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Parents Advocating School Accountability
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Discrepancy discredits Edison test score claims

Critics of controversial, for-profit Edison Schools Inc. have long accused the company of making inaccurate achievement claims for its schools. Now discrepancies in reported test scores at Edison's Dayton (Ohio) Academy support those charges.

Test scores posted by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) differ from test scores posted in Edison's Report on School Performance in every category. The discrepancy is most glaring in math, where the ODE shows a decline of 5.8 percentage points from 2000 to 2001, while Edison's Report on School Performance touts a gain of 11 percentage points. Scores are for fourth grade, the only one of the K-5 grades that takes the OPT.

In five subjects, the ODE figures show a cumulative total gain for the school of 5.6 percentage points from 2000 to 2001. But Edison's Report on School Performance claims a cumulative total gain of 32 percentage points.

The discrepancy is difficult to explain, since in one subject, writing, Edison showed a loss where the ODE showed a tiny gain. Edison's figures showed a loss of 6 percentage points, while the ODE showed a gain of 0.9 percentage points.

But the discrepancy bolsters the charges of critics who assert that Edison's claims are unreliable. All figures are shown below.

Edison also runs a second Dayton school, Dayton View Academy, which is too new to have its scores posted under ODE policy.

Edison Schools Inc. has raised questions with its reporting of both student achievement and company finances. The company claims that 84 percent of its schools made "positive gains" in the 2000-2001 school year. But Edison's School Performance Report lists 62 schools that it claims made "positive gains," for a year when the company says it ran 113 schools. Sixty-two of 113 schools would be 54.8 percent, not 84 percent.

And scrutiny debunks the claim that the 62 "positive gains" schools are successful. At least 10 of the schools on the "positive" list have had contracts with Edison severed - Edison had already been terminated from several of the schools at the time it released the list touting them as successes. More than 10 of the "positive" schools appear on their states' lists of failing schools.

Edison has also faced questions about the number of schools it claims to run and other figures. Recent business news articles questioned the way the company reports its revenues.

Edison Schools, which claims to run 136 schools nationwide, is a nationwide school management

firm with stock publicly traded on the NASDAQ, though the 10-year-old company has never made a profit. Edison has attracted ideological support from backers of privatization and school vouchers, and from such powerful conservative bastions as the Wall Street Journal editorial board and the Hoover Institution.

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Test scores for Dayton Academy as reported by Edison Schools vs. test scores as reported by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE)

Percentages are of 4th-grade students scoring proficient or advanced

Reading (ODE)

Spring 2000 18.7%

Spring 2001 20.8%

Change: +2.1 percentage points

Reading (Edison's version)

Spring 2000 20%

Spring 2001 24%

Change: +4 percentage points

Math (ODE)

Spring 2000 18.7%

Spring 2001 12.9%

Change: -5.8 percentage points

Math (Edison's version)

Spring 2000 4%

Spring 2001 15%

Change: +11 percentage points

Writing (ODE)

Spring 2000 43.7%

Spring 2001 44.6%

Change: +0.9 percentage points

Writing (Edison's version)

Spring 2000 56%

Spring 2001 50%

Change: -6 percentage points

Science (ODE)

Spring 2000 12.5%

Spring 2001 11.9%

Change: -0.6 percentage points

Science (Edison's version)
Spring 2000 9%
Spring 2001 14%
Change: +5 percentage points

Citizenship (ODE)
Spring 2000 18.7%
Spring 2001 27.7%
Change: +9 percentage points

Citizenship (Edison's version)
Spring 2000 16%
Spring 2001 34%
Change: +18 percentage points

Link to Ohio Department of Education test scores:

<http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/2002CS1.xls>

Links to Edison Schools Inc.'s Report on Student Performance:

<http://www.edisonschools.com/annualreport2001part1.pdf>

<http://www.edisonschools.com/annualreport2001part2.pdf>

For more information on Edison Schools, go to www.pasasf.org. PASA is an advocacy organization and our press releases reflect our point of view. Our material is reported and written in accordance with professional standards for accuracy. Any problems called to our attention will be corrected or responded to publicly as appropriate.