

and local school districts more control and flexibility. Commonly known as "Straight A's," the Academic Achievement for All Act gives states the freedom to raise student academic achievement through more flexibility in spending federal education funds. This bill is a giant step in the right direction. Rather than relying on Washington-based programs, Straight A's gives states and local school districts the freedom to focus resources on locally proven efforts and solutions.

This is the kind of reform Colorado and every state needs and wants. In a letter to Congress, Gov. Owens stated,

Colorado has schools that are blazing a trail of change. More schools and states need greater flexibility in their use of federal dollars. As the father of three children who attend three different public schools, I am proud to put my full support behind Straight A's. This legislation will allow the diverse areas, schools and people of Colorado to decide what they need most for their schools.

Placing more authority in the hands of local school boards will also ensure more dollars end up in classrooms. Meanwhile, officials at the U.S. Department of Education have been so busy devising and enforcing their various rules, and restrictions that they have failed to account for the billions in precious tax dollars entrusted to them to help promote education.

As part of an ongoing effort to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in federal government, my colleagues and I on the Education Committee have uncovered evidence of widespread financial mismanagement at the Department of Education. Eight months behind schedule, the department last November released a financial report in which its auditors determined the agency's 1998 books were not auditable. In other words, the department could not account for how it managed its \$120 billion budget that year.

At an investigative hearing on Capitol Hill in March, we also found, amount other things, evidence the department violated the Credit Reform Act by hoarding \$2.7 billion in education funds improperly in an internal account. In addition, we're currently monitoring an ongoing Justice Department investigation of a computer and electronic equipment theft ring operating within the department.

Mr. Speaker, such widespread and chronic mismanagement is clearly not in the best interest of our children. That is why in March the House unanimously passed legislation I authored directing the General Accounting Office—the federal government's financial investigative arm—to conduct a comprehensive fraud audit of the Department of Education.

Students, parents, teachers, and schools all suffer when scarce resources are lost in the bureaucracy instead of invested properly in education. It is past time for Congress to end such waste and abuse and force the Department of Education to place the interests of America's schoolchildren first.

Mr. Speaker, Colorado is doing just that. One of our state's most innovative and successful efforts has been the creation and promotion of charter schools. Currently benefiting thousands of Colorado students (with thousands more on waiting lists), charter schools are public schools created through a contract, or charter, with local school agencies. They are open to all children. Colorado's 68 charter schools are afforded a high level of autonomy and flexibility over curriculum and operation in exchange for maintaining high standards for

student achievement and unique goals laid out in the charter. As founding parent of the Liberty Common School, a charter school in Fort Collins, I have personally experienced the positive results of a good charter school community.

Dr. Katherine Knox, headmaster of Liberty Common School, recently testified before the House Education Committee and underscored the importance of local autonomy. According to Knox,

Though we all want quality in funding, and accountability for results, we don't want strings attached that allow subtle and increasing federal direction and control of local schools. The momentum for charter schools comes locally, and the attitude and culture is positively different in a good charter school because of the local control.

Ensuring a successful and well-funded education system in each of America's fifty states is important in the nation's effort to leave no child behind. But this laudable goal will never be attained until we first remove the shackles of an intrusive and unaccountable federal bureaucracy indifferent to the needs of our children. Local control is our best hope for education excellence, Mr. Speaker.

As a member of the United States Congress, I relish the chance to do everything within my elected capacity to ensure every child in America has access to the best education possible. My primary guide will continue to be the common-sense opinions of Coloradans, our home-spun western orientation for quality, and our abundant love for our families. These are the important components of a successful free-market education system established and championed by the great state of Colorado.

HONORING THE INGLEWOOD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 24, 2000

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, it is with extreme pride that I come to the floor of the House of Representatives today. I want to share the fantastic accomplishments of some of my constituents—the students, parents, teachers, administrators and school board representatives of the Inglewood Unified School District in Inglewood, California.

A recent Los Angeles Times article, "Inglewood Writes the Book on Success: It's Elementary Schools Draw Experts Studying How Poor, Minority Kids Get Test Scores as High as Beverly Hills': Keys Include Phonics, Constant Testing, Intensive Teacher Training" by Duke Helfand highlights the phenomenal educational achievements by Inglewood's students. The article extensively chronicles the success of this urban school district.

The article explains that Inglewood's Elementary school students, 98% of whom are African-American and Latino, have scores on the Stanford 9 educational test in the top half of the list of all California school districts. These students are not considered the "norm," the majority qualify for school lunch programs, have learned English as a second language and are being taught by a 45%

uncredentialed elementary school teacher force. These students are defying all of the rules governing poverty, parental achievement and educational attainment.

