



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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\* **CHARTERS:** A great deal of attention has been given to the National Education Association's "shift" in its charter school stance just approved at their annual meeting. The "new" resolution is loaded with restrictions hindering charter schools. Even as the NEA claimed to take a bow in favor of charters, NEA president Bob Chase laid out dozens of criteria, declaring (with no justice) "it's beyond comprehension that taxpayer-funded charter schools aren't being held to the same standards."

\*California - But the need for true charter schools was highlighted in a recent state-ordered study in the West Contra Costa (CA) school district, which noted that "strict and cumbersome" union contract rules impede student and hinder management efficiency. The rules require that "insider" employees be considered first for placement and promotion, preventing the district from looking outside the district for the best applicant - a problem that does not exist with strong charter school provisions, but which the NEA would impose.

\*Georgia - Good charter laws also require clear funding provisions as Stone Mountain Charter School can attest. The school has been locked in litigation with the DeKalb County school district over funding, with the district keeping about \$1,000 per student for "services" the school does not utilize. The arts-themed school received its annual renewal last night.

\*Indiana - And finally, effective charter laws also need multiple chartering authorities, a provision that was written into Indiana's new law. Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson will release his charter school application at a workshop for prospective charter school applicants in the city on July 19, as part of Indiana Black Expo at the Indianapolis Convention Center. Meanwhile, few local school boards are even getting around to discussing charter school applications - a fact underscoring the need for alternative authorizers. Peterson's views on charters can be found [here](#).

\* **TESTING:** The school employee union meeting in the expensive Los Angeles Staples Convention Center has endorsed parents opting out of state testing requirements and promised union support to state-level lobbyists for such legislation.

Showing how out of step the union bosses are, several recent developments that support

state testing are of note:

\* A recent Milwaukee survey by the Public Policy Forum shows that both parents and non-parents strongly favor standardized testing to check students' progress in school;

\* a report by the Human Resources Research Organization recommends that California maintain its current schedule for its high school exit exam (reversing an earlier recommendation of delay); and

\* the Stanford 9 results in Arizona shows that Alhambra School District - with 87 percent of its students on free and reduced lunch - is still able to beat national and state scores in all grades and in all subjects by as many as 40 percentile points.

The NEA resolution puts the organization squarely in the corner of affluent Scarsdale, NY, where some vocal parents oppose standardized testing (and whose children will do well on them anyway) and squarely against parents in Alhambra and other poverty areas where, without testing and accountability, students are left to struggle and ultimately fail.

\* **WASHINGTON ACTION:** The big elementary and secondary package is on the conference table this week with the various factions poised to give a little on each major part of the now muted Bush education package. We'll know more next week, but one thing is certain: schools should prepare to start testing yearly and taking corrective action on any children that their conventional programs and policies leave behind. It's not too early to start!

\* **CHOICE:** Poor areas - particularly African-American communities - are fertile ground for school choice initiatives and exhibit a growing schism between the community and those who claim to represent the community. A new study by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies finds that while 69 percent of black elected officials oppose vouchers, 60 percent of the black public supports vouchers. Among those under age 50, support for vouchers rises to 70 percent, suggesting a possible generational shift in voting patterns for those officials courageous enough to take advantage of it. Check out a summary of the study at [www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org)

\* **CHARTERS, II:** More evidence of charter school suffocation in Missouri, where the state Education Department is creating mandatory guidelines restricting new charter schools and going beyond what they are empowered to do under state law. The department's new regulations restrict the types of charter operators permitted, charter only niche programs recognized in advance as meeting the needs of the local district for accreditation, limit charters to two per year, and eliminate most for-profit education management organizations - all of which exceed state law. The guidelines are still in draft form, and a meeting is scheduled with the St. Louis Charter School Coalition on July 23 to map out a plan to fight the rules.



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