

June 9, 1997

**FOR RELEASE: 11 AM June 10**  
**CONTACT: Janet Bass 202/879-4458**

**Statement by Sandra Feldman**  
**President, American Federation of Teachers**  
**on results of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS)**  
**for fourth-graders**

(additional info on the TIMMS study)

Public-school bashers, take note: there's good news here about American students, American teachers, and American public schools. The TIMSS study of fourth-graders shows that our students perform above the international average in math and science when compared to their peers in 26 nations. Our youngsters are mastering the basics, and the challenge now is to take more of them beyond the basics.

Scores for our students drop in eighth grade, and we need to figure out why. One explanation is that we spend too much time repeating basic material, instead of adding more demanding topics, as our international competitors do. Another factor might be class size. Internationally, the data on how class size affects learning present a very mixed picture. But in the U.S., class size matters. A recent study by the Educational Testing Service, "When Money Matters," shows that small class size is directly related to student achievement in math for fourth and eighth graders. The effect is even more dramatic for low-income students.

We still have a lot of work to do to get to where we want our students to be. And that's at the top, not just "above average." TIMSS shows what we need to do: stay the course with standards. A rigorous, focused curriculum based on high standards must follow students as they progress through elementary, middle and high school. Instead of toying with vouchers and other education fads, legislatures and school districts should work on raising standards and improving discipline -- a common-sense approach that will push more of our youngsters to world-class levels of achievement.

*The American Federation of Teachers represents 940,000 teachers, school support staff, higher education faculty and staff, healthcare professionals, and state and local government employees. AFT's Lessons for Life campaign seeks to make high standards for achievement and conduct a reality in every public school.*

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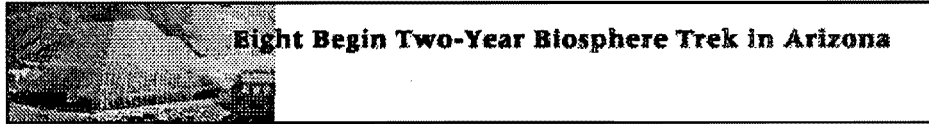
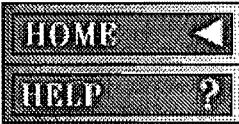
◀ [Back to Previous AFT Press Releases](#)

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The Boston Globe boston.com

## Metro | Region

### US students lagging by 8th grade, tests show

#### LOTTERY

Daily

8734 (Tue)

Mass Millions

2,8,15,17,37,44

Bonus: 16 (Mon)

Megabucks

6,21,24,37,39,40 (Sat)

By Kate Zernike, Globe Staff, 06/11/97

The largest comparison of students from around the world provided strong new arguments yesterday for the movement toward tougher national standards and tests.

For while fourth graders from the United States scored at or near the top of the international heap in science and math, US eighth graders in the same study ranked lower against their foreign peers.

Lottery information courtesy [Interlotto](#)

The key to the contrast, researchers said, is the difference in what's taught in US and international schools in the grades in between.

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While US students are often still learning arithmetic and basic science in middle and junior high school, their international counterparts have moved on to algebra and geometry, chemistry and physics, courses often dictated by national standards.

Students in countries that scored better than the United States in eighth grade face tough exams around that grade, exams that often determine whether they will attend university and the nature of their careers.

#### Table of Contents



The test results of the [Third International Math and Science Study](#) coincide with a movement by President Clinton, and by Massachusetts and other states, to institute graduation exams and tougher standards of what students need to know to leave high school. The movement has been opposed by teachers who complain that standards are too prescriptive. Parents have successfully sued states for denying diplomas to students who fail tests.

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Yesterday's results, however, suggested that such tests and standards are the key to boosting achievement.

