



NEWS RELEASE

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Majority of California Districts Faced With “Restructuring” Maintain Control at the School Level and Turn to Internal Reform

WASHINGTON – February 9, 2006 – The vast majority of California districts with schools facing restructuring – the No Child Left Behind Act’s ultimate sanction for struggling schools – are forgoing the law’s more radical options, such as converting these schools into charter schools or turning the operation of the schools over to an outside entity. Instead, districts are engaging in internal reforms that improve the schools, according to a new report from the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Education Policy (CEP).

The study, *Wrestling the Devil in the Details: An Early Look at Restructuring in California*, tracks the initial steps of 271 schools in mostly urban areas in California that have missed Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward state achievement targets for five or more consecutive years, placing them in restructuring and subjecting them to a variety of major, school-wide reform strategies intended to revive failing schools.

While it is too early to say whether the processes for restructuring are effective in California, it is clear that the most popular improvement strategies for districts and schools stop short of dissolving a school or turning it into a charter school.

According to the report, 76 percent, or 205 schools, in restructuring chose to “undertake any other major restructuring of the school’s governance that produces fundamental reform.” In California this option has taken a variety of forms, from hiring coaches to help teachers work together in new ways, to appointing a leadership team to oversee school operations. Comparatively, only 2 percent of schools chose to “reopen as a charter school,” making this the least popular restructuring option.

California is one of the first states to see a significant number of schools enter restructuring. The report also notes that the total number of California schools in restructuring increased to 404 schools for the 2005-06 school year– a 49 percent jump that occurred primarily because the state raised its AYP targets.

Last November, CEP released a report on restructuring in Michigan which found a similar trend. The study, *Hope But No Miracle Cures: Michigan’s Early Restructuring Lessons*, includes data on the effect restructuring efforts have on schools making AYP in the future – it can be viewed at <http://www.cep-dc.org/fededprograms/michiganNov2005/HopebutNoMiracleCure.pdf>.

Based in Washington, D.C. and founded in January 1995, the Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent any special interests. Instead the Center helps citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.

The report, along with additional information on CEP, its publications and its work, is available on the web at www.cep-dc.org.

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