



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **CA STATE BOARD:** Nancy Ichinaga should have been approved as California Governor Gray Davis' appointee to the California State Board of Education last week. But because "some opposition letters" came in, her hearing was put off until this Wednesday, February 14. Ichinaga is the former principal at Bennett-Kew Elementary School, who refused to buy into the notion that minority or poor children can't learn. She put in place a heavy phonics-based reading program with plenty of in-house testing and teacher development, and ended both bilingual education and social promotion at the school. The result? Her school, with more than 50 percent African American and Latino and more than 75 percent poor, scores in the top ranks of California's Academic Performance Index.

The teachers associations, bilingual education advocates and other members of the Senator.Burton@sen.ca.gov, and reminding him of her contribution to the education of children.

* **CHARTER SCHOOLS:** In yet another example of school board litigation against charter schools, the Englewood New Jersey School Board has tied up the Palisades charter school in court, again disagreeing with a decision of the state Board of Education allowing the school to remain open. Palisades is a K-4 school emphasizing individual attention. Its success has resulted in a significant expansion of the school. The School Board's reason for opposing the school, which opened in 1998, has nothing to do with achievement – the stated concern of School Superintendent Joyce Baynes is that the school's mere existence makes it potentially damaging to efforts to attract students to the traditional public schools' magnet schools. In other words, what's important is not whether kids are served – it's whether the system can be in control. For more information go to: <http://www.bergen.com:80/ed/suitdc200102085.htm>.

* **CHARTER SCHOOLS II:** In December, New York City Schools Chancellor Harold Levy stepped up to the plate in an effort to help the children at five New York City schools that were disastrously failing to educate the children attending them. His proposal would have turned the schools over to Edison Schools, Inc., which uses such winning curricula as "Success for All," to help kids who have failed in traditional public schools. Now, after pressure from the teachers unions, local politicians and establishment advocacy groups, Levy has decided to delay the vote. The unions, which stand to lose the most, are now orchestrating a campaign of scare tactics, leading parents to believe that their schools would be worse off under Edison – although that's hard to understand, given the fact that in some schools as many as 75 percent of students are reading below grade level. For more on the story, go to: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/09/nyregion/09EDIS.html>

See also: [CITY LIFE: Parents Should Vote to Improve Schools](#), By Jeanne Allen, *Newsday*, February 16, 2001.

* **SCHOOL CHOICE:** Opponents of the rather limited parental choice options in President Bush's educational plan may find themselves on the side starting to lose public support. The fourth American Values Survey conducted by Zogby International and the O'Leary Report found that 82 percent of Bush voters favored vouchers – but so did 24 percent of Gore voters. More importantly, Democrats who represent areas with large numbers of underachieving schools have started to line up behind school choice, among them: AFL-CIO member Kenneth L. Johnson, vice president of the Milwaukee School Board; Rep. Dwight Evans, chairman of the Pennsylvania House Appropriations Committee; Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist; and Rev. Floyd Flake, a former New York Congressman. Finally, John Witte, whose research has been used by the National Education Association to oppose school choice, now says that choice is a "useful tool to aid low-income families."

* **SCHOOL CHOICE II:** In Florida, legislation has been introduced that would grant a \$3,000 scholarship to any student in a school that was 120 percent or more over capacity. Supporters tout the effort as a short-term fix for the space crunch in public schools, and a way to lower class size in those schools.

* **TESTING:** Thursday night, February 15, the PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer will discuss President Bush's testing proposals. Featured in the discussion will be Alfie Kohn, author of "The Case Against Standardized Testing," Monty Neill of the Massachusetts-based anti-testing group FairTest, Arizona State Superintendent of Schools Lisa Graham Keegan, and Hoover Institution Research Fellow Bill Evers. Keegan and Evers were both education policy advisors to President Bush during the 2000 campaign and the transition. Show time is scheduled for 6:00 pm Eastern Standard Time, but you should check your local listings for when your PBS affiliate airs the program.

SAVE THE DATE!



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