



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **TENNESSEE:** The state not typically known for sparking radical education ideas seems to have awakened its establishment in more ways than one. First on charter schools, efforts have been undertaken successively for more than 5 years to pass a bill, but have never managed to make it to square one. As bi-partisan support has begun to emerge, along comes a confidential memo by the state's Tennessee Education Association (TEA is the state's school employees union) that calls charter schools "toy schools" and lambastes not just the bill pending (which is moderately weak), but the entire concept of schools. More TEA report details will be forth coming.

Meanwhile the union is fighting in Memphis the establishment of a KIPP Academy by progressive superintendent Johnnie Watson. KIPP Academy is the much acclaimed institution which has bred some of the most successful urban public schools, in the face of devastating social and educational poverty. In fact, 64 of Memphis' 165 Schools unfortunately made the state's list of poorly performing public schools. There were only 95 schools on the list. Now TEA is soliciting parents to file a lawsuit in Memphis over the school's establishment. This in a city where the once fabled success of school reforms was found to be a bust.

State school board member Avron Fogelman of Memphis said Thursday he will propose that the board set up lower performance standards for Memphis schools than the rest of Tennessee.

* **URBAN REFORM EFFORTS:** In Baltimore, leaders in this changing city have conversely, embraced KIPP, which will be one of three new independently run schools to provide new choices to parents. An effort by CEO of schools Carmen Russo to move more reform into Baltimore, this New Schools Initiative will invite new applicants again next year.

In PHILLY, plans surrounding the state's takeover of the school system seems to have taken a slight shift in course. While the Governor still has plans to turn over failing schools to community groups and engage private partners to run schools, the role of Edison Schools may be curbed to help, not outright manage the new system. Opponents of the state reform effort consider this a victory. In reality, the real meat of the reform plan remains, and is slated to be finalized by this Friday, November 30. Stay tuned!

SCHOOL BOARDS & PATRIOTISM: While most seem to have no problem waiving the red, white and blue, the Madison, Wisconsin school board seems to have steered from the norm when it voted in October to ban the Pledge of Allegiance as one method of fulfilling the legislature's fall

mandate that all schools honor a moment of Patriotism. The Madison board also voted to allow the Star Spangled Banner to be played but not sung. Public outrage forced the board, a week later, to reverse its decision by a 6-1 vote. The lone dissenter was Bill Keys, who is now the target of a recall effort in February. Area activists have 30 days to collect 35,000 signatures which would put the Keys recall on the February, 2002 ballot. No ordinary citizen with few political ties, Keys happens to be the former president of the local school employees union. Local leaders also note that over 20,000 emails were sent in to the school board's email box but were mysteriously destroyed.

* **SCIENCE:** While many of the Nation's reform groups last week covered the announcement of the nation's dismal science scores, silence was noticeable around Washington at major education establishment headquarters. The fact that in an era where scientists and keen analytical minds are in need as never before should have prompted the school administrators' group, for example, to demand that science majors from leading universities be recruited into teaching for competitive and performance-based pay contracts. The Nation's principals group could have called for a moratorium on seniority-based teacher placements. Instead, there was a call for more resources. Scientists, however, argue the problem is the system and its lack of standards.



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