

The
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School Choice: 2006 Progress Report

The Heritage Foundation

"Backgrounder #1970"

By Dan Lips and Evan Feinberg

September 18, 2006

Reforms that give parents greater ability to choose their children's schools continue to expand across the nation. Just a decade ago, only a few school choice programs existed. Today, a dozen states and the District of Columbia have private school choice programs. In 2006, eight states— Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, and Wisconsin—enacted new school choice programs or expanded existing programs. By 2007, as many as 150,000 students will be participating in publicly funded tuition scholarship programs.[1]

As of August 2006:

- Seven states—Arizona, Florida, Maine, Ohio, Vermont, Utah, and Wisconsin—and the District of Columbia have taxpayer-funded scholarships to help students attend private elementary or secondary schools of choice;
- Seven states—Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island— have tax credits or deductions for education expenses, including private school tuition, or incentives for contributions to scholarship programs;
- Forty states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws;
- Public school choice within or between districts is guaranteed in 15 states;
- Dual enrollment programs[2] exist in 38 states, in 18 of which the programs are mandatory, to allow qualifying high school students to attend college classes to receive higher education credits; and
- Home schooling is legal in every state.[3]

The Heritage Foundation has put together a comprehensive study of the current school choice programs available in all fifty states. This is an excellent statistical tool for school choice research.

For complete article click here: <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Education/bg1970.cfm>

State Board of Education approves first merit pay plan

The Associated Press

Herald Tribune

October 17, 2006

TAMPA, Fla. -- The Florida State Board of Education on Tuesday approved the first performance-pay plan linked to a pool of \$147.5 million of state money that lawmakers set aside to reward outstanding teachers.

The board approved the plan submitted by Hillsborough County. Other counties must submit proposals by Dec. 31 to get access to the money, which was appropriated this year by the Florida Legislature. The state board is expecting applications from at least 75 other districts across the state to share the money.

Under the Special Teachers Are Rewarded, or STAR, program, a school district must develop a performance-pay plan that includes an evaluation component focused on the improvement of student learning.

Finally, teachers will be compensated for working hard and succeeding with their children. As long as the school districts structure their merit pay plans logically, the increased competition will ultimately lead to an increase in performance.

For complete article click here:

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061017/APN/610171325>

No excuses or short cuts at Atlanta charter school

CNN

By Audrey Schewe

October 5, 2006

(CNN) -- Students at the West Atlanta Young Scholars Academy in Atlanta, Georgia, are expected to go to college.

Known as KIPP WAYS, the school is one of the more than 50 "KIPP" public charter schools serving students from low-income urban and rural communities across the country. KIPP stands for Knowledge is Power Program.

Homerooms are named "Cornell," "University of Virginia," and "Clark Atlanta," after the teachers' alma maters. The school mascot is the "Scholar Dog" -- a diploma-holding, cap-wearing bulldog. Class banners denote each grade level to keep students focused on their goals.

In this article we see how, when done correctly, charter schools can be a model for traditional public schools. Their freedom from the bureaucratic red tape allows for efficiency and the ability to quickly correct areas which need improvement.

For complete article click here:

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/EDUCATION/10/02/kipp.ways/index.html>

For Math Students, Self-Esteem Might Not Equal High Scores U.S. Lags Behind Countries That Don't Emphasize Self-Regard

By Jay Mathews

Washington Post Staff Writer

October 18, 2006; Page A02

It is difficult to get through a day in an American school without hearing maxims such as these: "To succeed, you must believe in yourself," and "To teach, you must relate the subject to the lives of students."

But the Brookings Institution is reporting today that countries such as the United States that embrace self-esteem, joy and real-world relevance in learning mathematics are lagging behind others that don't promote all that self-regard.

Consider Korea and Japan.

According to the Washington think tank's annual Brown Center report on education, 6 percent of Korean eighth-graders surveyed expressed confidence in their math skills, compared with 39 percent of U.S. eighth-graders. But a respected international math assessment showed Koreans scoring far ahead of their peers in the United States, raising questions about the importance of self-esteem.

We have become so focused on the psychological "needs" of students it has caused us to stray from the reason they are in school to begin with—to learn. We keep creating too many excuses for why our children can't learn (ADD, ADHD, chronic allergies, too much TV, not enough sleep—you name it and it has probably been used) while at the same time working hard to build up their self-esteem to ensure they "feel" good. Maybe it's time to stop constantly hand-holding with our students and start setting higher goals and precedents for them to achieve.

For complete article click here:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/17/AR2006101701298.html>

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