An educational environment exists where the administrator defied the state educational guidelines and stuck to the basics—phonics drills, writing exercises and children's literature. The schools did not follow the move toward bilingual education and continued teaching in English only, according to the article. The administrators involved the parents in their child's education, keeping in mind the parent is a child's first educator.

Inglewood elementary schools have shattered the myths about poverty and education. I am excited to be here today to share that fact with my colleagues. Public schools work. The level they have reached is the level we expect from all our children regardless of where it is they happen to live. In Inglewood, educational excellence is the norm.

In today's news, we usually only hear about problem situations with our young people. We often do not hear enough about the hard work of the majority of our own constituents. We do not hear the success stories of the young people, their parents, teachers and administrators. I am pleased to be able to share this exciting success story with you. I thank Mr. Helfand, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer, for writing this informative article. I have attached a copy of the complete article for inclusion at this time.

Congratulations, Inglewood Unified School District! You have made us all proud. Continue to keep up the excellent academic achievements you have begun. We are a better community for your accomplishments.

[From the Los Angeles Times, April 30, 2000]
INGLEWOOD WRITES THE BOOK ON SUCCESS; ITS ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS DRAW EXPERTS STUDYING HOW POOR, MINORITY KIDS GET TEST SCORES AS HIGH AS BEVERLY HILLS': KEYS INCLUDE PHONICS, CONSTANT TESTING, INTENSIVE TEACHER TRAINING
(By Duke Helfand)

It is an axiom of education that the best public schools are found in affluent suburbs. Parents shopping for a top-tier campus, however, might want to take note of a more urban exception—Inglewood.

The city's elementary schools, many located under the landing path of Los Angeles International Airport, are filled with poor students who qualify for free lunches and who learn English as their second language. Yet they have leaped to the top ranks of California's new Academic Performance Index, defying the rule that equates poverty and minority status with low achievement in the classroom.

Inglewood's elementary students—virtually all Latino or African American—have produced Stanford 9 test scores that equal levels found in more upscale cities. In some cases, the Inglewood schools register math scores surpassing those in largely white enclaves of affluence such as Irvine, Malibu and Beverly Hills.

That success seems attributable to reforms that feature an intensive focus on basic reading skills, constant testing to detect students who fall behind and relentless teacher training. The model was perfected at two campuses that eschewed bilingual education and social promotion when both were popular, and that stuck with basic phonics when the rest of the state turned to a "whole language" approach to reading.

"You don't have to be white and rich to learn," said Nancy Ichinaga, principal at Bennett-Kew Elementary, one of the district's top-performing schools, along with Kelso Elementary.

Kelso earned a 10 and Bennett-Kew a 9 on the state's new accountability index, which ranks schools from 1 to 10 on the basis of their Stanford 9 test scores. In all, eight of the district's 13 elementary schools ranked among the top half of campuses in the state, shattering the crippling link between poverty and low academic performance.

Decades of research have shown that income and family background are the surest predictors of academic achievement. Students from low-income homes where parents have limited education consistently earn lower grades and test scores. Race and ethnicity are also closely associated with performance, with black and Latino students lagging well behind whites and Asians.

The achievement gap between poor and affluent, as well as white and minority, has long been the glaring failure of public education. Since President Lyndon Johnson launched his Great Society programs in the 1960s, the federal government has pumped billions of dollars into schools that serve the poorest children. Nonetheless, the gap has persisted.

Inglewood's campuses fit the profile of schools that usually fail. They are among the most disadvantaged in the state when it comes to student poverty, lack of English skills, numbers of uncredentialed teachers and other obstacles associated with low performance, a Times study of state data shows.

Nearly three-fourths of Inglewood elementary students qualify for subsidized lunches, the leading measure of poverty among schoolchildren. More than one-third are not fluent in English. Latinos and African Americans account for 98% of the students. Forty-five percent of the elementary school teachers have not completed their training and hold emergency credentials.

But the elementary schools earned an average rank of 6.2 on the state's accountability scale and an average raw score of 654—exceeding the state median of 630. Districts with similar socioeconomic characteristics earned far lower scores. For example, El Monte's elementary schools scored an average 125 points lower on the accountability index and Montebello schools trailed by 166 points.

"It's impressive that virtually all of Inglewood's elementary schools performed better than expected," said Kim Rueben, a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California who reviewed the test scores as part of a broader statewide study of academic achievement. "I think we should try to take lessons from the district."

Inglewood's middle and high schools do not show the same level of success. The city's two middle schools registered 3s on the accountability index, with an average score of 526, well below the state median. Its two high schools bottomed out with 1s, with an average score of 441. Officials say that the bulk of recent reforms have concentrated on the primary grades and that students who benefited from those measures are just now moving into the middle schools.

