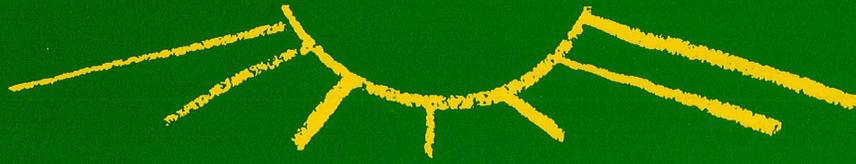


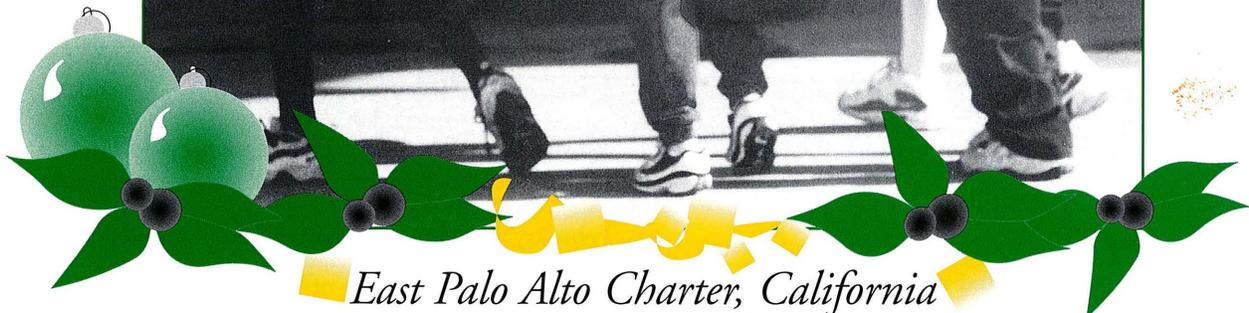
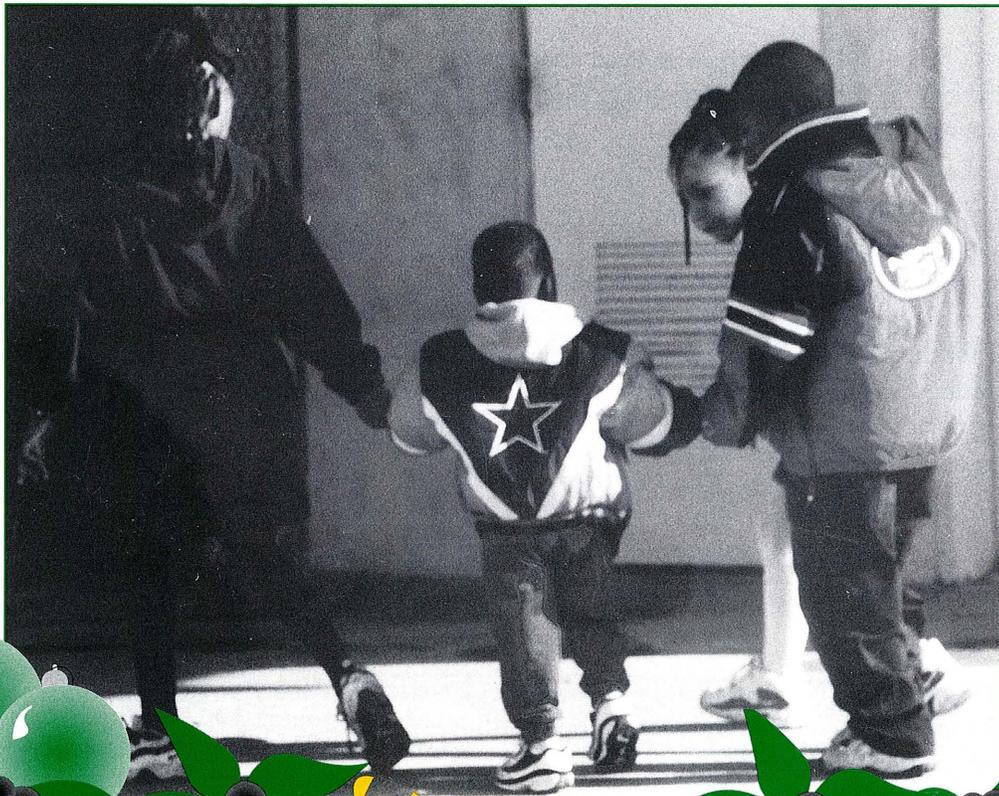
# THE Center for Education Reform



MONTHLY LETTER TO FRIENDS OF  
THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
No. 66

SPECIAL HOLIDAY ISSUE  
DECEMBER 2000 - JANUARY 2001

## *"A Little Help"*



Courtesy of Temp Keller, teacher

## FOR SEVEN YEARS, MAKING SCHOOLS WORK BETTER...

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# THE YEAR 2000 AT CER *Highlights*

The Center for Education Reform spent the year 2000 engaged deeply in reform efforts throughout the country. Whether in attendance at meetings, organizing conferences, growing and nurturing the “troops” through materials or technical assistance or engaging the media, CER is proud to note the following accomplishments:

## WHERE WE'VE BEEN...

...WITH OUR ACTIVITIES ON BEHALF OF REFORM

### February

“Charter Schools Today: Changing the Face of American Education” is released.

