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FLORIDA WELCOMES DISPLACED STUDENTS

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/pbcentral/content/local_news/epaper/2005/09/02/a24a_HURRIDD_0902.html

According to a report in the Palm Beach Post, Florida schools – from kindergarten through university level – will allow displaced Gulf Coast students to enroll in fall classes without transcripts or health records, and in some cases with IOUs for tuition.

Board of Governors Chairwoman Carolyn Roberts and Education Commissioner John Winn said Thursday that they want to provide an easier transition for students who may have lost records, along with their homes, to Hurricane Katrina.

The James Madison Institute would like to thank educators, administrators and parents who are working hard to accommodate the displaced students and who are contributing to the general relief effort for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

To follow the efforts of the Florida Department of Education and to find out how you can help, visit <http://www.firn.edu/doe/hurricane/>

AN OUNCE OF RETENTION

http://www.naplesnews.com/npdn/bonitanews/article/0,2071,NPDN_14894_4048938,00.html

According to one Lee County teacher, stopping social promotion at third grade could mean the difference between going to college and dropping out of high school. Cynthia Lott teaches a class designed for children who are repeating the third grade.

“I hear people talking about these poor kids that didn’t pass. Well, they need to be able to read,” she said.

What happens to underperforming students who are socially promoted?

They might be unprepared for high school and college. And by then, it may be too late.

According to high school Principal George Clover, many unprepared ninth graders have been socially promoted for many years. “A lot of students have been passed throughout the years, I believe, because they may have made an effort and are decent kids,” he said. “When you get to the high school level, things are different.”

In fact, according to the Naples Daily News, retention in ninth grade has little effect on slipping FCAT scores in secondary grades. While elementary age students have shown improvement every year in math and reading, middle and high school scores have been stagnant or even slipping.

FLORIDA'S NEW K-12 CHANCELLOR

http://www.sptimes.com/2005/08/31/State/She_s_no_stranger_to_.shtml

According to a report in the St. Petersburg Times, Cheri Yecke was named to the K-12 chancellor position left vacant when Jim Warford resigned in July. One of the top spots in Florida's education hierarchy, the chancellor reports to Education Commissioner John Winn and oversees standards for 160,000 teachers and 2.7 million students.

Yecke is expected to push Department of Education positions on middle school reform – she wrote a book on the issue, *The War Against Excellence* – and performance pay for teachers.

The Times also reported that Yecke is a former teacher; she has served as the top education official in both Minnesota and Virginia, and has directed teacher quality and school choice programs at the U.S. Department of Education.

Yecke has been a consistently strong advocate for high-stakes testing, school choice and accountability.

This is good news for school choice advocates who were also pleased this month to see the release of the National Governors Association's new study "Providing Quality Choice Options in Education."

According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, "This report states that governors are expanding education options to help exceed their statewide education goals. It also details school choice strategies being used to improve student achievement and raise graduation rates and reviews a variety of state choice policies."

To read OII's "Education Innovator #31," visit

<http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/innovator/2005/0829.html>

To read "Public Quality Choice Options in Education," visit

<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/EDUCATIONCHOICE.PDF>

EDITORIAL: WHY AREN'T PUBLIC SCHOOLS MORE LIKE UNIVERSITIES?

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,168107,00.html>

"There is widespread agreement that America has the best universities in the world. Foreign students enroll by the hundreds of thousands, and American college professors dominate the Nobel Prize lists.

“But virtually no one says we have the best K-12 education in the world. To the contrary, many lament the poor showing of American students on international tests. What makes American universities so much better than our primary and secondary schools?”

“While many factors are at work, much of the explanation can be summarized in two words: “privatization” and “markets.” About a third of four-year college students attend private institutions, and the proportion is growing. By contrast, only one-eighth of K-12 kids attend private schools.

“Moreover, even public universities are far more independent of the political process than K-12 schools. Public universities have greater ability to hire and fire staff, pay people on the basis of merit, change curricula, and face far less interference from obstructionist labor unions.

“These organizational differences are important. Countless academic studies show that kids learn better in private schools or in public schools that manage to remain independent of central bureaucracies. While there are exceptions, universities are more decentralized, more innovative, and less constrained by mindless rules and regulations like teacher certification requirements and class-size restrictions.”

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