



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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\* **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Please join us in putting the children and families of Santee, CA, in your prayers today.

\* **FEDERAL POLICY:** U.S. Senate and House committees are toiling over their respective education bills, each trying to satisfy recommendations by the President as well as their own members. Despite occasional press reports to the contrary, the accountability and testing provisions remain intact in discussions, and nowhere is it more true than on Capitol Hill that it ain't over until the fat lady - or man - sings.

Education Secretary Rod Paige is slated to testify Wednesday, March 7, on the Bush plan before the House Education and Workforce Committee at 10:30 a.m., in room 2175 Rayburn House

Office Building. Paige has been steadfast in his endorsement of ensuring that federal money be made to support children, not systems.

\* **UNIONS:** That message apparently escaped the Pennsylvania State Education Association, whose president was recently taken to task by PA Education Secretary Eugene Hickok for recommending that schools turn away any student teachers who come from colleges that endorse charter schools. "All Pennsylvanians should be outraged that some of your members are putting their opposition to charter public schools before the needs of the children they're supposed to serve," said Hickok. "For the teachers of Reading and Boyertown School Districts to block and intimidate eager college students who want to help our children just because the colleges they attend are affiliated with charter public schools flies in the face of what your union purports to stand for." To read Secretary Hickok's full statement, go to: <http://papress.state.pa.us>

Of the situation in these two districts (which has been played out in other states as well over time, most notably Michigan), the most outrageous statement comes from Reading, PA's union president Richard Ashcraft who said of charters, "We feel it's a cancer on public education."

That "cancer" must be what caused Vista, California's union to protest the establishment of a charter school that would serve the primarily under-served Latino parents who overwhelmingly signed the petition to start the Vista Literacy Academy charter school.

The proposed charter offers them an alternative to the notoriously poor education their children

currently receive in their neighborhood schools. The Academy would limit class sizes and extend instruction to 194 days. But a state union official has been reportedly masquerading as a school district official to spread misinformation. For example, this official called parents and told them the charter school would be underfunded, not have credentialed teachers and have bigger class sizes. Members of the Vista Townsite Latino Community met to rally against such negative pressure and are hoping to persuade the school board to approve their application. To read the full story go to:

<http://www.nctimes.com/news/2001/20010304/rrr.html>

**\*REFORM SUPPORT:** Juxtaposed against these messes are two new state-based groups that have been formed to buck the tide against reform and influence policymakers to adopt fundamental reforms. In Massachusetts, Business for Better Schools has been formed from amidst the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Massachusetts High Technology Council and several other related groups to bolster their state's efforts for high-stakes tests.

The group's chairman is William Edgerly, who said that the 12,000 companies in the new group see the results of an unaccountable system, and want the student diplomas to mean something. For more information, you can call 617-876-1440.

In California, leading Silicon Valley entrepreneurs have teamed up to form EdVOICE to persuade policymakers there to adopt reforms concerning teacher quality, charter schools and funding issues. Using their muscle in much the same way as they did in helping to pass Prop. 34 which gave charter schools in the Golden State access to facilities, among other things, this group will keep the fire burning for reform in Sacramento. For more information, visit [www.edvoice.com](http://www.edvoice.com) or call 650-637-2062.



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