

Education News – June 14-20, 2008



Middle Schools Tone Down Graduation Ceremonies

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-graduation20-2008jun20,0,2747979.story>

(Source: *The Los Angeles Times*, 6/20/08): Schools across the country are starting to shy away from elaborate middle school graduation ceremonies in order to discourage the viewpoint that completing middle school is going far enough in one's education. To detract from the impression of finality, schools are discontinuing the use of robes, titling the events "promotion" rather than "graduation" ceremonies, and encouraging parents to save the big celebrations for high school or college graduations.

Philadelphia Taking Back Six Privatized Schools

http://www.philly.com/inquirer/home_top_stories/20080619_Philadelphia_taking_back_6_privatized_schools.html

(Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6/19/08): Philadelphia education officials have voted to resume control of six of the 38 schools that have been run by outside managers ever since an historic privatization experiment was set in motion six years ago. The program's intent was to use privatization to turn around failing schools, but it has not proved a cure-all. The school board has told an additional 20 of the privately run schools that they have one year to improve or they will be taken over as well.

Islamic Academy Protested in Virginia

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/17/AR2008061702336.html>

(Source: *The Washington Post* 6/18/08): In Fairfax County, Virginia, more than a dozen people from the church lobbying group, Traditional Values Coalition, protested a private Islamic school. The protestors claim that the school teaches its students to hate others and commit violence, but an investigation by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors did not find any cause for concern.

Top Students Show Little Gains from 'No Child' Efforts

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/education/k12/baltimore.md.achieve18jun18,0,7786399.story>

(Source: *The Baltimore Sun*, 6/18/08): A new report from the Fordham Institute indicates that the best students are making the weakest gains on their test scores in the era of No Child Left Behind. The study raises the question as to whether educators are putting too much emphasis on the students that struggle most while leaving gifted students to stagnate intellectually.

Report Finds Little Gain from Vouchers in D.C. Schools

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/16/AR2008061602537.html>

(Source: *The Washington Post* 6/17/08) As a pioneer in the school choice movement, the D.C. public school system first awarded vouchers for its students to attend private schools as part of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program in 2004. However, a recent study by the Institute for Education Sciences has found that the students who participated in this program did not score better on reading or math tests when compared to their peers in public school. The initiative was begun during a Republican-led Congress, but now may be in jeopardy due to the lack of support among the current Democratic-led Congress, which argues that the program drains funds from D.C. public schools.

More Schools Trying Separation of the Sexes

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/14/AR2008061401869.html>

(Source: *The Washington Post* 6/16/08) In more and more public schools across the country, boys and girls are learning in separate classrooms. The initiative has met some success, particularly in one Virginia school, where teachers tailor their classrooms to benefit the distinct learning styles of girls and boys. However, there has also been some criticism of the idea, mostly by parents of female students who claim that separate classrooms could perpetuate age-old stereotypes that girls are not smart enough to be learning alongside boys.

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