

Sept. 24, 2001 San Francisco

Four Edison Schools Land on State's Lowest-Performing List

Four of the eight California schools run by controversial, for-profit Edison Schools Inc. have landed on a list of the state's lowest-performing schools.

Schools on the California Department of Education list ranked below average in statewide test scores and failed to improve by a predetermined amount from the previous year. Edison schools on the list are Edison Charter Academy in San Francisco, Edison-Bethune Charter Academy in Fresno, Edison-McNair Academy in East Palo Alto and Phillips-Edison Partnership School in Napa.

Edison Schools is a for-profit New York-based school management company with stock publicly traded on the NASDAQ. It currently operates 136 privatized schools nationwide with public funding. The company maintains that its schools post superior achievement over schools run by districts, though studies discredit that claim.

The presence of four Edison schools on California's list of lowest-performing schools increases doubt about the company's claims of high achievement. Edison has run three of the schools on the list since 1998 and one since 1999.

Low-performing schools qualify for a program called the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP), operated by the California Department of Education (CDE). The program provides funding and sets out remedial procedures and interventions for participating schools. Schools that fail to improve under the action plan are subject to intervention by their districts, including possible removal of the principal.

Two of the Edison schools on the list also prompt questions about confusing oversight of the II/USP program. San Francisco's Edison Charter Academy is administered by the state Board of Education rather than the San Francisco Unified School District, so apparently the state would handle intervention procedures. Similarly, Fresno's Edison-Bethune Academy is chartered by the Fresno County Office of Education rather than Fresno Unified School District, so the county would oversee intervention.

Many districts nationwide have had problems with Edison Schools, and its contracts have been severed in San Francisco; Sherman and San Antonio, Texas; Goldsboro, N.C.; and Lansing, Mich. The company's one Minneapolis school will also close at the end of this school year, ending Edison's presence there.

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CDE list of schools qualifying for the II/USP program

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/iiusp01/iiusp01e.pdf>

Schools are listed by county.

Edison Schools:

-- Fresno County, Fresno County Office of Education: Edison-Bethune Charter Academy

(Note: this school is listed under Fresno County Office of Education rather than Fresno Unified,

and is listed only as Bethune.)

-- Napa County, Napa Valley Unified: Phillips-Edison-Phillips Partnership School

-- San Francisco County, listed under San Francisco Unified: Edison Charter Academy

(Note: This school is no longer a San Francisco Unified school and is now chartered by the state Board of Education.)

-- San Mateo County, Ravenswood School District (East Palo Alto): Edison-McNair Academy