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**Education Policy Center Newsletter**

**From The Independence Institute**

**March 7, 2012**

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**Center Sheds Light on Douglas County Debates**

Douglas County R-1 – Colorado’s third-largest school district and home of the groundbreaking [Choice Scholarship Program](http://education.i2i.org/douglas-county-vouchers/) – has become a focus of attention in the past few months since reformers completed their second straight Board election sweep. In different venues, our senior policy analyst Ben DeGrow has [challenged the presentation of union-led attacks](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2012/02/13/33023-commentary-wheres-the-rest-of-the-dougco-school-survey), [highlighted the national union’s politically liberal giving habits](http://www.independentteachers.org/2012/02/7-8-million-in-2010-11-aft-member-dues-including-douglas-county-mostly-given-to-liberal-causes/), and once again [demonstrated the fiscal savings](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/03/new-fiscal-impact-study-reinforces-benefits-of-dougco-choice-scholarship-program/) promoted by the Board’s efforts to implement private school choice.

**Union Negotiation Transparency Draws Attention**

Less than a year after Colorado Springs District 11 agreed to open most of its teachers union negotiations to public observation, Douglas County citizens created [an online petition](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/support-open-union-negotiations-in-douglas-county/) to call for the same sort of transparency in their backyard. [Momentum behind the issue is growing](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2012/03/07/34415-dougco-union-requests-open-talks), as a legislative committee convenes this week to consider House Bill 1118, which would bring school district bargaining transparency statewide. DeGrow highlighted the need for open negotiations [in a Backbone Radio interview](http://www.jsharf.com/sound/Backbone20120219/BenDeGrow.mp3) (audio link), and explained in a column for Colorado Peak Politics how [Colorado’s education transparency train keeps rolling on](http://www.coloradopeakpolitics.com/diary/1062/colorado-education-transparency-train-rolls-on).

See also:

[“Colorado Education and Open Negotiations: Increasing Public Access to School District Bargaining,”](http://education.i2i.org/2010/04/colorado-education-and-open-negotiations-increasing-public-access-to-school-district-bargaining/) Ben DeGrow, Independence Institute Issue Backgrounder 2010-B

Ed Is Watching, [That Old Colorado School District Open Negotiations Momentum? It’s Back](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/02/that-old-colorado-school-district-open-union-negotiations-momentum-its-back/)

**DeGrow Tackles Educator Effectiveness Changes**

Colorado’s major 2010 educator effectiveness initiative easily cleared a key hurdle last month, when Governor Hickenlooper signed into law detailed State Board of Education rules ratified by the legislature—an unusual step. Ben DeGrow [commented on the development](http://education.i2i.org/2012/02/degrow-comments-on-colorados-progress-toward-effectiveness-based-educator-evaluations/) for an American Family Radio News report, while urging Colorado education leaders to [pay teachers to be effective, too](http://education.i2i.org/2012/02/teacher-evaluations-systems-to-address-teacher-effectiveness/), in an op-ed published by both the *Greeley Tribune* and *Summit Daily News.*

The Education Policy Center has been keeping its eye on a few other bills being considered at the Capitol this session – including [HB 1149](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/02/colo-s-parent-trigger-ii-survives-first-test-maybe-hb-1149-can-win-bipartisan-support/) (the new “parent trigger” proposal), [HB 1238](http://education.i2i.org/2012/02/degrow-comments-on-colorado-literacy-bill-for-one-news-now/) (early literacy and curbing social promotion), [HB 1306](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2012/02/29/34011-commentary-are-unfunded-kids-being-dumped-on-districts) (funding to districts that gain students after the October 1 count), and [HB 1146](http://education.i2i.org/2012/02/house-bill-1146-provides-dropout-recovery-option-at-no-extra-cost/) (dropout recovery option program).

**Podcasts: School Lessons at Home and Abroad**

In our new Denver studio the Education Policy Center hosted two February podcasts that offer education reform lessons from our backyard to “across the pond.” Fox Family Foundation executive director Tom Kaesemeyer [highlighted successful factors](http://education.i2i.org/2012/02/denver-foundations-reward-local-schools-that-beat-the-odds/) in the Denver area’s recent Foundations for Great Schools grant-making initiative. Meanwhile, Denver-based education policy consultant Gina Schliemann touted the success of [school-level autonomy in Great Britain’s “academies”](http://education.i2i.org/2012/02/british-academies-promote-case-for-school-autonomy/) (much like American public charter schools).

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Taking a Few Leaps to Promote Excellent School Leadership in Colorado](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/02/taking-a-few-leaps-to-promote-excellent-school-leadership-in-colorado/)

[Can We Put the Schools “in Charge”? Colorado’s Falcon 49 Shows a Different Way](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/02/can-we-put-the-schools-in-charge-colorados-falcon-49-shows-a-different-way/)

**Eddie Pays Birthday Homage to the Late Dr. Seuss**

Last Friday would have been the late Dr. Seuss’ 108th birthday. To pay him tribute and to recognize the National Education Association’s coinciding involvement in “Read Across America” Day, our young blogger Eddie went all Seuss on [trying to figure out why union officials won’t read his work](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/03/happy-dr-seuss-birthday-a-fun-friday-nea-tribute-from-ed-i-said/): “I will not read it, Ed-I-said, I do not like That blog by Ed.”

A few other items the NEA might have missed, but you don’t have to:

[Comprehensive Milwaukee Voucher Study Shows Some Positive, No Harmful Results](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/02/comprehensive-milwaukee-voucher-study-shows-some-positive-no-harmful-results/)

[Denver’s Northeast Academy Deserves Full 3 Years to Prove Itself during Turnaround](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/02/denvers-northeast-academy-deserves-full-3-years-to-prove-itself-during-turnaround/)

[Senate Bill 82 Shows Utah Serious about Treating Teachers Fairly](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/02/senate-bill-82-shows-utah-serious-about-treating-teachers-fairly/)

[Bad News in Colorado Remediation Rates Renews Call for Transformation](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/02/bad-news-in-colorado-remediation-rates-renews-call-for-transformation/)

[School Reform News Bulletin: Can Bold Iowa Reform Plans Get Unstuck?](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/03/school-reform-news-bulletin-can-bold-iowa-reform-plans-get-unstuck/)

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