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Parents Advocating School Accountability  
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## **Edison's New York test scores plunge**

Two schools run by controversial, for-profit Edison Schools Inc. in its home state of New York show significant drops in scores on the statewide English Language Arts (ELA) test.

The two schools, in Albany and Rochester, are the only New York schools run by Edison long enough to show achievement trends.

At Albany's K-6 New Covenant Charter Academy, the number of students failing the fourth-grade ELA test rose from 78 percent in 2001 to 85 percent in 2002. New Covenant had the lowest fourth-grade pass rate of all Albany schools.

At Rochester's K-8 Charter School of Science and Technology, the number failing the fourth-grade ELA test jumped from 72 percent in 2001 to 84 percent in 2002.

At the Charter School of Science and Technology, the number failing the eighth-grade ELA test climbed from 87 percent in 2001 to 93 percent in 2002.

The test results contradict Edison's boasts that its students nationwide are achieving "life-changing" academic improvements.

Edison fourth-graders' test scores fell even as scores of fourth-graders statewide, in Rochester and in Albany continued a trend of steady improvement, according to local news reports. "Right across the board, year by year, (fourth-grade achievement has) gone up in elementary school," state Education Commissioner Richard Mills told the Albany Times Union.

Eighth-graders fared poorly on the test statewide. But students at the Rochester Edison school did even worse.

"The results offered little good news for the two Rochester charter schools with eighth-grade students," reported the July 11 Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. "They fared among the worst in the state, with passing rates in eighth grade that dipped from last year's low scores." The second charter school referred to in the article is not run by Edison.

Edison has managed the Albany and Rochester schools since 2000. The company operates four other New York state schools – two in Buffalo, one in the Bronx and one in Riverdale, Long Island – but took over all of them in 2001, so no comparative test scores are available. Edison does not compare its schools' scores to their scores before privatization, according to the company's 2001 School Performance Report. "Schools often change their enrollments dramatically after Edison is introduced," the report explained. "If enrollments change, comparisons of test scores before and after Edison become potentially misleading comparisons of

different students."

Edison Schools Inc. has raised questions with its reporting of both student achievement and company finances. The Securities and Exchange Commission recently investigated the company for reporting as revenues money that Edison never received, such as salaries paid to teachers directly by school districts.

Edison has been removed from 11 of the 13 schools in its first four client districts, indicating a high level of customer dissatisfaction. And in a boast that doesn't hold up to scrutiny, Edison insists 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.

Further examination debunks the claim that the 62 "positive gains" schools are successful. At least 13 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. Many of the "positive" schools appear on their states' lists of failing schools.

Edison Schools, which runs more than 100 schools nationwide, is a nationwide school management firm with stock publicly traded on the Nasdaq, though the 10-year-old company has lost money every quarter of its existence. Edison's stock has plummeted from a high of more than \$38 in spring 2001 to around \$1 in July 2002.

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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### **English Language Arts test**

Note: Levels rank from 1 (lowest) to 4. Levels 3 and 4 are passing.

### **New Covenant Charter Academy, Albany**

4th grade English (2002):

Level 1 (lowest): 40%

Level 2: 45%

Level 3 (passing): 13.8%

Level 4: 1.3%

4th grade English (2001):

Level 1: 42%

Level 2: 36%

Level 3: 22%

Level 4: 0%

## **Charter School of Science and Technology, Rochester**

4th grade English (2002):

Level 1: 36%

Level 2: 48%

Level 3: 16%

Level 4: 0%

4th grade English (2001):

Level 1: 18%

Level 2: 54%

Level 3: 25%

Level 4: 2%

8th grade English (2002):

Level 1: 15.2%

Level 2: 78.1%

Level 3: 5.7%

Level 4: 1%

8th grade English (2001):

Level 1: 28.4%

Level 2: 59.1%

Level 3: 10.2%

Level 4: 2.3%

### **Sources for test scores:**

2002 Albany results

<http://www.timesunion.com/news/moreinfo/edu/2002ela/4ela2002.pdf>

2001 Albany results 2001:

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

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Rochester results 4th and 8th grade 2002 and 8th grade 2001:

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/homes/schools/>

Rochester results 4th grade 2001:

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

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For more information on Edison Schools, go to [www.pasasf.org](http://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.