### March

“Twenty Questions for School Board Members,” released for local leaders and press in anticipation of the National School Boards Association convention.



Upon Florida judge ruling Florida's A+ Opportunity Scholarship program unconstitutional, CER swings into action: Filing Amicus brief opposing judicial ruling, Publishing op-ed pieces supporting the A+ Plan, Organizing grass-roots advocates for the A+ Plan, Conducting an advocacy tour of Haitian, African-American, and Jewish communities, and contributing to an extensive report on the positive effects of the A+ Plan on public schools.

### April

Filed an Amicus brief supporting the Cleveland, OH choice program.

### May

CER leads the way in promoting “National Charter Week” in Washington, DC with busloads of officials and press touring charters throughout the nation's capital.



“Charter School Laws Across the States” released analyzing strengths and weaknesses of all state charter laws.



Sixth Edition of the “National Charter School Directory,” issued, with more than 2,000 charter schools listed.

### June

*Parent Power!, Helping You Make Sense of Schooling Today* reaches more than 7,000 paid subscribers, and readership of 100,000.

### August

CER issues four weekly “Back to School” reports to news media, providing critical questions about the state of American education.

### September

CER issues third edition of “Nine Lies About School Choice: Answering the Critics.”



Annual CER “Leaders Forum” looks at how “Business Delivers Better Schools.”



5th Annual Education Leader's Council draws a record 400 education reformers.

### October

Released “The New Generation of Testing,” explaining importance of new standardized tests for increased academic achievement.



PBS premiere of “Charter Schools That Work,” produced with CER assistance. CER hosts “Dinner and a Movie” showings with charter school advocates in Maryland.



“Candidates Education Meter” offers 14 hard-hitting questions voters should ask their candidates.

### November

CER responds to charter opponents with release of “What the Research Says About Charter Schools,” analyzing more than 50 charter school studies showing the schools' positive results.

## ...AT MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE NATION

January 12: Children's Scholarship Foundation Conference, New York, NY

January 18: Public/Private Partnerships, Scottsdale, AZ

February 11: The Center for Market Based Education, Charter School Research Conference, Scottsdale, AZ

February 18: Arizona Charter School Conference, Tucson

February 24: University of Southern California, Miller Forum for Public Policy, Los Angeles, CA

February 25 – 26: Texas Charter School Conference

March 1: Georgia Public Policy Institute, Charter School Luncheon, Atlanta, GA

March 8: Harvard University, Kennedy School of Public Policy, “Charter Schools and Vouchers: An Overview”, Cambridge, MA

March 10: Michigan School Board Leader's Association 1st Anniversary Banquet, Lansing, MI

March 22: Hearing on school reform, Trenton, NJ

*continued on page 11*



# INTRODUCTION

## Center for Education Reform



Dear Friends:

December, 2000

And the winner is.....!

No, not the president. We were wrong last time when we ventured to say that you'd know the outcome of that race by the time you got *that* newsletter!

This time, when we say winner, we're talking about the winners of CER's grand, HOLIDAY salute. As we reflect on the year almost past, it strikes us that there are some incredible people who stand head and shoulders among a huge and growing pack of leaders. They struggle and toil daily to bring about reforms that diverge often from the easy, conventional path that most take.

Those exceptional winners run the gamut from people to groups to media and legislators (a different kind of "people!"). But they also represent the Center's renewed focus on developing and supporting the extensive grassroots and citizen leaders that we've long served, yet often go unrecognized.

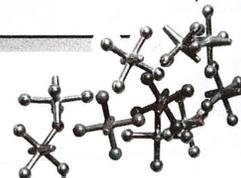
You'll also be treated to some highlights of important education reform events and the people involved in a variety of efforts, from local school board leaders to state chiefs to reform's entrepreneurs.

So grab some bubbly, turn the page and share with us in the Holiday spirit of giving these "winners" their due!

