



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

Newsire - July 14, 1999

July 14, 1999

The assault on social promotion in the Waco, Texas public school district is succeeding. At the end of the 1997-98 school year, more than 19% of students in third through eighth grade failed the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test, or TAAS. This spring, scores rose to an all-time high. The TAAS failure rate dropped to 9% following two rounds of testing. By the time students are re-tested at the end of summer school, district officials hope to lower that figure still further.

In California, over the objections of Republicans, the state Senate sent Gov. Gray Davis SB 434, intended to halt the growing practice of charter schools providing distance learning. Even though the bill, which is part of the budget, will increase the amount of state aid received by many charter schools, it is clear that the charter school community has an enormous amount of work to do to convince skeptical legislators that charter schools using non-classroom instructional methodologies are both fiscally prudent and educationally effective.

Also in California we are still waiting to learn if Proposition 227 -- the ballot initiative that curtailed bilingual education in the state's classrooms -- is improving student achievement. Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement Company is expected to provide definitive results to the state this week.

Meanwhile, California test scores show that phonics instruction is working. Since signing on with an intensive phonics program and receiving a grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, scores for the Sacramento City Unified School District rose from the 35th percentile nationally in reading for first-graders two years ago, to the 54th percentile last year and the 62nd percentile this year.

In New York City, accountability is a pointed word. At the close of the school year superintendents, principals, and even entire schools have been sacked by Chancellor Rudy Crew. The school board approved shakeup includes shutting down 13 troubled schools over two years, with 4 this summer. Rudy also assumes direct control of 43 low-performing schools, more than quadrupling the number of such schools under his supervision. In the schools being taken over, teachers will receive 15% higher pay in exchange for longer hours and implementation of extensive curricular changes under an agreement with the teachers' union.

Colorado continues to lead the way in charter school capital financing. The Core Knowledge Charter School, located outside Denver, became what many experts say is the first charter school in the country to be rated by Standard & Poor's. The roughly 300-student school received an investment-grade rating for a \$2.8 million bond. The company's top rating is AAA; the charter school received a BBB rating. The rating signals a stamp of approval of sorts for investors and is likely to bring with it a

lower interest rate. The school, now housed in a strip mall in Parker, CO, plans to break ground in the fall on a nearly \$3 million building.



The Center for Education Reform
910 Seventeenth Street, NW, Suite 1120 • Washington, DC 20006
800-521-2118 • 301-986-8088 • Fax: 301-986-1826
www.edreform.com • cer@edreform.com
copyright © 2013