DRIVING SCHOOL REFORM

HARVARD’S PROGRAM ON EDUCATION POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

2011 REPORT
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http://www.educationnext.org
Driving School Reform

Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) continues to have numerous opportunities to shape the direction of school reform. Its former research and postdoctoral fellows are staffing think tanks in Washington, D. C., and holding key positions at universities across the country. Its studies have been quoted in the halls of Congress and state legislatures, cited by judges in significant court cases, and reported in major media outlets. Its journal, *Education Next*, is thriving on its newly revamped website, reaching a dramatically larger audience than ever before. The number of *Education Next* Twitter followers grows steadily, and a new social networking website has been launched. Of all those engaged in school reform, *Education Next* was the first to have an application for the iPad.

Others blog, tweet, and network, of course. PEPG’s distinctive role is to provide high-quality research on critical issues that deserve national attention. A PEPG research fellow demonstrated that the constitutionally mandated class-size reduction in Florida did not yield educational benefits commensurate with its cost. PEPG researchers found that the United States ranks 31st in the world in turning out high school students who perform at the highest level in math, a finding that may help focus public attention on the educational needs of our very best students as well as those who have been left behind. The PEPG poll of public opinion revealed a slide in public satisfaction with the nation’s schools to an all-time low. Surprisingly, it also found a high—and growing—level of support for online learning.

Entering its 14th year, and celebrating the 10th anniversary of *Education Next*, Harvard’s PEPG is proud of its record and looks forward to continued growth and unbending commitment to a school reform mission it has had from its beginnings. In the pages that follow, we provide a snapshot of the many ways it has been helping to drive school reform.

PEPG’s distinctive role is to provide high-quality research on critical issues that deserve national attention.

—Paul E. Peterson
Harvard’s PEPG hosted a national conference on June 3-4, 2010 that examined the political, economic, and educational issues associated with teacher performance pay. The conference attracted over 100 participants and was covered by several media outlets, including the New York Times and the Washington Post.

In the opening session, Andrew Smarick of the Fordham Institute, now Deputy Commissioner of Education for the State of New Jersey, identified the surprising extent to which the Obama administration’s support for merit pay has gone well beyond anything the president indicated during his campaign for national office. In his comments on the paper, Roberto Rodriguez, Special Assistant to the President for Education on the Domestic Policy Council, agreed that the administration was searching for creative ways to promote needed school reforms.

**The Uncertain Impact of Merit Pay for Teachers**

Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance held a two-day conference on teacher merit pay. I remain convinced that Race to the Top was wise to include a push for merit pay, because it shakes up the compensation status quo, which is both rigid and replete with bonuses for things, like graduate degrees, that are statistically unrelated to student outcomes. The program brought incentives up for discussion, and no economist can really be against that.

Roberto Rodriguez (White House) said that the surprisingly robust merit pay policies of the Obama administration reflect growing divisions on this issue within the Democratic party.

**PEPG in the News**

**The New York Times**

The Uncertain Impact of Merit Pay for Teachers

By Edward L. Glaeser

Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance held a two-day conference on teacher merit pay. I remain convinced that Race to the Top was wise to include a push for merit pay, because it shakes up the compensation status quo, which is both rigid and replete with bonuses for things, like graduate degrees, that are statistically unrelated to student outcomes. The program brought incentives up for discussion, and no economist can really be against that.

**The Washington Post**

Study: N.Y. teacher performance pay program flops

By Valerie Strauss

A paper prepared by two Columbia University researchers for a recent education conference at Harvard University said that the New York City Bonus Program, which attempts to raise student achievement by paying teachers for it, was unsuccessful. Why shouldn’t student achievement be included in the evaluation and compensation of teachers?

**HARVARD Gazette**

The mystique of merit pay

By Colleen Walsh

Harvard Staff Writer, Wednesday, June 9, 2010

In a two-day seminar at Harvard last week (June 3-4), scholars, politicians, and educators gathered at Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) to discuss the value and feasibility of performance pay. The Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance at HKS organized the conference.
Among the Research Findings:

- Research on merit pay in 28 industrialized countries around the world found that students in countries with merit pay policies in place were performing at a level approximately one year’s worth of schooling higher on international math and science tests than students in countries without such policies.
- New York City’s merit pay plan rewarded all the teachers at schools that met the plan’s expectations. It proved effective at raising math scores in schools with relatively few teachers, but was not effective in either reading or math if the number of teachers at the school exceeded ten.
- Merit pay policies in a state in India show very substantial effects of a well-designed performance pay program.
- Neither academic credentials nor years of experience, after the initial few, are correlated with a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom.
- Merit pay programs are present in fewer than 5 percent of U.S. school districts.