Enjoy this special edition of THE MONTHLY LETTER TO FRIENDS. And Happy Holidays, on behalf of all of your friends at The Center for Education Reform! May God bless you all,

Jeanne Allen

P.S. And by the way, no end of the year publication would be complete without our own request to tap into your spirit of giving (and end of the year tax write-offs)! After all, these winners count often on the Center's work for their efforts and together, we forge a pretty dynamic and forceful coalition for change.



# A TOAST TO SOME DYNAMIC

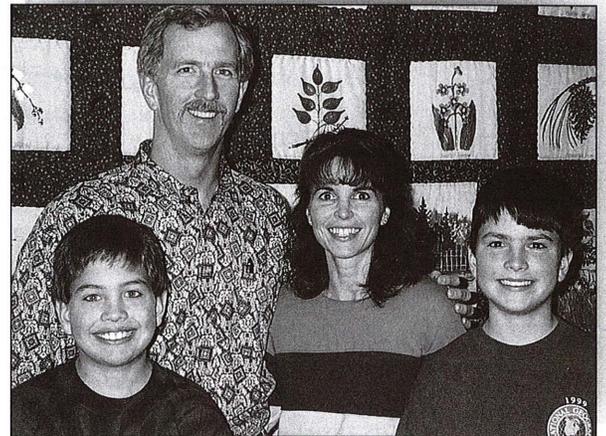


## NANCY AND TREY HAMILTON

When Nancy and Trey Hamilton became concerned that their kids were bored in school and needed harder math, weren't learning to read and couldn't really sound out words, never did they realize in a million years they'd become part of a storm much larger than they, and that they'd share the frustrations of millions of parents like them who decided to become warriors for reform.

They call themselves "Wyoming Warriors," and in their little town of Laramie, that's precisely what they are, with battle wounds to prove it. After they questioned the school officials and suggested the bar might be set too low, they began "to feel the anger of the

teachers. One of us was forbidden to serve on or even attend her school's school improvement committee by the principal because of her belief in classical, traditional education," say Nancy and Trey. So after a long road of attending meetings, trying to educate the district about options that exist and better curricula, they organized the dozens of parents who shared their frustrations, and in March this year, decided to propose what they'd been preaching as a charter school. After hundreds of hours, meetings and more, they're at a standstill. Wyoming's law is the only one in the nation that requires 12 district teacher signatures before they can present their proposal. But the teachers have been led to believe that the Snowy Range Charter School proposal would crush



Logan, Trey, Nancy and Travis Hamilton.

their district, and as in stories we've told here countless other times, they're seeking to break the misconceptions that abound in little Albany County. But Nancy and Trey will persevere, and know that "if parents do not work to change the system it will remain at status quo. We believe we can make a difference," they say. So do we. ✱



## PETE PETERS

It was a simple idea. Give schools in desperate need of help a chance to convert with some independence to



Pete Peters

a whole new school. After all, it has been tried successfully hundreds of times in other places, and even in nearby Springfield, Massachusetts, where a reform-minded superintendent there turned over a school to the SABIS Schools Network. It serves as a successful laboratory of innovation today. So never did Lovett "Pete" Peters dream in his wildest imagination, that even the intransigent education establishment would turn failing schools against a Million Dollar Deal. But that's what happened when Mr. Peters made his much-noticed offer to schools.

Founded this year, Peters' Save A Schools Foundation is devoted to helping lift public schools with an incentive: He said to six school districts with the worst 22 schools in the state, that if

they converted any of those failing schools into independent charter schools, if after five years they did not exceed the district average on statewide scores, they'd get a million bucks for the effort.

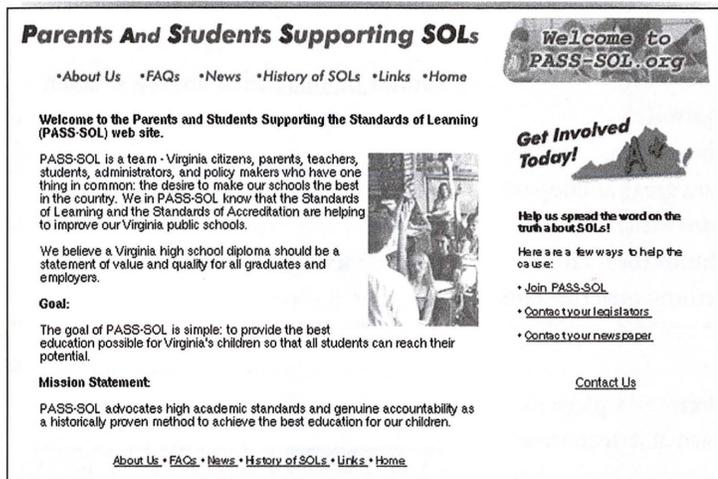
Sounds simple, and it is. It's appealing, too. So appealing that Georgia Governor Roy Barnes called to ask Mr. Peters if he'd make the same offer in the Peachtree State. But whether he does it there or elsewhere the question remains: isn't there one school in Boston who would venture out to create a new and different school with the goal of being to raise achievement for all students, and if not successful, would take the million dollars? Pete Peters, a successful business leader, might again be ahead of the curve. Only time will tell. ✱



