



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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\* **POLITICS:** Two candidates for New York City Mayor, Democrat Alan Hevesi and Republican Michael Bloomberg are planning to create "Education" political parties in an effort to capitalize on public discontent with the NYC public school system. Political observers are calling the efforts "desperate" and a "cheap political gimmick," and for the most part the moves are aimed at preserving ballot positions for the two should they lose their parties' nomination. If either were proposing genuine reforms for the troubled school system, they might be deserving of an "Education Party" nomination but they're not. But if they want to see genuine education reform (and secure more votes), they need only look across the Hudson River to New Jersey, where Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler, now a candidate for NJ Governor, has put in place a robust mixture of charter schools and school choice - and in offering opportunities to those who never had it, expanded his political base far beyond what might be expected.

\* **CHARTERS:** The news about charters from around the country offers hope and challenges -

\*In San Francisco, the California State Board of Education unanimously approved the charter for the Edison Charter Academy, guaranteeing that every child attending the school will get to continue their education. The Edison Charter had come under bitter attack from the San Francisco School Board, which yanked the charter based on "philosophical opposition" to for-profit companies running schools, despite the rising test scores there. For more go to: [www.edisonaction.org](http://www.edisonaction.org).

\*In Milwaukee, the National Council of La Raza's charter school development initiative stepped up to the plate to provide grants for developing or implementing a pre-k through elementary school and a middle school. The La Raza fund has \$10 million in funding and has helped start up 27 charter schools. Among those struggling to be born is the Jaime Escalante school in Montgomery County, MD, where the local school system continues to resist the innovative school organized by parents and teachers. For more on this go to: [www.nclr.org/](http://www.nclr.org/).

\*The Philadelphia, PA school district has cut off its legally required monthly payments to the city's 34 charter schools (needed to buy books and pay teacher salaries), arguing that they don't have the funds available. However, they continue to pay their own district salaries, prompting State Rep. Dwight Evans to compare the district to a sinking ship, except "instead of women and children first, they're saying 'Captain and crew first.'" Governor Tom Ridge is preparing for a possible state take-over, and state officials have promised that they will withhold state funds from the district and send them directly to the affected charter schools.

\*And in Michigan, the latest information on charter schools, including test scores and financial data, has been added to the Standard & Poor's school evaluation web site. Michigan district information was first unveiled in May, and last week the website was updated to include the state's 171 public charter schools. For the profiles, go to: [www.ses.standardandpoors.com](http://www.ses.standardandpoors.com)

\* **CHOICE:** Latest word is that the Cleveland school choice case will be reviewed by the Supreme Court on September 24, with a strong likelihood that the Court will announce on October 1 whether or not it will take the case. CER filed an amicus brief arguing in favor of the Court taking the case and will, if the Court takes it, file a more expanded version on the merits. Watch this space.

Choice advocates have an opportunity to participate in a live on-line discussion with Kaleem Caire, the dynamic young president of Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) on Tuesday, July 24, at 12:00 noon EDT. BAEO, which is moving its base of operations to the Washington, DC area, will host the discussion at WashingtonPost.com. [The website for the discussion is linked here.](#)

\* **TEACHING:** American Federation of Teachers president Sandra Feldman has proposed a massive expansion of the Head Start program, expanding it to include wealthy families who would pay tuition on a sliding scale basis. The proposal offers no substantive changes to convert Head Start to an educational program, which means, however, the national evaluations revealing that Head Start produces no lasting cognitive gains would not change. HHS research shows that Head Start children are not learning early reading skills like letter recognition and print awareness because the teachers aren't teaching it to them. Instead of offering a reform of "early education," the AFT has offered merely a massive day care program - but one which suits their needs by requiring the hiring of thousands of new teachers.

**CONGRATULATIONS:** To former PA Education Secretary Eugene Hickok, just sworn in as Under Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education. He has been a great friend of the Center's and, under his stewardship, was responsible for sweeping reforms for PA school children.



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