## Sections

PAGE ONE

NATION | WORLD

METRO | REGION

BUSINESS

SPORTS

LIVING | ARTS

EDITORIALS

COLUMNS

CALENDAR

CLASSIFIEDS

“There's not the same focus and motivation for eighth graders in the United States as there is in other countries,” said Michael Martin, deputy director of the international study and a professor at Boston College, which did the research. “Having tests by itself isn't going to do anything. It's the consequences of those tests that are the important thing in other countries.”

By contrast, researchers found that class size, television watching, homework, and time in school made no difference in boosting scores. Japanese students watched as much television as US students, had larger class sizes, and spent less time in school, even when accounting for after-school Japanese “cram” schools. Students in four out of seven of the countries that outperformed the United States in math spend less time in class per week than the international average, and far less than the United States.

“Some of these easy answers aren't at the heart of it,” said Pascal D. Forgione Jr., US commissioner of education statistics.

Hailing the fourth-grade results at a Rose Garden press conference, Clinton used them to reinforce his call for standards. US Education Secretary Richard W. Riley emphasized the need for such standards in the middle grades, which he acknowledged are a “weak link.”

The study looked at the same test taken by about 500,000 students in 26 countries, whose schools were randomly selected from communities that offered a good balance of social and economic factors. The study also included questions about influences on learning such as TV watching, homework, class size, and teacher preparation.

Results for eighth graders in the same study were released in November. Both sets of students, as well as a group of 12th graders whose results will be released in 1998, took the test in 1995.

US fourth graders scored above the international average in both math and science. Singapore and Korea scored highest in math, with Japan, Hong Kong and the Czech Republic also doing significantly better than the United States. In science, only Korea outperformed the United States. While Ireland had a slightly higher score in math and Japan a slightly higher score in science than the United States, the differences were so small that statisticians consider the scores the same.

But US eighth graders scored below the international average in math, and behind several nations in science. In other countries, there generally was not the same difference between fourth and eighth graders: Nine of the 12 countries that performed above average in math in fourth grade also did so in eighth. Eight out of 12 performing well in fourth grade science also performed well in eighth grade science.

Eighteen of the 26 countries in the study have a national curriculum. Researchers suggested this was where to look for answers about the gap between US fourth and eighth graders.

"The topics introduced to our eighth graders are topics that are mastered by the rest of the high-performing countries in the seventh grade," Forgione said. "We need to make sure our kids are doing algebra and other higher math in middle school."

Only 19 percent of US eighth graders had taken algebra in 1992, according to an Education Week study earlier this year. About 31 states are writing standards of what students need to know, according to Education Week, and 14 states have graduation tests.

But researchers from the study released yesterday also sounded a note of caution about how to draft such standards. Eighth graders in the United States, they said, are asked to learn too many topics, so teachers can't spend too much time on any one. In other countries, they teach tougher but fewer concepts. "We need to have rigor, and focus," Forgione said.

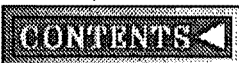
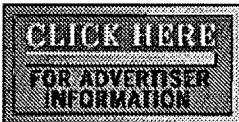
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Previous Story: [Flood Victims Urge Congress to Provide Relief](#)

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**Tuesday June 10 2:42 PM EDT**

## **Clinton Hails Reports of Better U.S. Education**

By Steve Holland

WASHINGTON (Reuter) - After years of embarrassing test scores, President Clinton Tuesday hailed new evidence that American schoolchildren are performing above the international average in math and science.

"Today is a good day for American education," he told a ceremony in the sunny Rose Garden where he announced results of the Third International Math and Science Study. The private study said U.S. students scored above the international average science score and U.S. fourth-graders -- 9-year-olds -- were outperformed only by students in South Korea.

It said that in math U.S. students averaged above the international norm and only students in Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Austria performed better.

Clinton, Education Secretary Richard Riley and other senior officials were quick to seize on the results as an indication of a turnaround in American education, long criticized in some areas of the country for low standards, uninspired teaching and disinterested students.

In some public schools, the process of learning is disrupted by the fear of crime and violence. Some Washington, D.C., and New York City schools have metal detectors to try to prevent students from carrying weapons inside.