# REFORMERS...

## PARENTS FOR STANDARDS

What happens when the public's desire for higher standards and accountable schools clashes with the establishment's fear of what standards might do? Well, take a look at Virginia for a case study



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Pass-SOL website. At the top, it says "Parents And Students Supporting SOLs" with navigation links for "About Us", "FAQs", "News", "History of SOLs", "Links", and "Home". Below this is a "Welcome to the Parents and Students Supporting the Standards of Learning (PASS-SOL) web site." section. A central image shows a group of people in a meeting. To the right, there's a "Welcome to PASS-SOL.org" banner and a "Get Involved Today!" graphic. Below that, it says "Help us spread the word on the truth about SOLs!" and lists ways to help: "Join PASS-SOL", "Contact your legislators", and "Contact your newspaper". A "Contact Us" link is at the bottom right. At the bottom of the page, there are more navigation links: "About Us", "FAQs", "News", "History of SOLs", "Links", and "Home".

*The Pass-SOL.org website*

on the consequences of state standards. It's hard to believe that after 6 years in existence, when 22 percent of schools have already met or exceeded tougher standards (up from only 7 percent last year) and the state's progress has been copied and used beyond its borders, that parents would have to mobilize to

keep the pressure on their legislature and to maintain high standards for their children.

But thankfully, parents are doing just that. Amidst the cry and chaos created by school officials and PTA leaders in opposition to

the State's Standards of Learning (SOLs), and the continual drum beat to water down the high standards, a group of parents fearing that schools would revert to low expectations decided to take on the establishment. They established PASS-SOL (Parents and Students Supporting SOLs) to advocate high academic standards and defend the state's efforts to bring them about. Joined by Fairfax County school board member Mychele Brickner — who as a parent is grateful for the SOLs — the group has spoken out at hearings held around the state, organized letter campaigns to the press and to state legislators, held public forums of their own, and become the authoritative voice for parents defending high academic standards. The "death of the standards" movement has been wildly exaggerated by defenders of the status quo, and this parent-based organization shows why. \*

## CORY BOOKER

We've been hearing a lot about someone lately that spends almost all his waking moments ... and resources ... on helping find solutions for impoverished minority citizens in Newark, NJ. Cory Booker is a man who, as the *NY Times* put it "could aim to own the world or save it." As an all-American high school football player, Stanford graduate and Rhodes scholar, he had the opportunity to make a profit on Wall Street, but instead chose to take on his party's establishment in a successful run for Newark City Council. And there, he has fought for his constituents not only for traditional public services but also by insisting on support for educational vouchers. As Booker puts it, "Only if

we return power to the parents can we find a way to fix the system." His work's been recognized on the front page of the *NY Times*, and he's also a part of a growing, critical network called the Black Alliance for Educational Opportunities (BAEO), which is growing chapters of people of color in communities nationwide that are devoted to real school reform and know that the only way for real equity is for choice to be available to all children, especially the poor.

Booker and BAEO are blazing new trails and demonstrating that the constituencies that most need good schools



*Cory Booker and friends.*

will not be silenced until they are available in plentiful supply to all. And options or choices need to be created today to make that happen. \*

# BUSINESS DELIVERS BETTER SCHOOLS, CER'S SECOND

A demonstration of the power of entrepreneurs in our goal of bringing about better schools for all children, CER hosted some of the nation's leading innovators in a discussion with Washington business leaders on their programs and the impact they can have together.



Don Shalvey

## Don Shalvey

CEO, *Aspire Public Schools, Inc.*

"Neil Simon in the *Goodbye Girl* said there's nothing worse than a hopeless romantic, and that's a hopeful one. I'm a thirty- four year public school educator and I could not be more hopeful about what we're doing in this country for public education."

We are, too, thanks to people like Don Shalvey. His own transition as a public school administrator to a reform entrepreneur came when he recognized that educational choice is key: That's why he founded Aspire, a not-for-profit charter school organization founded to enrich students lives and reshape public school systems by building 100 high performing charter schools across California.

"Schools have to fit kids," says Shalvey. "I asked myself a couple of questions. 'Do parents have a right to choose a school for their children?' Absolutely, yes. Where I live, school

choice is made every time parents buy a home... That school choice isn't necessarily extended to everyone in California. I believe it ought to be.

