



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **CHARTER REPORTS:** In a perfect world, charter schools would be the catalyst for competition with traditional public schools. Parents are choosing to send their children to charter schools (500,000 enrolled by Fall 2000) and traditional public schools should feel the need to improve in order to retain these children. That's apparently not happening as much as it should, says a **study of five urban school districts** in Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York conducted for the Manhattan Institute. Because they were protected from financial impact, the districts studied did not feel as pressured to change, even though they lost up to 10 percent of their students to charter schools. Don't loose hope; baby steps are being taken in some areas. Trenton's Superintendent has plans to implement a program that is charter-like where a school's budget is tied to their student enrollment. The study's conclusion was that in order for charter schools to have a competitive effect, school districts need to feel financial pressure and school leaders need to respond to the competition. For more information, call 212-599-7000 or visit <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/>

* **ACHIEVEMENT:** The fact that this June one-third of all **Chicago** public school eighth-graders will not graduate might conjure up huge anger at the Windy City and its school administrators. However, while the graduation rate is going down, it's because the district resolved to dispense with social promotion and raised standards for graduation. Those who don't graduate eighth grade have the summer to make up their deficiencies, and a program has been implemented that promises to help children achieve their goals. In the meantime, much more needs to be done to eradicate bad schools and give children more opportunities to succeed. Summer school is a band aid that will hopefully disappear for all but a few over time. See <http://www.suntimes.com/output/news/summ26.html>.

* **TEACHERS:** Teachers are sending mixed signals to policymakers but revealed important opinions about how and why they work in a recent study. Following are some of the findings from "**A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why**" by Public Agenda:

- Eighty-four percent of new teachers said it was a good idea to pay higher salaries to teachers who work in difficult schools with hard-to-educate children; sixty-nine percent support paying more money for teachers who are highly effective in improving academic performance.

- Forty-two percent of new teachers said: student achievement is mostly determined by parental involvement and socioeconomic factors; 54 percent said teacher quality is just as important in student success.
- Fifty-seven percent of new teachers said teaching should not be open to qualified, motivated people without formal training, while 54 percent of superintendents and principals said it was a good idea.

For more info visit <http://www.publicagenda.org/specials/teachers/teachers.htm>.

* **CHARTER KUDOS:** A perfect example of charter schools making a difference and raising the academic bar for students can be found in **Colorado**. The Liberty Common School, a public charter school founded in 1997, qualified as a John J. Irwin Colorado School of Excellence. The School of Excellence Program recognizes public schools throughout the state according to outstanding accomplishments, assessments of student performance, community satisfaction and effective school practices. Nineteen public schools were recipients of the award - six of those were public charter schools. The Liberty Common School was the only school in the Poudre Colorado area to receive the School of Excellence distinction. See http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_home.htm.

* In the **Nation's Capital**, the DC Charter Resource Center celebrated Major Achievements by Charter Schools with their first annual MAC Awards Dinner. Amongst the many receivers of awards was one remarkable young man - Timothy Hinton, Options Public Charter School - who received the MAC Hope Award. Timothy had not attended school for two years when he came to Options Charter School; he is now not only active in school, but president of the student body government. Charter schools educate 9% of all public school students in D.C. - with 31 schools currently open. Awards were given for other outstanding achievements as well -- all in all a great salute to progress being made in DC Charter Schools. For more information on DC charters visit <http://www.dcchartercenter.org/>.

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