As recently as 1991, a similar study found fourth graders to be below average in math and above average in science but, Clinton said, "nowhere near where they are today."

The president has declared improving U.S. education a priority and has proposed a large increase in education funding in a plan to balance the budget by 2002.

"There are a lot of people who never believed the United States children would score in the top two in the world on any of these international tests," he said.

"But let's not kid ourselves: We are still nowhere near where we need to be. We can be the best in the world if we simply believe it and then organize ourselves to achieve it."

Clinton fretted that even though fourth-graders did well in the new study, eight-graders -- 13-year-olds -- from a similar study last November did not do well in math. He said this proved his case that all states should adopt voluntary national learning standards and tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math that he proposed soon after he took office in January for his second term.

He announced that Kentucky had become the seventh state to agree to embrace the standards. The others included Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, California, West Virginia and Massachusetts, along with schools on military bases.

The tests are to be given first in the spring of 1999.

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---

Previous Story: [Flood Victims Urge Congress to Provide Relief](#)

Next Story: [Ralston's Ex-wife Says His Decision a Loss](#)

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[ [Index](#) | [News](#) | [World](#) | [Biz](#) | [Tech](#) | [Politic](#) | [Sport](#) | [Scoreboard](#) | [Entertain](#) | [Health](#) ]

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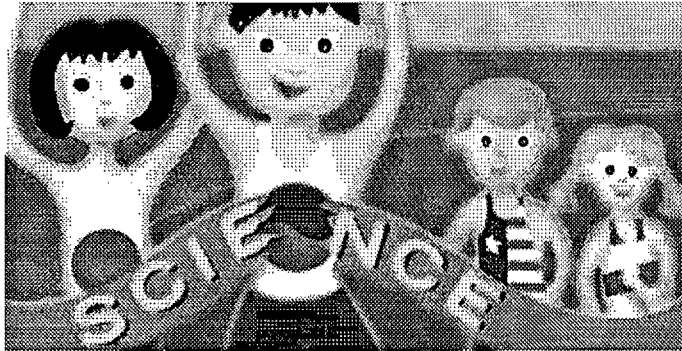
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U.S Fourth Graders Do Better in International Comparisons

# Clinton Urges Uniform Testing

**“Math at eighth grade is a weak link.”**  
—*Education Secretary Richard Riley*



U.S. fourth-graders placed third in science, behind Korea and Japan (M. Triandafellos/ABCNEWS.com)

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*By Rebecca Howland*  
**ABCNEWS.com**

**President Clinton:**  
**“Today is a good day for American education.”**  
**(RealAudio)**

President Clinton used a disparity in international test scores to call for national education standards today, saying national tests would help pinpoint weak links in the American curriculum.

A new study places fourth-graders in the top echelon of science students around the world, and above average in mathematics. The study comes one year after a similar study ranked eighth-graders much lower.

The results are a “clear challenge to every single state that has not yet come forward to participate in the

### Countries Participating in the 4th Grade Study

Australia  
Austria  
Canada  
Cyprus  
Czech Republic  
England  
Greece  
Hong Kong  
Hungary  
Iceland  
Iran  
Ireland  
Israel  
Japan  
Korea  
Kuwait  
Latvia  
Netherlands  
New Zealand  
Norway  
Portugal  
Scotland  
Singapore  
Slovenia  
Thailand  
United States

national standards movement," Clinton said.

"In no other country in the world did performance in math drop from above average in fourth grade to below average in eighth grade. We are doing a very good job in the early grades, but we've got a lot more work to do in the later ones."

The president's push for uniform testing has met with resistance in Congress, where some lawmakers want to overhaul and revamp education programs before adopting standards.

Six states have agreed to participate in national testing—Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, California, West Virginia, and Massachusetts.