Lesley Turner (Columbia University) found no benefits for students from incentives provided in New York City to all the teachers at a school, unless that school was small and had only a few teachers.

Lesley Turner (Columbia University) found no benefits for students from incentives provided in New York City to all the teachers at a school, unless that school was small and had only a few teachers.

L-R: Robert A. Schwartz (Harvard Graduate School of Education) listens to Ludger Wössmann (University of Munich) who found worldwide evidence of benefits from merit pay programs.

Dissemination of Findings

The Economics of Education Review has agreed to publish revised versions of six econometric papers from the conference in a special symposium issue on teacher merit pay. Papers have also been submitted for publication with Education Next, the Peabody Journal of Education, and the Journal of Labor Economics.

The conference agenda and all of the papers are available for free download at:

hks.harvard.edu/pepg/conferences/PTFP.html
Support for charter schools has remained reasonably steady over the last several years. Between 2008 and 2009, the portion of the public saying they favor charters fell from 42 percent to 39 percent, but that trend reversed in the past year, putting charter support at 44 percent in 2010.

Support for charters among African Americans rose from 44 percent in 2008 to 64 percent in 2010. Among Hispanics, levels of support grew from 37 to 47 over the three years (see figure, this page). These results come from the 2010 Education Next-PEPG Survey—the fourth survey of a representative sample of U.S. adults in as many years. Other results find growing support for online education and merit pay (see figures, p. 5) and decided opposition to guaranteeing tenure to teachers.

Apart from student and school accountability measures, Americans as a whole do not stand steadfastly behind any single reform proposal. Yet the most salient divisions appear to be within, not between, the political parties.

Complete results from all the surveys are available online at educationnext.org.

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**Education Next-PEPG in the News**

**African-Americans for Charter Schools**
By Paul E. Peterson and Martin R. West
For the past four years, Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance, together with the journal Education Next, has surveyed a nationally representative cross-section of some 3,000 Americans about a variety of education policy issues. In 2010, we included extra samples of public-school teachers and all those living in zip codes where a charter school is located.

**Teachers, public sharply divided on key issues**
By State House News Service
Teachers and the broader public are divided over issues such as merit pay for teachers, the federal Race to the Top program, and teacher tenure, according to new poll results.

**What the Public Thinks of Public Schools**
By Paul E. Peterson
According to the just released Education Next poll put out by the Hoover Institution, public assessment of schools has fallen to the lowest level recorded since Americans were first asked to grade schools in 1981.
In the Winter 2011 issue of Education Next, William G. Howell, Paul E. Peterson, and Martin R. West discuss key poll findings, including the surprising fact that, on education questions, there may be a “meeting of the minds.” Apart from their evaluations of teachers unions and their views on teacher tenure, those who identify themselves as Democrats and Republicans do not differ strongly on most education issues.

### Learning to Like the Internet

A majority of the public think high school students should get credit for online courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High school courses</th>
<th>Middle school courses</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>Should students get credit for online courses?</td>
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<tr>
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**Note:** Exact questions available at educationnext.org.
**Sources:** Education Next–PEPG Surveys 2009, 2010

### No Exceptions for Teachers

The public supports merit pay and opposes practices that guarantee teachers tenure.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Merit pay</th>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Exact questions available at educationnext.org.
**Sources:** Education Next–PEPG Surveys 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010

### TIME

**Charter Schools: The Good Ones Aren’t Flukes**

By Andrew J. Rotherham

When the education journal Education Next asked Americans some basic questions this summer about charter schools, such as whether they can charge tuition or hold religious services, fewer than 1 in 5 respondents knew the correct answer (which was no in both cases). The confusion is so pervasive that more than half of the teachers surveyed couldn’t answer the questions correctly either.

**Poll: Teachers, public split on school issues**

By Staci Hupp

More Americans than ever want to tie teacher salaries to their students’ state test scores, according to an annual survey completed for Harvard University and the journal Education Next.

