



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **CHARTER SCHOOLS:** Two steps forward one step back. This isn't a dance step, but rather a description regarding the progress of funding to District of Columbia Charter Schools. This year will be the first time since enactment of the DC's charter school law in 1996 that all DC charter schools will be fully funded, as a result of three years hard work by the DC Public Charter School Coalition. But full funding won't help the schools if it continues to arrive late. Disregarding the schedule set by law, the District withheld full Fall funding from some charters until May (the month they should be getting Spring funding). Last year many charters were forced to cut back programs and struggled to pay teachers and expenses because they were under funded by about \$30 million. This year they meet the same obstacles because of tardiness. Despite these struggles, parents continue to choose DC's charter schools. Nine new schools will open in Fall 2000. A total of 35 charter schools will serve 11,000 students. For more information visit <http://www.focus-d charter.org>.

KIPP Academy of Houston, Texas has seen several days in the spotlight. They were recognized on the floor of the Republican National Convention on Monday night and will be featured on a "60 Minutes" re-broadcast Sunday, August 6, 2000. Check your local listings for time.

* **SCHOOL CHOICE:** Scholarships, vouchers and more are hot topics in various states. In **Michigan**, two high-ranking officials voice their support of the Kids First! Yes! education reform ballot initiative, Proposal 1. Michigan Lieutenant Governor, Dick Posthumus publicly announced that he would be voting "yes" on the ballot initiative. Oklahoma Congressman J.C. Watts – the highest ranking African American member of the U.S. House of Representatives – visited Michigan and stated, "I believe that every child in America deserves an equal opportunity for a quality education." Just as these two men were singing the praises of choice, Administrators at Oakland, Kearsley, and Grand Haven (MI) public schools were found guilty of breaking the law for using public dollars and tax payer funded resources for urging parents not to support vouchers. (For more information about Proposal 1 call 888-330-KIDS.)

In **New Mexico**, the pressure to perform is on. New Mexico has a new public school rating

system, which according to a report from KOB-TV in Albuquerque may fuel the push for education vouchers. Nearly 100 schools will be put on probation for next year. This could very well be making way for plans of public school improvement and options for parents. Let's hope that New Mexico will learn from Florida and Cleveland that options are a win, win for children, parents and schools.

The Sunshine State is preparing for oral arguments being heard by the Court of Appeals in Tallahassee on August 16, 2000. A rally in support of **Florida's A+ Plan** is planned for the same day outside the courthouse steps.

* **TESTING:** A new survey from the Association of American Publishers (AAP) finds that a majority of parents support standardized testing but want to be better informed about how the scores are used. Following are some highlights of the survey results:

- 83% of parents said that standardized tests provided important information;
- 90% of parents said they want to be able to compare their children and the schools they attend with others;
- Counselors and Administrators were the least likely to say they learn about a child's progress from standardized tests.



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
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