### Fourth-Graders Rank 3rd in Science

The study, based on tests given to students in 26 countries and reported by the *Third International Mathematics and Science Study*, ranked American fourth-graders 3rd in science and 12th in math. The report did not include 15 countries that were used in the TIMSS study of eighth-graders last year.

Switzerland, France, Russia, Sweden and Germany were among the countries that participated last year but not this year.

Researchers cautioned that the rankings were inexact because of differences in scoring methods among the participating countries.

Researchers also said it was too early to explain the latest findings. They analyzed the amount of homework assigned, time spent watching TV, teacher education and training, and curricula but said no single factor in the study emerged as significant.

Among the world's seven largest industrial democracies, only four participated in this year's study: the United States, Japan, Canada and Britain. Italy, Germany and France did not. U.S. students outperformed their British and Canadian counterparts in science but scored below their peers in Japan.

### Is Math a Weak Link?

Education Secretary Richard Riley said the evidence was clear that "math at eighth grade is a weak link," and that adopting national standards would go a long way toward rectifying that.

"Our elementary schools are getting better at teaching the basics," Riley said. "Our goal now is to keep up the pace and make sure that they are learning to these high

<http://www.ed.gov/NCES/timss/>

standards all the way through to high school.”

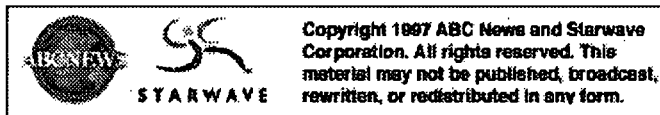
But Jim Giordano, the district supervisor for math at Princeton High School in Princeton, NJ, said the administration may be misinterpreting the study’s results.

Rather than reflecting poor teaching between fourth and eighth grades, the numbers may be reflecting recent changes to curriculums.

“The way mathematics is being taught is changing dramatically,” Giordano said. “It’s no longer only focused on computation. It’s focusing on higher-order thinking skills, applications... teaching kids to think.”

The discrepancy between fourth and eighth grades may be the result of recently improved teaching, Giordano said, adding that older students adapt less well to fundamental curricular changes. “When you throw change at kids in the middle it tends to muddy things.”

*The Associated Press contributed to the report.*





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## Fourth-Graders Score High in Math

By *EUN-KYUNG KIM*

Associated Press Writer

Tuesday, June 10, 1997 10:04 am EDT

WASHINGTON (AP) -- American fourth-graders are doing slightly better in science and math than their eighth-grade counterparts, scoring above the international average in both subjects on tests comparing them with foreign students, according to a study by a private research group.

President Clinton was highlighting today's results at the White House as part of his push for national testing standards to measure what U.S. students know.

The findings were based on math and science tests given to students in 26 countries and reported by the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. The report, however, did not include 15 countries that were used in a similar TIMMS study last November that centered on tests given to eighth-graders in 41 nations. Switzerland, France, Russia, Sweden and Germany were among the countries that participated last year but not this year.

In science, U.S. fourth-graders ranked third behind students in Korea and Japan and were trailed closely by Austria, Australia, Netherlands, and the Czech Republic.

American fourth-graders ranked 12th out of the 26 countries in math. U.S. students were outranked by their counterparts in Singapore, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong. Students in the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Austria, Slovenia, Ireland, Hungary and Australia also scored higher than Americans.

Researchers cautioned that the rankings were inexact because of differences in scoring methods among the participating countries.

Last year's report on eighth-graders ranked Americans 28th in math tests given to students in 41 countries. In science, they finished in the top half of the list, at 17.

Researchers said it was too early to explain the latest findings. They analyzed the amount of homework assigned, time spent watching TV, teacher education and training and curricula but said no single factor in the study emerged as significant.

The Clinton administration wants states and school districts to move toward uniform testing standards, starting by participating in TIMSS this year and next year. The president's plan has met with resistance in Congress, where some lawmakers want to overhaul and revamp education programs before adopting standards.

Education Secretary Richard Riley said the evidence was clear that "math at eighth grade is a weak link," and adopting national standards as Clinton has suggested would go a long way toward rectifying that.