**Obama must do better on charters**

By Jim Stergios

boston.com/community/blogs/rock_the_schoolhouse

**Spend more on education! No higher taxes!**

Would this survey be true for Richardson voters? By Jeffrey Weiss

richardsonblog.dallasnews.com

**Good Reading – Now With More Polls!**

eduwonk.com

Meeting of the minds on education By Joanne Jacobs

www.joannejacobs.com

The public’s views on public education

halmonitor.ohioblogs.com

**Merit Pay: Public support for merit pay growing, survey shows**

By Leslie Postal

blogs.orylionsentinel.com

‘Superman’ debate: Waiting for the teachers’ unions By Larry Sand

signonsandiego.com
Maintaining our innovative edge in the world depends importantly on developing a highly qualified cadre of scientists and engineers. To realize that objective requires a school system that produces students with advanced math and science skills. Unfortunately, 30 countries outrank the United States in this regard, a PEPG study reveals.

Eric Hanushek (Hoover, Stanford), Paul E. Peterson (Harvard University), and Ludger Woessmann (University of Munich) compared the percentage of U.S. students in the graduating Class of 2009 who were highly accomplished in mathematics in each of the 50 states to percentages of equally high-achieving students in 56 other countries. The study equated the performance of U.S. students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), administered by the U.S. Department of Education and generally known as the nation’s report card, with the performance of students in other countries on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

No state within the United States did as well as the top 15 countries in the world (see figure below). Results for many states are at a level equal to those of developing countries. Results cannot be attributed to the impact of the federal law, No Child Left Behind, as small gains have been detected since that law was enacted.

**Massachusetts and Minnesota were the highest ranking states, but even they were outranked by 16 and 18 countries, respectively.**

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**PEPG in the News**

*Your Child Left Behind*
By Amanda Ripley
Hanushek, along with Paul Peterson at Harvard and Ludger Woessmann at the University of Munich, looked at the American kids performing at the top of the charts on an international math test.

*Mass. Losing Ground in Math*
By James Vaznis
Just 11 percent of Massachusetts 12th-graders graduated with advanced math skills in 2009, less than half the rate of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea, according to the study sponsored by the journal *Education Next* and Harvard University’s Program on Education Policy and Governance.

*U.S. students not measuring up in math*
In a state-by-state analysis of the percentage of students performing at advanced levels, the study found most U.S. states rank closer to developing countries than to developed countries.

Utah lags behind 32 countries in advanced math
Thirty-two countries outperformed Utah when it came to the percentages of students scoring at advanced levels in math, according to a new report released today by *Education Next* in conjunction with Harvard University’s Program on Education Policy and Governance.
Radio Boston Rundown: Mass. Students Best of the Worst?
By Andrew Phelps
High-schoolers here surpass their peers nationwide in mathematics, according to a new study by the Kennedy School at Harvard. But Massachusetts students fall way behind their peers in at least a dozen European and Asian countries.

Even our best kids lag in math—middle schools to blame
By Jay Mathews
The study reveals that only 6 percent of U.S. eighth graders score at an accomplished level in math on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). As a test, PISA has its problems, but the authors link its results closely to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the most reliable American test of student achievement, and provide what looks to be a fair comparison.

Oregon, U.S. students lag behind in advanced math skills, study says
Kimberly Melton
About 7 percent of Oregon high school graduates have the advanced math skills to compete for top jobs in the global market, according to a national study released today. Oregon beat the U.S. average but trailed neighboring Washington and scored about the same as Lithuania.

American math achievement trails most industrialized nations
By Lisa M. Krieger
Fewer Math Students Seen at Advanced Level
By Erik W. Robelen

msnbc.msn.com
mercurynews.com
edweek.org

The Washington Post
The Oregonian

Education Next
The report was the cover story for the Winter 2011 issue of Education Next.

U.S. Math Performance in Global Perspective
How well does each state do at producing high-achieving students?
Eric A. Hanushek
Paul E. Peterson
Ludger Woessmann

Prepared under the auspices of:
Harvard's Program on Education Policy and Governance & Education Next Taubman Center for State and Local Government Harvard Kennedy School

No state within the United States did as well as the top 15 countries in the world.
Education Next Celebrates 10th Anniversary

As the journal enters its second decade, its reach and impact is greater than ever.