"Will school choice lead to school improvement? From the first charter school in California [which Don helped create] we've just noticed in the school district I left where all but one of the schools has converted to charter that the idea of providing some choice and competition matters. I think school choice does lead to school improvement.

"In the public policy arena... educators and the system are great at cooperation, we're great at consensus... but we're really lousy at innovation and change. It's not something governments do really well.

"We need *edumarkets*... a place in education where choice and accountability are the watch words. That's what we're attempting to do.

"I, as a school superintendent shouldn't be able to say, your youngsters should go; your youngsters should stay. That's an Old World way of viewing the world."



## Chris Whittle

CEO, *Edison Schools, Inc.*

"One of the things I think you're going to see in the decades ahead is a tremendous amount of diversity in how businesses and private organizations, non profit and for



Chris Whittle

profit, relate to public schools. One of the great things about competition is that there's not just one answer. There are many answers. I want to show you one."

Whittle was one of the first to take the arrows that often come with discovering new territory. Recognizing that schools might benefit from the models of scale that successful national businesses have found, Chris Whittle launched his private management organization of schools. "Buying power cannot be marshaled among smaller, cottage organizations." Thus Edison is striving to operate a national system of schools that serve the needs and demands of a growing number of families that feel their traditional local school is not optimal.

Edison Schools, Inc. now boasts 108 schools up and operating serving 57,000 children. They are in 45 cities in 21 states. Relative to school districts, Edison would rank at 60th in size (out of approximately 14,000). Whittle says they've learned many important lessons in their ten years. One is that "we tend to brush with broad strokes and there are indeed tens of thousands of good schools. But there are also tens of thousands of schools doing poorly, too. Those are the ones we tend to focus on. Our product is better public schools. When you say 'what does better mean,' if you can't demonstrate superior student achievement on whatever measure is being used in the locale that you're in, you're not better. That is one form of better.

"We think you've got to run every aspect of a school to make it great. What's the reading program, the math program, what is the discipline program, what's your technology program, what is your purchasing problem? It's no different than if you went to Marriott, they're thinking about it the



# ANNUAL LEADER'S FORUM

same way. We spent a decade pulling together what is a good school. We don't want a collection of great schools, we want a system of great schools."



**Connie Jones, Ph.D.**  
President, *The Core Knowledge Foundation*



Connie Jones

From structural changes to internal changes, Connie brings a slightly different perspective and different starting

point for school reform.

"We've taken the approach of actually starting with the plan, and when you start thinking about for an elementary and middle school, where should the starting point be? And we believe very firmly that that starting point ought to be what boys and girls are going to be able to do by the time they leave the school. Everything else in that school should revolve around and support that school and should support those efforts to improve teaching and learning."

Thus Core Knowledge was born, and Connie was originally the first Core Knowledge school principal. From the publication in 1987 of Cultural Literacy by E.D. Hirsch, people were fascinated with the list of what people should know. Some were critical of it's content, but it was the message that you learn new information based on what you already know," what they call the scaffolding effect. "There's no such thing as one shot learning," Connie says. "And unfortunately, if you look at the curriculums across this country, teachers

are expected to teach in isolation and with very little collaboration and very little discussion and what's important for them to learn, to build that scaffolding in later years.

"Core Knowledge is a set of content guidelines, with skills in reading and math, as well. With this plan of what you need for school, it has to be detailed. Teachers not only know what they're going to teach that year, but what was taught the year before and what's going to be taught the following year, so their teaching can fit into the big picture of trying to produce a total education for the child."

After ten years, Core Knowledge has three research studies to take to the bank that show the success of Core Knowledge schools. Dramatic achievement results are apparent, and in Oklahoma City, children in Core Knowledge versus non-Core Knowledge schools achieved at significantly higher rates.



**Kim Smith**  
Founding President, *New Schools Venture Fund, Inc.*

Question: What happens when you "smush together a venture capital fund and a foundation?" Answer: You get the New Schools Venture Fund. New Schools' mission is to improve public schools by supporting education entrepreneurs.

"Entrepreneurs are extremely visionary and passionate," says Kim. "They don't wait for opportunities but they act with a sense of urgency. Real entrepreneurs lead with a sense of integrity.

They lead people by inspiring them."

Kim helped found New Schools with leading venture capitalist John Doerr, with a vision to create a fund to draw what they learned from their business and contribute those lessons to the public education system. Their success is based on the access they had to quality education and "it doesn't make sense to them that we're not giving that quality education to everyone in this country. They can see the economic impact, and they bring a personal motivation to the table that it's just unfair that we're not doing a better job."

So New Schools takes a two pronged attack: Invest in programs and learn by doing, but also to create a network of new economy folks and

educators who believe that entrepreneurs could be a very important tool in improving public education, and Don Shalvey is part of that network and one of the entrepreneurs in the New Schools portfolio.