Those reforms began to take root in the district three years ago under the late Supt. McKinley M. Nash. Wanting to duplicate the success of Kelso and Bennett-Kew, he pressed the other elementary schools to embrace their techniques and programs.

SCHOOLS ADOPT SAME READING PROGRAM

Officials say a crucial reform had each school adopt the Open Court reading program, which uses heavily scripted lessons that combine phonics drills, writing exercises and children's literature. The lessons dictate virtually every detail of daily instruction.

Some teachers complained that Open Court robbed them of creativity in the classroom.

Others protested what they believed was a one-size fits-all approach for children with a range of abilities. They argued that it was particularly unsuitable for students new to English.

But the schools pushed ahead, significantly boosting training for teachers in Open Court. Each campus designated a "reading coach"—essentially a master teacher to show the others how to use the reading program. The coaches have been funded with nearly \$2 million in grants from the Packard Humanities Institute, a Los Altos, Calif., foundation that has spent about \$45 million to install reading coaches in 28 California school districts using Open Court.

The coaches have helped solidify the new reading program in Inglewood's elementary classrooms, where nearly one in two instructors holds an emergency credential.

Inglewood educators also introduced "pacing schedules" in the primary grades to ensure that teachers in every class covered the same reading lessons at about the same time. The idea, patterned after the practice at Kelso and Bennett-Kew, was to ensure that students at every school consistently acquired the same skills.

Schools also began testing their students every six to eight weeks in spelling, vocabulary and other skills in the same way that Kelso and Bennett-Kew had done for several years. Teachers began poring over the data together to identify lagging students and to refine their practices.

"There's little wiggle room to fall through the cracks," said Betty Jo Steward, principal of Highland Elementary School, which earned a rank of 8 on the state index, even though more than two-thirds of its teachers are uncredentialed. Highland switched to Open Court five years ago, ahead of the other campuses. "It's made a tremendous difference," Steward said.

Inglewood's elementary schools have become urban laboratories for educators and researchers. Several of the state's largest urban school systems—including those in Burbank, Riverside and Oakland—have sent delegations to study Inglewood's classrooms.

The Los Angeles Unified School District is among the latest to send observers. In July, the district will begin introducing Open Court and reading coaches in most of its elementary schools.

"Anything Inglewood can do, Compton or Los Angeles can do—we are not unique," said Marge Thompson, Kelso's principal of 25 years until her retirement in February. She still visits regularly to help train teachers.

Inglewood's schools are among a group of campuses around the country that are gaining attention in education ranks for producing solid results with low-income and minority students.

"People need to make the study of schools like those in Inglewood the single highest priority in the country," said Samuel Casey Carter, a researcher at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., who included Bennett-Kew in a new book about 21 impressive campuses that serve low-income children.

Carter found that the successful schools shared common practices and features such as an emphasis on basic skills, strong principals, frequent testing and assessment, and continuous teacher training.

"There is nothing these schools do that is beyond the reach of any school in America," he said.

What Carter found at Bennett-Kew were students like Omir Perez.

Omir's first language is Spanish; both of his parents were born in Belize. His family lives on about \$18,000 a year. Yet the Bennett-Kew fifth-grader has produced Stanford 9 test scores that would please any parent: the 73rd percentile in math, the 80th in reading, the 97th in spelling.

"Education gets you a good job sooner or later," said Omir, who wants to be an airline pilot.

Omir's record already is paying dividends. He won a scholarship next year to the exclusive Chadwick School on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, along with four other Bennett-Kew students who had equally high marks.

The \$11,600 tuition is nearly two-thirds of what Omir's father, a machinist, earns in a year.

"We had a lot of people praying for this," said Omir's mother, Isabel, who like her husband speaks English and is a naturalized U.S. citizen. "It's a blessing."

Omir is bright and studious, and his parents make his education their top priority. But his marks are hardly exceptional. "We have 20 kids in the fifth grade like Omir," Ichinaga said.

CLOSING A STUBBORN ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Inglewood's schools are succeeding at closing a stubborn achievement gap that emerges as early as age 3—even before children enter school. Children from poor families arrive in the classroom with less exposure to books and smaller vocabularies than their more affluent peers.

That gap widens the most during the elementary years but persists through high school and college—showing up in grades, test scores, graduation rates and other measures of achievement.

Ultimately, it affects students' earning power as adults.

The most recent round of national tests—in 1998—demonstrated the scope of the divide.