Milestones

2001
First Lady Laura Bush identified the critical importance of education for all Americans at a Washington, D.C., event that celebrates the appearance of Education Next’s first issue.

2002
Education Next available on newsstands and in bookstores nationwide.

2004
Mainstream media campaign begins.

2006
Education Next cited as most influential school reform journal in an independent survey that ranked the influence of various individuals, organizations, and news outlets.

2007
Introduction of Education Next-PEPG annual poll.

2009
EducationNext New website provides blogs, videos, audio podcasts, and reader commentary. Print version of journal available in full color.

2010
On website, MyEdnext page facilitates social networking. Journal available on iPhone and iPad applications.

2011
On website, Edfacts provides readers with a place to discover key facts about America’s schools.

Education Next in the News

Study: NYC Middle Schools Need Improvement
New York City's middle schools aren’t making the grade, at least according to a new Columbia University study (Education Next, Fall 2010).

Researchers said standalone middle schools do a worse job educating students than schools offering kindergarten through eighth grade under one roof.

Middle Schools Failing
By Yoav Gonen
By the eighth grade, a student who attends a kindergarten-through-eighth-grade school scores, on average, 7 percentage points higher in math and 5 points better in reading than a student who attends a regular middle school -- even though they scored equally in third grade. “We find the consequences of attending a middle school for student achievement to be substantial and troubling,” concluded a report by Columbia Graduate School of Business researchers Jonah Rockoff and Benjamin Lockwood.

Teachers, public sharply divided on key issues
By State House News Service
The results of the fourth annual survey conducted for Harvard University’s Program on Education Policy and Governance and the journal Education Next were released yesterday. The national poll provides “strong evidence... that most Americans support merit pay for teachers, while teachers oppose the policy by a large margin.”

February 2010:
Citing Ednext research article on charter high schools (Unknown World of Charter High Schools), Caprice Young (President and CEO, KC Distance Learning at Knowledge Universe) testifies at House Education and Labor Committee hearing on H.R. 4330, the All Students Achieving through Reform Act of 2009.
Education Next’s presence on the web has shifted sharply upward since website was relaunched

**The Oregonian**

Education funding: We’re dancing the Prosperity-to-Hysteria Two-Step
by George Will

Although the public education lobby’s cry of “Parsimony!” is not much of an argument, it is persuasive to Democrats comfortable in a relationship of co-dependency with teachers unions. But before Congress is stampeded into spending yet more (borrowed) billions, it should read “The Phony Funding Crisis” in the journal Education Next magazine by James W. Guthrie, a professor at Southern Methodist University, and Arthur Peng, a research associate.

**Education Week**

Stimulus Rules on ‘Turnarounds’ Shift
By Lesli A. Maxwell

In a recent article in Education Next magazine, he argued that the best way to turn around the thousands of schools deemed to be failing under the NCLB law is to close them and replace them with new, better options.

**St. Petersburg Times**

Don’t cut back on online courses, Florida Virtual School supporters say
By Jeffrey S. Solochek

Researchers, too, view Florida’s system as a model because it offers unprecedented access to a wide range of courses and has grown steadily without incurring the political sparring other education changes have created.

“When I talk to people in other states (about online education), they say, ‘We want to be like Florida,’” said Tucker, who wrote about Florida Virtual for the cover of the influential magazine Education Next. “Yet Florida doesn’t. That’s the irony of the whole thing, isn’t it?”

**The Wall Street Journal**

The Turnaround Myth

In any event, the reasonable conclusion is that children would be better served by closing these schools and starting new ones.

In a recent article for Education Next magazine, Andy Smarick of the American Enterprise Institute notes that the most successful urban school models are run by charter organizations—KIPP, Achievement First, Aspire—that specialize in starting new schools.

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### Education Next

**Launch of new website design**

- **Pageviews**
- **Unique Visitors**
- **All Visits**

**Pageviews**

- **All Visits**
- **Unique Visitors**

**Thousands**

- **Pageviews**
- **Unique Visitors**
- **All Visits**

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**Pageviews**

- **All Visits**
- **Unique Visitors**
- **All Visits**

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**Pageviews**

- **All Visits**
- **Unique Visitors**
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**Thousands**

- **Pageviews**
- **Unique Visitors**
- **All Visits**

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**Pageviews**

- **All Visits**
- **Unique Visitors**
- **All Visits**

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In Horne v. Flores, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Arizona school and state officials in a complex dispute over the adequacy of English language instruction in the state’s schools. In the published opinion of the Court (p. 36), the Court cites work by Matthew Springer and James Guthrie that was presented at a PEPG conference and published in the volume edited by Martin R. West and Paul E. Peterson, School Money Trials (Brookings 2007). The case was decided June 25, 2009.

