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Jack Jennings Retires from Center on Education Policy; Founded and Led Research Organization to National Prominence

In final publication, Jennings calls for a civil right guaranteeing the opportunity for a good education

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Jan. 27, 2012 – Seventeen years after founding the Center on Education Policy (CEP), Jack Jennings will step down as the center's president and CEO, effective January 31. As part of his planned retirement, Jennings is releasing two publications. One makes recommendations for federal policy and the other is a history of the CEP.

Also effective January 31, Diane Stark Rentner, the director of national programs for CEP, will become the organization's interim director.

"I am proud of what all of us have been able to achieve," said Jennings. "Our success would not have been possible without the great abilities and hard work of CEP's staff and consultants. The high quality of their work is matched by their commitment to improving public schools in America, and that will not change after I retire."

Though the Center's modest start included being housed temporarily in borrowed office space, CEP quickly grew in prominence. A few years ago an *Education Week* survey found that CEP was one of the 10 most influential education groups in the nation.

"Since its founding in January 1995, the Center has provided a continuous stream of high-quality information and research that has thoughtfully – and, perhaps more important, impactfully – shaped discussions and debate over federal education policy," said Virginia B. Edwards, the chair of CEP's Board of Directors and the editor-in-chief of *Education Week*. "Jack's vision, integrity, and insight will be missed, though the center remains committed to his goal of providing independent research and analysis to strengthen public schools."

The Center's recent work includes a comprehensive series of reports on state and local implementation of No Child Left Behind, annual tracking of state high school exit exams and other state high school tests, and the most detailed analyses available of state test data since 2002.

In anticipation of leaving his position, Jennings wrote *Reflections on a Half-Century of School Reform: Why Have We Fallen Short and Where Do We Go From Here?* This paper summarizes Jennings' reflections on 44 years of helping to form and then research education policy. From his experiences and research, he reaches three conclusions:

- The three major reform movements of the last half century – equity-related, school choice, and standards-based reforms – have had an effect on schools but have not brought about the broad improvement that schools need.

- To bring about major change, greater focus must be placed on improving the curriculum, the quality of the teaching force, and on adequate funding.
- A new civil right to a good education should be enacted by the federal government in a major aid program governed by a joint national/state council.

A second publication is also being released as part of Jennings' departure. *An Evolution of the Center on Education Policy: From an Idea to a Major Influence* tracks the history of the Center and its ambitious yet modest beginning. Both publications are available online and for free at www.cep-dc.org

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Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in 1995 by Jack Jennings, 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 special interests. Instead, it helps citizens make sense of conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.