"Our elementary schools are getting better at teaching the basics," Riley said. "Our goal now is to keep up the pace and make sure that they are learning to these high standards all the way through to high school."

Among the world's seven largest industrial democracies, only four participated in this year's study: the United States, Japan, Canada and Britain. Italy, Germany and France did not. U.S. students outperformed their British and Canadian counterparts in science but scored below their peers in Japan.

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[Back to the top](#)

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# Vouchers: Clips Summary

## Overall Reaction:

- One major debate is whether or not it blurs separation between church and state to give public money to fund children to go to private, religious schools.
- This issue seems to run on party lines..Republicans support vouchers and Democrats oppose them
- Unions oppose vouchers
- Those who oppose see vouchers as an abandonment of public schools

## What's Going on in the States:

- Ohio In August of 1996 a state court upheld vouchers for low-income parents to send their children to private and parochial schools. The judge said there was no entanglement because it was the parents who chose where the student went to school and not the government.
  - In May the 10th District Court of Appeals ruled that vouchers violated the Ohio Constitution in two ways:
    - 1) Vouchers allow public money to be spent on religious schools which violates the separation of church and state.
    - 2) Since the program was limited to Cleveland it violates the "uniformity" clause in the State Constitution.
- Georgia, Atlanta in May a group of parents tried to revive a 1961 School voucher law, but the school board refused to set rules for issuing vouchers. The law was originally written to help preserve segregation.
- Louisiana: In May a proposed voucher program was narrowly defeated in a state senate committee.
- Pennsylvania: Philadelphia City Council narrowly defeated a nonbinding resolution in favor of vouchers. Currently there are two proposals circulating at the state level:
  - 1) Reimburse a fraction of the cost of private education
  - 2) Proposal by State Representative Dwight Evans (D) which would reimburse

parents in full. They are trying to do this by making Florence County v. Carter apply to more than just special education.

- Illinois: Chicago paper editorial calls for the use of vouchers saying vouchers are not unconstitutional.
- New York: The Common Council is proposing tax-payer financed vouchers for Buffalo
  - Buffalo Teacher's Union is against it.
- Wisconsin: Individual donors and private foundations came up with scholarships while Circuit Judge Paul Higginbotham blocked Wisconsin's five year old school choice plan and give tuition vouchers to religious schools.
  - In Feb. State Representative Annette "Polly" Williams announced that she would introduce a bill proposing the expansion of choice only to non-religious schools. The Governor didn't want to tinker with law while it is in the courts.
- New Jersey: In Lincoln Park the school board decided to grant vouchers which would let the students go to any area school instead of the school they were assigned to in the neighboring town.
  - The ACLU, New Jersey Education Association, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Education Law Center in Newark all oppose this.
- Florida: Governor Lawton Chiles says he opposed to the idea of vouchers that are paid for with tax dollars.

#### What the Unions and Other Organizations Say:

- AFT
  - Since you can't just give vouchers to poor children, they will end up being an entitlement for the rich.
  - Vouchers do not promote school choice because it is the school that chooses the child.
  - Private schools will lose the freedom that they enjoy. Since they will be taking public money they will be held to public standards, etc.
  - There is no evidence that vouchers will give a high-quality education to all

students.

- NEA
  - Against public funds for private school vouchers
  - Vouchers keep communities from working together to improve education.
- People for the American Way
  - An advocacy groups that "works to preserve the separation of church and state and maintain the public education system."
  - This group is co-counsel for groups opposing tuition voucher plans in Ohio and Wisconsin.