Springer and Guthrie found that professional consultants who testified that schools were inadequately funded often had a stake in the outcome of the decision.
Shaping Opinions

Informing Citizens Through Op-eds and Commentaries

March 16th, 2010
By PAUL E. PETERSON

On Saturday, President Obama delivered a radio address on education and he didn’t shrink from saying that American high school students are trailing international averages. He sketched out details of a bill his administration is now pushing to revise the No Child Left Behind Act. Kane and his colleagues found that teachers who were alternatively certified were no less effective than those that had been traditionally certified. It was argued and submitted February 11, 2009. The case was decided in favor of the defendant, July 23, 2009.
Parents grade their local schools on the basis of student achievement, not the racial composition of the school, this study found.

The analysis also debunks the popular belief that low-income, minority, and less-educated parents are not as informed about school quality.

Both parents and the general public, however, do give lower grades to schools with a high percentage of students from poor families.

The peer-reviewed study was the first to compare Americans’ subjective ratings of local schools to actual data on student achievement at the same schools. The analysis reveals that citizen ratings of local schools reflect publicly available information on the level of student achievement at those schools.

— Education Next, Fall 2010

### Judging Schools

The public in general, and, even more, parents in particular, give higher grades to local schools where students score high on state tests. They also give higher grades to schools with fewer students who are poor. Neither parents nor the general public evaluate schools based on racial or ethnic composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors affecting citizen evaluations of local schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% proficient in math and reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effect on grade given school (percent of A or better grade)**

- Citizens
- Parents

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**Fellows in the News**

Fellows (recent and present), back row: Guido Schwerdt, Matthew Chingos, Omar Wasow

Front row: Martina Viarengo, Carlos Xabel Lastra-Anadón, Elena Llaudet, and Daniel Nadler
State Standards Rise in Reading, Fall in Math

By Paul E. Peterson and Carlos Xabel Lastra-Anadón

A PEPG report rates each state’s proficiency standards and finds that Race to the Top (RttT) winners Delaware and Tennessee get a ‘C’ and an ‘F’, respectively, raising questions about standards set by RttT winners.

Researchers Peterson and Lastra-Anadón show that standards in most states remain far below those of the proficiency standard set by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

In more encouraging findings, the analysis reveals that despite widespread perceptions that state standards are falling nationwide, they are rising noticeably in reading. Math continues to suffer, however, with declining standards.

– Education Next, Fall 2010

Strength of State Proficiency Standards, 2009 (Figure 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>4th Grade Reading</th>
<th>8th Grade Reading</th>
<th>Overall Average</th>
<th>Percentage Change in Ranking 2003 to 2009</th>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
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NOTE: “*” indicates that data for this state are not available for 2003, so the percentile change is from 2005 to 2009. “New” indicates that data for this state are not available for 2003 or 2005, and we cannot calculate the percentile change from either year. No grade means that either state scores or NAEP results were unavailable. Letter grades in colored type indicate improvement by a full letter grade or more from 2007.

SOURCE: Author calculations based on state tests and NAEP.
Postdoctoral fellow Matthew M. Chingos found that Florida’s constitutional amendment, which forced districts to use state funds for class reduction unless they had already reduced class sizes to an acceptable level, had no impact on average student performance. Students in schools where districts were not forced to spend their money on class-size reduction improved as much on state tests as those attending schools in districts subject to the constitutional mandate. The study also found no significantly different impact on the average performance of ethnic and racial groups or between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students.

The class-size amendment is estimated to have cost about $20 billion over the first eight years of the program and $4 billion per year subsequently. In November 2010, 55 percent of Florida’s voters voted to give school districts more flexibility in setting class size at their schools. The constitutional requirement remained unchanged, however, as the Florida Constitution now requires that 60 percent of voters approve any proposed amendment.

