

**MONTHLY LETTER TO FRIENDS OF  
THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
No. 3**

**JANUARY 5, 1994**

Dear Friends:

Happy New Year! 1994 is already shaping up to be a breakthrough year for education reform. With coordinated, concerted effort on all our parts, we may well see victories for reform in several states.

The line-up of hot spots follows, along with information about what's being dug up in state law books, a wish list of research projects for the reform movement, and other tidbits.

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**Just the Facts, Please**

A report issued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that provided country-by-country spending comparisons and other sundry facts was highly touted in the press, but some of the more salient facts were passed over. For example, in 1991, 2.6 percent of the U.S. workforce was comprised of teachers, while 2.9 percent were involved in education in non-teaching jobs. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the student-teacher ratio is only 15.2 for elementary schools and 15.5 for high schools, which falls right in the middle in comparison to other industrialized nations. The report is chock full of such factoids, and is a must for anyone who speaks, writes or thinks about the subject. We'll have a copy on hand just as soon as the government sends it.

**1994 Line-Up of Fruitful Choice Efforts**

- ***Arizona***

January 18 could mark the start of a special session of the Arizona legislature devoted to the Governor's education reform package. At the top of the agenda — with the backing of the Governor, both House and Senate leaders, and several members — is a school choice bill that would initiate a parental choice grant pilot program, as well as authorize charter schools. Locally, Jeff Flake of the Goldwater Institute is working with state leaders on pulling together a national SWAT team to help convince fence-sitting

## **School Choice**

We've just completed an action paper summarizing the private scholarship programs, which is enclosed along with two other briefs we've done to give an overview of key topics in education reform. In assessing the progress of private scholarships, one idea came to mind that may be worth considering as a provision for any future choice legislation.

In private scholarship programs helping thousands of children in states across the country, low-income parents are generally required to match the tuition scholarships they receive. This gives the purchasers a real stake, and as Chubb and Moe discovered, the consumer side of choice is what keeps schools accountable. The idea is to require any recipient of a choice grant to pay some additional amount toward his child's education. Even a small contribution of \$200.00 per year would be enough to secure this kind of stakeholder's allegiance to being involved, and ensure that choice works the way it is intended. If low-income parents are required to pay a certain amount (perhaps on a sliding scale), then you bypass some of the criticisms of such programs which contend that some parents aren't willing or aren't able to choose their child's school.

Why require anything? Well, most choice scholarships, while technically provided to the parents, are really held in the state coffers until the money is redeemed. As such, some say there is a risk that this might then be treated, or at least construed, as just another education entitlement. This is a controversial response, perhaps, but we think worth the discussion. Your thoughts?

## **Reform in the District of Columbia**

Superintendent of Public Schools Franklin Smith has become an enthusiast of contracting out with the private sector for management and educational services. The D.C. School Board recently toured several sites in Baltimore where Educational Alternatives, Inc., holds a contract with nine schools, and Smith reportedly is close to making a decision. In private, he has suggested that he is also interested in Charter Schools, as well as alternative certification (allowing professionals to skip the traditional route of teacher education to qualify for teaching positions).

Smith and the Board also let go all the teachers at three schools in D.C. and sought application from among all teachers to refill these vacant positions. All but ten teachers hired for each of the three schools were new, and the departing teachers were re-assigned to other schools where many are reportedly re-energized. This was an attempt to find motivated teachers whose choice in selecting where they work would have a positive effect on their teaching. If the results prove positive, this too could be a model for