### Interesting Quotes

"The problem with vouchers and privatization is not teacher union opposition. The problem is that there is no evidence that they work." --Al Shanker, AFT

"This is a classic example of what I've learned: the poor have no advocates. The service providers to the poor, they have lots of advocates. But the poor have none." David Brennan, Ohio

"The educational establishment will stop at nothing to preserve its monopoly status." --The Columbus Dispatch

"That's the problem in a nutshell: the mind-set that educational spending is for the benefit of schools, not students." --The Columbus Dispatch

"Vouchers controversies polarize communities and distract them from working together on common sense reforms to improve public schools." --Marshall Smith

"The School voucher movement threatens the demise of public education and, if successful, will ultimately make it harder for poor children to get a good education." --DeWayne Wickham

# Charter Schools: Clips Summary

## Overall Reaction:

- Both parties support charter schools, however it changes from state to state which party supports them more.
- Everyone seems to support them because they promote greater freedom and competition.
- Some expressed concerns over whether charter schools should compete with and replace traditional public schools or be a collaborative effort with public schools which offer new alternatives for parents and children.
- Local school boards tend not to approve Charters because they do not want to lose money
- Special Education is a BIG issue with Charter Schools
  - Concerns about whether Title I and IDEA funds are getting to Charter Schools
  - There are not enough guidelines on how Special Education should play into Charter Schools.
  - Boston is experiencing criticism because people say that they have a smaller percentage of Special Education students than public schools do.
  - Some people accuse Charter Schools of filtering out Special Education students by telling the parents that the school really isn't suited for the child.
  - The Special Education laws require large bureaucracies to process paperwork, which is the main reason Charter Schools use for lack the resources for SPED students.
- In Arizona some housing developments are being built with plans for charter schools included in the development. Hoping to make this a reality in AZ and FL.
- Charter schools are rated by students and parents as excellent or good in motivating students.
- Some people have the impression that Charter Schools are elitist, that they only skim from the top students. However, a lot of Charter Schools are set up

specifically for "at-risk" students. Also, students who are successful in most public schools aren't going to risk changing something that is working for them.

### What the Unions Say:

- AFT supports Charter Schools

They have certain conditions for Charter Schools:

- Allow anyone to submit a proposal as long as they get approval of the local school district.
- Exclude private schools from receiving Charter status
- Allow collective bargaining rights and make Charter Schools responsible for retirement and health costs to the same extent as other public schools.
- Publish charter school student test scores and make available student's progress on state standards and assessments.

- NEA supports Charter Schools.

They also have conditions:

- School admission must be open to and meet the needs of all students
  - Staff members, parents, and other stakeholders must be involved in the design and governance of the school.
  - Teacher must be certified professionals.
  - Schools must submit to rigorous fiscal and academic accountability
  - Schools must share what they learn in order to promote improvements in other public schools.
- NEA opposes loosely drawn Charter laws that lead to back-door privatization
  - NEA's focus is to make sure that Charter Schools will be public schools in the best sense.
  - NEA sees Charter Schools as a catalyst for innovation in and renewal of public schools.

### Other Think Tank Opinions:

- Chester Finn says that since unions say they support Charters, but want to place too many restrictions on them they will become clones of public schools.
- Hudson Institute
  - They think you should allow anyone to submit a Charter Proposal
  - Private Schools should be allowed to convert to Charter status.
  - There should be minimal restrictions placed on the Charter Schools
  - Charter School accountability should be a triad consisting of standards, assessments, and consequences.

#### What Is Going on in the States:

- CN, FL, IL, NJ, NC, and SC are the latest states to pass Charter Laws
- PA and OH didn't make it past the state legislature
- ID, OR, and NV didn't make it past committee
- Pennsylvania: the Charter Bill was threatened by a long-standing distrust between to government and the education establishment.
  - Ridge added amendments to the Bill that made people nervous
    - Blanket instead of selective waivers from state mandates
    - More local and state money per student for each charter
    - An appeals panel for those who are turned down by local school districts
    - Elimination of a provision that requires 1/2 parents and 1/2 teachers in public schools agree before a school can convert to a charter
    - The number of certified teachers reduced to 60% from 75%
  - Some people saw Ridge's Amendments as evidence that he wanted to funnel money to private schools
  - What percentage of per pupil expenditure to give to the Charter schools was another problem.