**Florida’s class-size reduction mandate did not improve student achievement**

**Matthew M. Chingos presents his class-size research at a PEPG Colloquia.**

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**PEPG in the News**

**Class sizes are getting bigger, but does it really matter**

By Tamara Henry

The Hechinger Report

Conventional wisdom says the smaller the classes, the better the education, because teachers can pay more attention to each child. But while smaller classes are popular, decades of research has found that the relationship between class size and student outcomes is murky.

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**Florida Mandates Classroom Size Reduction**

By Vanessa de la Vina

“My looks like this hugely expensive policy had little or no effect on student achievement,” Matthew Chingos, a research fellow at the Harvard program, told ABCNews.com.

Chingos went on to explain the study does not say reducing class sizes in general has no effect. He said it just shows reducing class size with such tight resources is not the solution to improving education.

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**Study shows no effect from Fla. class size cuts**

A new Harvard University study says Florida’s class size amendment has had no discernible effect on student achievement.

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**Class size debate heats up: Is it working? Is it worth it?**

By Ron Matus

A Harvard think tank concludes in a study being released today that despite a multibillion-dollar price tag, the 2002 state constitutional amendment to reduce class sizes has had little impact on student test scores.
From Schoolhouse to Courthouse:
The Judiciary’s Role in American Education
by Joshua M. Dunn and Martin R. West
Brookings Institution Press / Fordham Institute, 2010

“No one wishes to substitute courts for school boards, or turn the judge’s chambers into the principal’s office,” Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer once observed. This volume, which examines the judiciary’s influence on matters ranging from desegregation to school choice and from special education to school finance, demonstrates why.

Saving Schools:
From Horace Mann to Virtual Learning by Paul Peterson
Harvard University Press, 2010

This book is a masterpiece — carefully constructed and engagingly written. In one volume Peterson gives us a portrait of schools as they have come to be, and as they soon will be as technology brings to each student a virtual little red school house, custom-constructed to each one’s needs.”

— Clayton Christensen, Professor, Harvard Business School and author, Disrupting Class

Paul E. Peterson has written a deep and rich history of public education in America and the people and forces that shaped it. He brings together policy, research, and political issues with genuine sophistication and hard-edged thinking. He believes we’re finally poised for a big step forward, using technology to customize the learning experience and empower both students and their families.”

— Joel Klein, Chancellor, New York City Department of Education

Book Reviews

Book Report: ‘From Schoolhouse to Courthouse’
By Mark Walsh

I would heartily recommend the book for anyone with an interest in school law: professors, practicing attorneys, education students, administrators, policymakers, and the most interested teachers and parents (as well as students). It might be nice if a few federal judges or Supreme Court justices, or at least their law clerks, got their hands on the volume, too.

History of school reform offers glimmers of hope
By Laura Impellizzeri

Education reformers have left the essential teacher-pupil relationship untouched for more than a century, fighting instead for changes outside the classroom: desegregation, teacher pay hikes, funding equality, increased testing, vouchers and changes in curriculum.

Harvard University government professor Paul Peterson argues that although many of those efforts have been well-intentioned, even noble, American schools haven’t kept pace with changes in society. And they’re just not very good.

The Optimist
By Marcus A. Winters
In Saving Schools, Harvard’s Paul Peterson tells us that America’s road to public-school ruin was, naturally, paved with good intentions. Peterson chronicles the history of America’s public schools through the lives of the six titans of education policy—Horace Mann, John Dewey, Martin Luther King, Jr., Albert Shanker, William Bennett, and James Coleman.

Software’s pull on hard-to-reach teens
By Charles Murray
In his new book, Saving Schools, Harvard’s Paul Peterson gives a detailed description of how such schools operate, using Florida Virtual School near Orlando as a case study. The short story is that virtual education works and is getting better and better as technology advances.
PEPG Friends

Paul E. Peterson and New York mayor Michael Bloomberg exchange thoughts on the book Saving Schools.

Former Washington, D.C., chancellor of schools Michelle Rhee speaks with Paul E. Peterson about the Education Next profile of her that ran in the Winter 2010 issue.

Jeb Bush, chair of the PEPG advisory committee, performs work for the committee while Antonio Wendland, PEPG associate director, looks on during Bush’s week-long stay at Harvard’s Kennedy School during the fall of 2010.

