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**Education Policy Center Newsletter**

**From The Independence Institute**

**February 2, 2012**

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**In this issue**

-- Happy Digital Learning Day: Center Helps Craft Policy Roadmap

-- Kids Aren’t Cars Movie Night Celebrates School Choice Week

-- Center Criticizes *Lobato* School Funding Court Decision

-- *Denver Post* Follows DeGrow in Taking on Tax-Funded Union Release Time

-- Eddie Looks Ahead on Hot Colorado Education Issues

**Happy Digital Learning Day: Center Helps Craft Policy Roadmap**

With yesterday, February 1, as [the first-ever Digital Learning Day](http://www.ediswatching.org/2011/11/plan-early-for-important-digital-learning-day-february-1-2012-is-coming/), the Education Policy Center continues to support student choice and customized learning opportunities through technology. On January 23, the Independence Institute and the Donnell-Kay Foundation gathered nearly 50 Colorado online education leaders and policy experts [to help craft a roadmap of digital learning policy priorities for the state](http://education.i2i.org/2012/01/inacols-susan-patrick-guides-colorado-online-leaders-in-crafting-digital-learning-policy-roadmap/). Susan Patrick of iNACOL facilitated the meeting, and then addressed a lunch gathering of 17 state legislators about high-quality digital learning policies.

Many parents also will appreciate the new guide [*Choosing a Colorado Online School for Your Child*](http://education.i2i.org/2011/12/choosing-a-colorado-online-school-for-your-child/) by research associate Ella Peterson and Center director Pam Benigno. The issue paper profiles the state’s 46 full-time public online programs and provides other helpful information. Earlier today Pam [appeared on the Amy Oliver Show](http://education.i2i.org/2012/02/benigno-highlights-digital-learning-day-on-amy-oliver-show/) to discuss the paper and the need for Colorado to pursue student-centered digital learning policies.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Winding Down 2011 by Looking Ahead to Digital Learning Gains in 2012](http://www.ediswatching.org/2011/12/winding-down-2011-by-looking-ahead-to-colorado-digital-learning-gains-in-2012/)

[Guess Implementing Digital Learning Policy Changes in Colorado Not as Easy as It Looks](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/01/guess-implementing-digital-learning-policy-changes-in-colorado-not-as-easy-as-it-looks/)

**Kids Aren’t Cars Movie Night Celebrates School Choice Week**

Last week also was the second annual [National School Choice Week](http://www.schoolchoiceweek.com/) (January 22-28). [We celebrated here at our new Denver offices](http://education.i2i.org/2012/01/independence-institute-liberty-on-the-rocks-celebrate-school-choice-week-with-kids-arent-cars-movie/) with our partners at Liberty on the Rocks. Attendees watched the recent movie *Kids Aren’t Cars* and asked questions of the resident education experts, Pam Benigno and Ben DeGrow, and also had the chance to leave with one of the fashionable yellow scarves. Ben also [made appearances on the Mike Rosen Show](http://education.i2i.org/2012/01/degrow-celebrates-school-choice-week-on-mike-rosen-show/) and Amy Oliver Show to talk about School Choice Week.

More from Ed Is Watching:
[Get School Choice Juices Flowing: “Kids Aren’t Cars,” Parent Trigger II and Milk (!)](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/01/get-school-choice-juices-flowing-kids-arent-cars-parent-trigger-ii-and-milk/)

[School Choice Week Good News Trifecta: Nationwide, Arizona ESAs, Ohio Vouchers](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/01/school-choice-week-good-news-trifecta-nationwide-arizona-esas-ohio-vouchers/)

**Center Criticizes *Lobato* School Funding Court Decision**

Maybe the biggest Colorado education news late last year was the Denver District Court ruling for the plaintiffs in the *Lobato* school funding lawsuit. In case you missed it, CU-Colorado Springs professor and national expert Joshua Dunn opined in [an iVoices podcast](http://education.i2i.org/2011/12/judge-sets-constitution-aside-in-school-finance-ruling/) and in [a Colorado Springs *Gazette* op-ed](http://education.i2i.org/2012/01/lobato-judges-anti-constitutional-opinion-is-politics-not-law/) that the judge’s ruling shows contempt for our state constitution. Our own Ben DeGrow [shared his thoughts on *Lobato* and the state’s “broken” education funding system](http://education.i2i.org/2012/01/degrow-on-one-news-now-lobato-decision-misses-real-problems-with-broken-education-funding-system/) with American Family Radio News.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Governor Appeals Lobato Ruling; State Board May Need Some Holiday Cheer First](http://www.ediswatching.org/2011/12/governor-appeals-lobato-ruling-state-board-may-need-some-holiday-cheer-first/)

***Denver Post* Follows DeGrow in Taking on Tax-Funded Union Release Time**

The Education Policy Center received an early Christmas present when an issue we have researched and covered for years got front-page, in-depth attention from the state’s largest newspaper. *Denver Post* reporter Karen Crummy’s [“Colorado teachers unions under fire for taxpayer subsidies from school districts”](http://www.denverpost.com/commented/ci_19571617) quoted our own Ben DeGrow to help highlight the problem of at least 5.8 million tax dollars underwriting union classroom release time. Two large reports authored by Ben have explored the [costly](http://education.i2i.org/2004/02/take-public-funds-off-the-negotiating-table-let-teachers%E2%80%99-unions-finance-their-own-business/) and [unaccountable](http://education.i2i.org/2010/02/colorado-schools-and-association-release-time-making-the-privilege-accountable-to-citizens/) nature of this commonly negotiated union privilege.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Denver Post Tackles Long-Studied Problem of Tax-Funded Teachers Union Release Time](http://www.ediswatching.org/2011/12/denver-post-tackles-long-studied-problem-of-tax-funded-teachers-union-release-time/)

**Eddie Looks Ahead on Hot Colorado Education Issues**

Though our education reform blogging prodigy Eddie took some time off over the holidays, he has covered several more recent developments of great interest right here in Colorado:

[K-12 Issues in Colo. Legislative Session Figure to Be Busier for 2012](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/01/k-12-issues-in-colo-legislative-session-figure-to-be-busier-for-2012/)

[West Denver Prep or Wherever, It's Now for Colorado Public School Open Enrollment](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/01/west-denver-prep-or-wherever-its-now-for-colorado-public-school-open-enrollment/)

[Colorado Has Made Some Progress, But a C for Teacher Policy Isn’t Good Enough](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/01/colorado-has-made-some-progress-but-a-c-for-teacher-policy-isnt-good-enough/)

[Effective Math and Science Program Making Big Leap in Colorado High Schools](http://www.ediswatching.org/2011/12/effective-math-and-science-program-making-big-leap-in-colorado-high-schools/)

[Foundation Gives Higher-Performing Poorer Denver Area Schools Cause to Celebrate](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/01/foundation-gives-high-performing-poorer-denver-area-schools-cause-to-celebrate/)

[New Colorado School Grades Website Offers Important Info to Families](http://www.ediswatching.org/2011/12/new-colorado-school-grades-website-offers-important-info-to-families/)

[Bob Schaffer Looks Back at 10 Years of NCLB Federal Education Failure](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/01/bob-schaffer-looks-back-at-10-years-of-nclb-federal-education-failure/)

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