to adopt report cards to get a better education. A survey of parents of the 500 children served by the CEO Foundation of Chattanooga found that 54% of children had improved their academic performance, and 63% of parents were very satisfied with the education their child was receiving. Children are also happier in their present school, and their behavior, when compared to their previous experience, has improved.

\* And **when teachers exercise choice**, they are clear why they are making that choice. California Assembly Speaker Antoinia Villaraigosa (D-Los Angeles) said the following in explaining why he and his public school teacher wife are considering placing two of their children in private school:

"As a parent, no matter how passionate you are about public schools, in the final analysis you're going to do what's best for you children."

Villaraigosa was one of the speakers who addressed the NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando last year. (A study published by CER found that urban public school teachers are more than twice as likely to send their children to private schools as other Americans.)



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