



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **CHOICE:** The Center for Education Reform filed its amicus brief with the United State Supreme Court yesterday, calling on the high court to review the decision of the Sixth Circuit Court striking down the Cleveland Scholarship Program. The 17-page brief is based on the fact that the Cleveland Scholarship Program is part of an evolving 25-year program designed to bring the Cleveland Public Schools into compliance with a desegregation decree, and yet the Court of Appeals held that consideration of the complete education reform package is 'irrelevant' to its inquiry.

The Bush Administration also filed an amicus urging the Court to accept the case for consideration. The United States rarely files briefs urging Supreme Court review of cases in which it is not involved, and the unusual act was viewed as increasing the chances of high court review.

CER's amicus brief was handled by former Interim Dean of Catholic University Law School Robert A. Destro and Patton Boggs attorney Dan Volkmuth. Click here for a copy of [the amicus](#).

* **CHARTERS:** The San Francisco Board of Education voted last night not to extend the charter by which Edison Schools operates Edison Charter Academy, and at the same time allow the company to request a state-issued charter from the California Board of Education. School Board members had previously declared themselves "philosophically opposed" to for-profit company involvement, despite the school's transformation from a troubled school to an educational success story.

An exception needed to be made, since under current law a revocation by the board would have precluded Edison from receiving a state charter. Under the agreement, Edison will pay the same rent other charters pay, and the school district will pay for student busing for two years. Edison also gives up \$300,000 in desegregation funds, and teachers will become Edison Schools' employees, with two years to decide if they want to return to the traditional system. Click here [For background information](#).

Both opponents and supporters of Edison expressed satisfaction with the arrangement, but the last word may belong to parents like Adrienne Johnson, whose son is in first grade at Edison: "I am grateful the school won't close and education will continue. But I will make sure every one of you is off this board in the next five years."

* **CHOICE, II:** Wisconsin Governor Scott McCallum has threatened to veto the entire Senate-passed budget if the Wisconsin legislature approves slashing the Milwaukee Parental Choice program by half. Senators had halved the state's payments under the choice program, capped the number of students at

10,580, and reduced payments for charter schools. More than 4,000 choice students would have been without classrooms in the fall as a result of the plan.

The action has divided many Milwaukee Democrats from their constituents, where the program has let thousands of parents make better choices about the school their children attend. Noted Mikel Holt, editor of the state's largest black newspaper: "From a black perspective, this has always been about: Do you put your party before your people? Right now, too many of these lawmakers are putting their party before their people. And some of them are going to end up paying the price for that." Milwaukee Democratic Senator Gary George has already split from his party over the funding issue.

* NEW YORK, NY: Schools Chancellor Harold Levy sent shockwaves through the city school system last week with a demand that principals in failing elementary schools get out of their offices and ... into the classroom. Levy wrote them that they should set a goal of spending 50 percent of their time in the classroom. Panic-stricken principals immediately contacted their union, which attacked the proposal, but the chancellor declined to back off. The action follows a recent decision by Levy to impose an immediate hiring freeze on central administrators and a promise to "substantially" reduce the 3,000 administrative positions in the central offices.

* TESTING: The Massachusetts legislature is debating the future of 46 bills related to the MCAS statewide standardized test, many of which seek to water the test down or eliminate it as a graduation requirement. But standards supporters, including Boston Superintendent of Schools Thomas Payzant, are fighting back, arguing that using the test as a graduation requirement spurs improvement and raises standards.

When speakers at hearings on the bills claimed that the tests are unfair for children who are poor immigrants, State Senator Robert Anonioni (D-Leominster), rose up to declare: "For whatever reason, we are promoting people in these communities who don't have the skills they'll need to participate in a worldwide economy. Frankly, with all due respect THAT's unfair."

Standards and testing advocates would do well to obtain a copy of the Business Roundtable's most recent report, "Assessing and Addressing the Testing Backlash," available in a PDF format by going to www.brt.org. The report offers practical advice and current public opinion research, helping standards advocates to engage the critics of standards - noting that surveys continue to find overwhelming support among all demographic groups for standards-based reform.



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