Among fourth-graders 39% of whites and 37% of Asians met the "proficient" level in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. That meant that the students demonstrated competence over challenging subject matter.

By contrast, just 13% of Latinos and 10% of African Americans met the proficiency standard.

African American and Latino 12th-graders had fallen so far behind by the end of high school that they performed at about the same level in reading as white and Asian eighth-graders, the nationwide test scores revealed.

A growing number of experts argue that more experienced and qualified teachers are the key to reversing the trend.

Studies in Texas, North Carolina and other states have found that competent teachers—those who earn high test scores themselves and have a deep knowledge of the subjects they teach—produce higher-achieving students.

"If we took the simple step of assuring that poor and minority children had teachers of the same quality as other children, about half of the achievement gap would disappear," said Kati Haycock, director of the Education Trust, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that monitors student achievement in low-income communities.

"If we went further and assigned our best teachers to the students who most need them, there's persuasive evidence to suggest that we could entirely close the gap," Haycock added.

But the reality is that urban schools serving the neediest students tend to have the greatest proportion of novices leading their classrooms.

Inglewood fits the pattern: 45% of its elementary school teachers hold emergency credentials. Only six of California's 1,000 school districts have higher percentages of teachers without full credentials. But Inglewood has overcome inexperience by literally molding its own talent and taking the guesswork out of teaching.

MAKING NEWCOMERS COMPETENT TEACHERS

The district has found a way to turn green newcomers such as Andrew Gin into competent instructors. Gin arrived at Payne Elementary School two years ago, after fleeing an unhappy career as a stock analyst for investment firms in Los Angeles. He brought enthusiasm, energy and a desire to work with children—but zero job skills. “I didn’t know where to begin,” he recalled.

At Payne, Gin was handed the Open Court reading program and a thick teacher’s manual that told him what skills to teach every day, even when to praise his second-graders. “It was a godsend,” he said, “like a huge outline.”

Meanwhile, Gin became a student in this own school. Payne’s teachers became his mentors.

Principal Georgia Leynaert began visiting Gin’s classroom regularly to teach him techniques for engaging students. Two senior teachers met with Gin at lunch and after school, showing him how to design lesson plans and giving him tips on games that encourage learning, such as math bingo. A reading coach helped demonstrate Open Court.

“Whenever I need something clarified or explained, I know where to go,” said Gin, 33, who is working toward his credential at Cal State L.A.

More than half of Payne’s teachers have emergency credentials. Still, in a school where 87% of the students qualify for subsidized lunches and 72% speak limited English, Payne earned a rank of 7 on the state’s new accountability index, placing it among the top third of elementary schools in California.

“If you hire right, then inexperience doesn’t have to be a negative,” Leynaert said. “You hire people who are going to be good. Then you give them structure so that no teacher is left out there alone.”

DRIVEN BY HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Payne and the other schools also are driven by high expectations, an intangible quality that shapes the culture of their campuses.

Teachers reject the idea that their students are destined for mediocrity because they are poor or speak limited English. Instead, they demand that students meet the state’s academic standards.

“If you set high expectations for children, they generally rise to the occasion,” said Norma Baker, principal of Hudnall Elementary School, which earned a state rank of 8 with nearly half the students still learning to speak English. “You get what you expect.”

That message literally surrounds the students in Barbra Williams’ fourth-grade classroom at Hudnall.

Mock graduation caps with black tassels hang from the ceiling. Each has the name of an elite university scrawled in white letters on the back: Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Princeton.

The walls carry similar messages. A sign on one wall ways, “ENGLISH MAJORS EXCEL,” in big black letters, with student reports stapled to the wall. A sign on another wall ways, “MATH MASTERS”; the wall features colored pictures of sliced pizzas that the students created to demonstrate fractions. The banner on a third wall ways, “SOCIAL STUDIES SCHOLARS.”

Williams requires all of her students to write essays at the end of the year about universities they will attend, and to select majors they plan to study. Students are encouraged to collect admissions packets in the course of their research.

“I tell them. ‘You have to go to a really good college. You have to get good grades,

good test scores. You have to get in the habit of taking it seriously,’” said Williams, 25, a graduate of UC Irvine. “I want to instill in them that these universities are out there. Some of these students don’t hear that or haven’t thought about it. When I ask them about colleges, they mention El Camino or Southwest two local community colleges.”

Nine-year-old La Tijera Avery has already picked her university. It’s Stanford.

“I want to grow up to be a great doctor who helps people who get sick,” said La Tijera, who earns mostly as an impressive Standard 9 test scores—the 62nd percentile in reading and the 85 percentile in math.