- Michigan: Right now the states has 78 Charter Schools and the debate is very politically charged.
  - Republicans say that Democrats opposed Charters because of the Michigan Education Association which give a lot of money to oppose them.
  - Democrats say the real reason is that they are not done evaluating them.
  - Under current law there are 4 groups who can grant charters:
    - 1) School Boards of local k-12 districts
    - 2) Intermediate School District Boards
    - 3) Community College Boards
    - 4) State University Boards
  - Since so many State Universities were granting charters, limits were created, these limits only apply to State University Boards:
    - No more than 85 charters through 1996
    - No more than 100 through 1997
    - No more than 125 through 1998
    - No more than 150 at any time
- Massachusetts: Most articles praised how Charters are created and held accountable to the state.
  - Boston Globe editorial called for lifting the 25 charter school cap to 75
  - Another editorial in the Globe said that two issues need to be resolved before opening more Charter Schools they are:
    - 1) Whether Charters are intended to be a network of demonstration schools or the leading edge of an entirely parallel system of public schools.
    - 2) State-up funds from private sources and then receive vouchers from respective communities.

- There are problems in Boston, lack of SPED students enrolled in Charter Schools
- Louisiana: Groups who can't get a local school board to approve charters, can appeal to the state education board.
- Georgia: Charter schools can only be set up by converting existing schools
  - Critics say that there are too many barriers to these new education approaches and it limits the number of Charter schools that can be started.
  - Republicans want to rewrite the law so communities and parents can start them using money designated by the district.
- Virginia: Republican bid to create Charter Schools was killed in the House of Delegates Education Panel.
  - One of the main reasons why Republicans are pushing for Charter Schools is because they want their share of the money that the President has allotted to Charter Schools.
  - Democrats say they oppose Charter Schools because they fear a return to segregation.
- Ohio: Governor wants to try Charter Schools In Columbus
  - He is thinking about as many as 20
  - State Representative Sally Perz (R) tried to pass legislation which would have introduced Charters statewide. It cleared the House but was shelved in the Senate after opposition from the Ohio Education Association, Ohio School Boards Association, and Buckeye Association of School Administrators.
  - Concerns about job security for teachers because Charter would siphon revenue from existing public schools, and result in a loss of local control over schools.
- Washington, D.C.: The 9 member Board Of Trustees does not have the power to grant Charters, but they can develop the criteria which the school board must follow.
- Maryland: The Stadium School in Baltimore will close if test scores and instruction don't improve.

- New York: Education Commissioner Richard Mills said that NY should work on improving existing schools -- not creating Charters
  - Regents Chancellor Carl Hayden said Charters aren't a panacea to solve all the problems of failing schools.
- Illinois: Contract negotiations for Charter Schools would include performance standards on Iowa Test of Basic Skills or Tests of Achievement and Proficiency and the Illinois Goal Assessment Program
  - Any Charter which gets a 5 year contract from a Chicago School Board also would need approval from the Illinois Board of Education.

Interesting Quotes:

"They [charter schools] have the potential to foster innovative teaching techniques and bring students to high levels of achievement." --Orlando Sentinel

"Current Special Education laws are ill-suited to Charter Schools. They require large bureaucracies and were designed for school systems in which some students are 'special' and others are not" --LRP Publications

"One common, more troublesome misperception is that these are elitist, special schools. They are not. The law says quite clearly that all charter schools have to be open to any student in the city. In reality, the people putting together applications for charter schools are trying to help the most disadvantaged kids." --Greg Richmond

"The charter movement is still too young for anyone to be certain that measurable achievement will be superior in these schools. But for the most part, they feel like places where a lot of learning is happening." --The Washington Post

"The number one thing is not the money. It's the message" -- Joe Nathan, Director, Center for School Change at University of Minnesota in Minneapolis (referring to the President's increase for charter schools in the budget)