Kim Smith

New Schools is helping to build a better system and is already helping redefine the old business model and bringing the credibility of the new economy to the drive for real education reform. \*



*"Entrepreneurs are extremely visionary and passionate. They don't wait for opportunities but they act with a sense of urgency. Real entrepreneurs lead with a sense of integrity. They lead people by inspiring them."*

— KIM SMITH



# EDUCATION REFORM: THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

## THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EDUCATION LEADER'S COUNCIL

The sun was bright and the southwest surroundings contributed to the grandeur of this special event that joins state chiefs who are passionate about reform with their colleagues across the U.S. at federal, state and local levels.



*Keegan and Hickok*

While reform is aplenty, there are a few states that stand out as leaders across the reform spectrum. It just so happens that in most of those, there's a state school chief that has helped shape his/her state's educational progress. And not so coincidentally, they have joined forces in the Education Leader's Council, which represents thirty percent of the nation's school children.

Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Graham Keegan and Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Eugene (Wild Bill) Hickok (*pictured above*) preside over their respective states dynamic charter community and revolutionary standards and assessment programs. At the ELC conference this year in Phoenix, Keegan debated the merit pay issue arguing that if a teacher's students aren't improving, they shouldn't be in education. She commented that contract negotiations should be over student advancement, not lunchroom duty. ELC Chair

Hickok presided over the meeting and at one session, implored people

to focus on history in their state's curriculum, noting that "if a people are literate about their past, there is hope for their future."

The other ELC Chiefs are equally stellar individuals whose leadership shows that it's possible to buck the status quo and survive to tell about it. Coming from Texas just days after the barrage of attacks on the TAAS test, Texas Commissioner Jim Nelson commented that minority achievement is rising: "...From the inner cities of Houston to the barrios of El Paso — when you raise the standards, work with the schools, provide the teacher training, kids respond and do well.

"People may complain that the tests are stressful," he noted, "but let me tell you, being stupid is stressful."

Bill Moloney, the sage Colorado Commissioner of Education talked about the "manufactured backlash" against high standards, and pointed out the results of the recent nonpartisan Public Agenda survey that shows overwhelming support for high standards, with fully 82 percent of parents believing their schools have been "careful and reasonable" in implementing new standards.

Virginia's Secretary of Education, Will Bryant spoke of how students in Virginia had been unprepared and of the millions spent on remediation for college students. "Before 1995 we had no accountability," said Bryant, "so we tied the tests and accreditation to student achievement, and scores are now going up." Commissioner Linda Shrenko spoke of Georgia's kindergarten test that helps teachers understand their students' readiness to learn, and noted that the test helps catch students in danger of failing early, "rather than wait until 3rd grade to find out

that the student can't read and Mom and Dad have to pay for a tutor."

Florida's Lt. Governor Frank Brogan dissected the excuses of the education establishment for its failure to help children who need help the most.

Describing how educators argue that many children do not succeed based on their demographics, Brogan went through them one-by-one, concluding "Now we've cut out children of color, children who come to our shores speaking a different native tongue, children from single parent households and children who receive free and reduced lunches. Who does that leave? That leaves what I call the filet mignon.

Once you cut everything else away, the only children my colleagues want to be held accountable for are the children who have done well since the beginning of time."



*Brogan*

"Public education was created for everybody," Brogan declared. "We especially created public education to make certain all the children I just profiled had access to the same education that the children of the upper and middle class have always had access to. But the inflexible, intolerant, and rigid system of today that is two-fold — one for those who do well and one for those who don't — that system has got to go."

These "winners" are paving paths for reform, and as their ranks swell, so will the opportunities that are created by their efforts. \*



# THE SCHOOL BOARD NETWORK<sup>®</sup>

## UNITING LOCAL BOARD LEADERS FOR CHANGE

School board members that see past the parochial relationships that dominate so many school systems are rare, but not as rare as once might have been the case. So when CER convened a leadership group of school board members from around the country we were not surprised to learn of the dedication, courage and tenacity that these leaders have in pursuing what is often a lonely agenda.

More than a dozen leaders from throughout the country — representing rural, suburban, and urban districts — came to the same conclusions: That the reports they receive from the established education groups are all of one mind, and they want the kind of actionable, objective and authoritative information that helps them truly improve education in their districts.

Focusing on such issues as standards and accountability, governance, and curriculum, the school board leaders left determined to develop a system for local reformers to communicate with each other — from websites, to meetings, to research reports, to local training institutes.