PEPG Seminars

Education Policy Colloquia Series 2010

The PEPG Education Policy Colloquia Series was initiated in the spring of 2004 to foster an interest in education research within the Harvard community and for students in training at the Program by inviting top scholars from across the country to present their recent research findings in an open discussion with colloquia attendees. All events are free and open to the public.

Meeting of the Minds? Results from the 2010 Education Next-PEPG Survey of Public Opinion. Martin R. West, Deputy Director of PEPG and Assistant Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education

What’s it All About, Arne? Grover “Russ” Whitehurst, Director, Brown Center on Education Policy, The Brookings Institution

What’s In a Name? No Child Left Behind and Today’s Teachable Moment. Margaret Spellings, Harvard University IOP Fellow and Former Secretary of Education

Doubling Up: Remedial Algebra and Student Outcomes. Josh Goodman, Assistant Professor of Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School


The Impact of a Universal Class-Size Reduction Policy: Evidence from Florida’s Statewide Mandate. Matthew Chingos, Research Fellow, Program on Education Policy and Governance

Interest Group Influence in School Board Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment? Christopher R. Berry, Assistant Professor, The Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago

Citizen Perceptions of Government Service Quality: Evidence from Public Schools. Martin R. West, Deputy Director of PEPG and Assistant Professor of Education Harvard Graduate School of Education

U.S. Math Performance in Global Perspective. Paul E. Peterson, Director of PEPG and Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government, Harvard University
PEPG Fellows and Alumni

Matthew Chingos
Post Doctoral Fellow in residence September 2010 to June 2011. Matt received his PhD (2010) in Government from Harvard University. Starting in 2011 he will also be a Fellow in Governance Studies at the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution.

Guido Schwerdt
Post Doctoral Fellow in residence September 2010 to June 2011. Guido comes from the Ifö Institute for Economic Research, where he served as a staff economist and affiliated to the University of Munich. He received his PhD (2007) in Economics, European University Institute, Florence, Italy.

PEPG 09-01: “School Competition and Statewide Mandate.”

PEPG 10-08: “It’s Easier to Pick a Good Teacher than to Train One. Familiar and New Results on the Correlates of Teacher Effectiveness.”


PEPG 10-02: “Do More Effective Teachers Earn More Outside of the Classroom?”

Martin R. West
“Citizen Perceptions of Government Service Quality: Evidence from Public Schools,” with Michael Henderson and Martin R. West

Guido Schwerdt
“Promotion and Reassignment in Public School Districts: How Do Schools Respond to Differences in Teacher Effectiveness?”

with Martin R. West

Guido Schwerdt

Research Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School

“State Standards Rise in Reading, Fall in Math”


Elena Llaudet
Research Fellow and PhD candidate, Harvard University

“Did the Rise of Crack Cocaine Increase Dropouts?”

with Elke Lüdemann and Martin R. West

PEPG 10-05: “Public Opinion on Merit Pay: Self Interest vs. Symbolic Politics”

with William G. Howell

PEPG 09-06: “Information and Exit: Do Accountability Ratings Help Families Choose Schools?”

The Alumni

Christopher Berry – Assistant Professor, The University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy.

David Campbell – John Cardinal O’Hara, C.S.C. Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame.


Matthew Chingos – Brookings Research Fellow in Governance Studies, Brookings Institution and Post Doctoral Fellow, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University.

Jay Greene – Professor and 21st Century Endowed Chair, Head of the Department of Education Reform, College of Education and Health Professions, University of Arkansas.

Bryan Hassel – Co-Founder and Co-Director, Public Impact.

Frederick Hess – Resident Scholar and Director of Education Policy Studies.

William Howell – Sydney Stein Professor in American Politics in the Harris School, co-director of the Program on Political Institutions, and a professor in the Department of Political Science and the College, University of Chicago.

Marc R. West – Assistant Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education. Deputy Director, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University, Executive Editor, Education Next.

Patrick Wolf – Professor and 21st Century Endowed Chair in School Choice in the Department of Education Reform, College of Education and Health Professions, University of Arkansas.

Kenneth Wong – Department Chair, The Walter and Leonore Annenberg Professor in Education Policy; Professor of Political Science, Public Policy, and Urban Studies; Director of Urban Education Policy Program, Brown University.
DRIVING SCHOOL REFORM