La Tijera’s mothers, La Tasha Holden, is thrilled with her daughter’s progress. When the family moved across Inglewood a few years ago, Holden purposely kept La Tijera at Hudnall. The philosophy of the school, she believed, reflected the values she teaches at home.

“My kids are going to college if I have to give every penny I have or sell my house,” Holden said.

STRONG LEADERSHIP SEEN AS CRUCIAL

When educators speak about school reform, they inevitably seize on the issue of leadership. High-performing campuses, the experts say, are led by able principals who firmly manage, show a keen ability to motivate teachers, set unambiguous goals and establish a serious academic tone.

Two of the lowest-performing elementary schools in Inglewood have faced regular turnover among top administrators. Lane, a kindergarten through eighth-grade school that earned a 3 on the state’s accountability index, has had eight principals in 10 years, said the latest administrator to hold that position.

Since taking over at Lane 2½ years ago, Principal Adrienne Jackson has replaced about half her staff and opened a school library for the first time in years. Lane’s reading test scores have improved an average of eight point during her tenure.

None of the administrators has done the job as successfully as Ichinaga and Thompson, the longtime principals of Bennett-Kew and Kelso, respectively.

Both have made careers of bucking the educational establishment.

Ichinaga and Thompson began using Open Court in the mid-1980s, and stuck with it even as phonics was being phased out in California. They hewed to scripted math programs that stressed basic computational skills, even as the state moved to more experimental approaches.

Both also required their teachers to give regular student assessments, and they personally analyzed the results, a previously unheard-of practice that is only now gaining currency in schools.

In addition, both long ago said no to social promotion, holding back failing kindergartners in “junior first” classes that provide an extra year of phonics practice.

And both rejected bilingual education two decades before California voters officially ended the practice in 1997.

“I didn’t believe in bilingual education, and my parents were dead set against it,” said Thompson, a former first-grade teacher in Inglewood. “I didn’t need a job bad enough to violate my ethics.”

For Ichinaga, the decision grew out of personal experience: She was reared in a Japanese-speaking home on a Hawaiian sugar cane plantation but attended schools that taught in English. “My kids come to school much like I was, with very little English,” she said.

These principals’ methods, and the stability they brought, are reflected in test scores.

The average Kelso second-grader reached the 71st percentile in reading and the 79th percentile in math on last year’s Stanford 9. The scores are comparable to the district average for second-grader in Irvine and Beverly Hills, which have two of the region’s most affluent school systems. Bennett-Kew’s scores also were high: The average third-grader was in the 58th percentile in reading and the 84th in math.

The scores mean that the students were in the top echelons of test-takers nationwide.

Thompson and Ichinaga are a contrast in styles. While she was principal, Thompson was a quiet force on campus, personally training her teachers and parents while keeping a low public profile. Ichinaga is an outspoken advocate for her methods and a master at delegating authority to her best teachers.

“I’m dismayed that so many people still believe if you’re a minority by color or language, you’re at a disadvantage,” Ichinaga said. “I don’t believe that for a minute. We have to get rid of that mentality.”

Ichinaga’s campus has drawn more attention in recent years because of the visible role she has taken in education reform. She sat on the task force that helped draft Gov. Gray Davis’ education agenda shortly after he was elected two years ago, and she is regularly invited to speak at education conferences. Davis appointed her this year to the State Board of Education.

Although Bennett-Kew has received more acclaim, Kelso, a year-around school, has quietly assumed the top rank in the district. One reason, Thompson and Kelso’s teachers say, is that all students are invited to take classes during their vacation breaks for a few hours a day. Up to two-thirds of her students return, meaning they literally attend school all year long.

“We’re committed to overturning perception in education—that so-called low socioeconomic children can’t learn,” said Linda Stevenson, a longtime Kelso teacher who was the first to use Open Court at school. “Of course, they can learn. We’re here to prove it.”

MAIN STREET POOCH

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 24, 2000

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, the people of Martinez, California, lost a great friend and a fixture in the community with the death of Charlie, the beloved golden retriever and member of the Ross family. Mr. Speaker, the relationship between Gene Ross and his dog, Charlie, was wonderful to behold. They went everywhere together. Whether Gene was running in the hills of Alhambra Valley or the trails of the Sierra Mountains above the Tahoe Basin, Charlie was always at his side. And if you walked or ran with them, you could listen to their constant conversation.

During summer vacations at Donner Lake, Charlie would dive into the chilly water where others were timid. He especially loved it when the kids were in the water, so he could look after them and swim with them. As friends and family gather for the upcoming traditional Fourth of July festivities at the Ross cabin, this year will be different. This year just before the fireworks start, we will not kid Gene as he talks to Charlie to calm him down about the