Marjorie Egarian, a school board member from a small rural New Jersey district, ran for office with a like-minded friend in order to refocus her schools on the bottom line — achievement. She talked of the importance of gaining access to people with new and innovative ideas nationwide, and how

she could help bring lessons to others in her state.

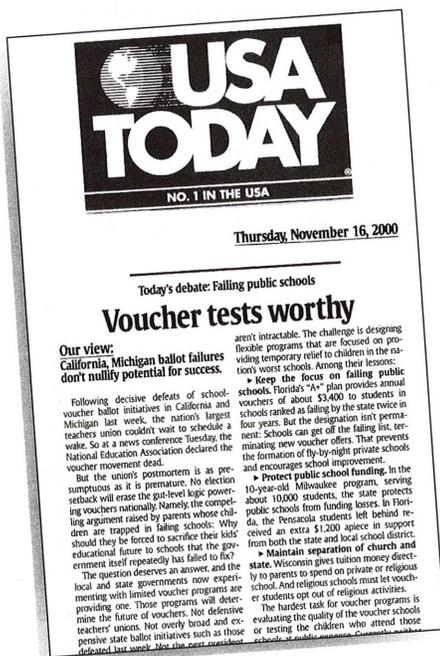
Others share the enthusiasm for a new national network, such as Lori Yaklin, whose new Michigan School Board Leaders



*School board members at work.*

Association is joining public, private and charter board members to crusade for reform. Notable local leaders who have benefited from their relationship with CER include Harriett Berlin of Nebraska, who first found us when she was looking for a reform-minded superintendent. Jim Sneeringer of Texas tired quickly of process-oriented discussions at traditional education meetings. Others in the new and emerging School Board Network<sup>®</sup> were anxious to connect with their colleagues from around the country. The fact that these individuals take the time daily to devote themselves to taking the path less followed is an important role model for us all and one for which we are indebted. ✨

## MEDIA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10



pointed out that some risks can be mitigated. Children with special needs could be given higher vouchers, for example.

Nondiscrimination could be a condition for participating schools. But no matter how you slice it, they argue, “to the many children losing out in the current system, some state-by-state experimentation might offer relief.”



USA Today's editorial page also ventured into previously forbidden and controversial territory to offer its support for voucher programs. “Local and state governments now experimenting with limited

ed voucher programs are providing one [answer]. Those programs will determine the future of vouchers. Not defensive teachers' unions. Not overly broad and expensive state ballot initiatives such as those defeated last week. Not the next president....A handful of ongoing voucher programs are demonstrating that these problems aren't intractable.

“... Vouchers should be used surgically. Not as an entitlement for all, but as a lifeline for children not receiving the education to which they are entitled.”

Cheers to the news media that “get it,” and get it right! ✨

# A TOAST TO THE MEDIA THAT "GET-IT."

Some in the media have called the public's attention to the inconsistencies in many a politician's rhetoric. NBC's Tim Russert, for example, took to task Vice President Gore in this fascinating exchange this summer:

**RUSSERT:** You mentioned vouchers tonight. There was quite an interesting exchange on it. Al Gore August 9 in Carthage, Tennessee—your hometown—If I was the parent of a child who went to an inner-city school that was failing, I might be for vouchers, too.

**GORE:** Yeah, yeah. I sa—and I said something like that tonight. If I thought there was no alternative, I might feel differently about vouchers. But, look, Tim, that's why I want to make the dramatic major improvement of our public schools our number-one priority. I'd budget for it. I shift money out of the lower-priority programs. This has to happen.

**RUSSERT:** Why not take just a small amount of money not out of the public schools, separate and above from the surplus...

**GORE:** Doesn't work that way.

**RUSSERT:** ...and—and let those poor parents—give them a chance?

**GORE:** Doesn't—do—doesn't work that way, Tim. Most communities set aside a certain amount for—I know you feel—I know you're in favor of vouchers.

**RUSSERT:** No. I—I have no view on it. I have no view.

**GORE:** Well—

**RUSSERT:** But—but I went to a private school, you went to a private school. Your children go to private school, mine goes to a private school.

**GORE:** All of my children went to both public school and private school. In most communities—

**RUSSERT:** Why—why not give—why not—as you said, If I—if I was a parent of a child who went to an inner-city school that was failing, I might be for vouchers, too. Why not give them a shot?

**GORE:** No, I didn't—that—that—you're—you're—you're—you're changing it just a little bit.

\*

Matthew Miller, a syndicated columnist for *Tribune Media Services* suggested some courageous approaches in his now nearly-famous *Atlantic Monthly* article a year ago. Rather than hold to their own ideologies, he recommended in one of his columns that both sides give a little. "If leading liberals are willing to question the public school monopoly, and prominent conservatives hear the call of justice, the voucher debate has a chance to move forward. The sensible first step would be a much bigger road test. Here's the idea I have put to various players in the debate: Suppose everyone came together and said, Let's take three or four big cities where we agree the public schools are failing. (Leave out dens of mismanagement like Newark and Washington, where spending is high but ineffective). In these cities, we'll raise per pupil spending by 20 percent giving urban schools the resources the left says they need... But we'll implement this increase by way of a universal voucher system that finally gives every child a choice." In other words, Miller says, why not both? Interestingly, choice proponents and conservatives said OK, but we're still waiting for him to find an affirmative among them in the Blob.

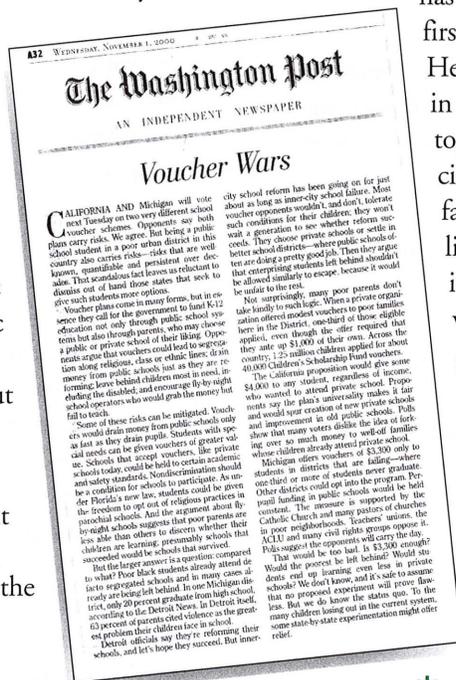
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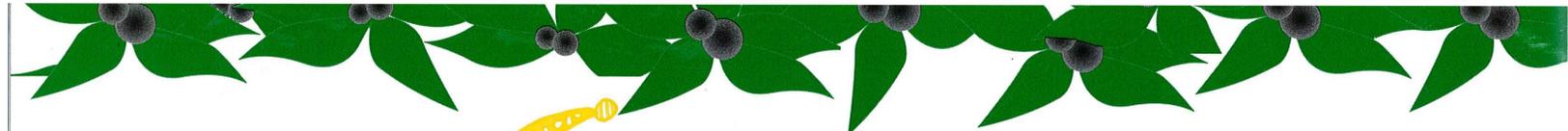
More cogent and intellectually open media arise every so often in the editorial pages of *The Washington Post*, which offered the sage wisdom chastising school boards in Virginia for not agreeing to accept charter applications, which that state's weak law allows them to do. *The Post* pointed out in its piece that "no system, no matter how successful, has a monopoly on good ideas. Agreeing to accept applications doesn't guarantee that any will show up or require a board to approve them if they do. It does send a clear message that boards are open to hearing from those who think they can improve on what's being offered..."

\*

On school choice, *The Washington Post* shocked observers when it proclaimed on November 1 its support for at least some experimentation with vouchers in the states. "Being a public school student in a poor urban district in this country also carries risks — risks that are well known, quantifiable and persistent over decades. That scandalous fact leaves us reluctant to dismiss out of hand those states that seek to give such students more options." *The Post* acknowledged the risks, but

*continued on page 9*





Dear Santa

Thank you for being so good to us all year. You may only come once a year, but the spirit you represent stays with us. This time of year, we are reminded that children are those that need all of our help the most. At this all-important time for reflection, family, friends and giving, please remember all our greatest desires.

Here is our own Christmas wish list. Could you give everyone a few extra goodies to remind them that we need their help, too? You're the best!

CER

## CER CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

- \* 1 Completely Staffed CER Partners Program, providing formal support and connections to grassroots groups nationwide. (Needed: \$40,000)
- \* 1 Leader's Forum to be held this spring to unite activists and citizen leaders to tell their stories to people in and around the Nation's Capital. (Needed: \$18,000)
- \* 1 Dozen trips to various cities to help build networks for reform. (Needed: \$12,000)
- \* 1 completely redesigned website to make life easier and make activism more possible for the thousands who visit each month. (Needed: \$120,000)
- \* 5,000 copies of our Charter School brochure to help explain the concept to those who still don't know what they are. (Needed: \$500)
- \* One Mailing, to 95,000 school board members, to help us identify who the real reformers are and who are simply defenders of the status quo. (Needed: \$83,600)
- \* Newer office equipment:
  - A new copying machine: \$5,000
  - New furniture, to accommodate a growing staff of professionals: \$1,500
  - New computers, to improve the effectiveness of new employees: \$2,400
  - A new fax machine, to reduce the wait for incoming and outbound faxes: \$800

THE Center for Education Reform



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