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Parents Advocating School Accountability,  
www.pasasf.org

## **Most of Edison's early contracts severed**

School districts have severed ties with Edison Schools Inc. for 11 of the 13 schools in Edison's earliest contracts, now that the controversial, for-profit company is leaving four schools in Mount Clemens, Mich.

The severed contracts demonstrate a high level of friction and dissatisfaction between New York-based Edison and its longstanding clients.

Edison struck contracts starting in 1994 and 1995 with Boston; Sherman, Texas; Wichita, Kan.; and Mount Clemens, for an eventual total of 13 schools in those districts by Edison's count. As of the end of the 2001-'02 school year, Edison has left Boston, Sherman and Mount Clemens, as well as two of its four schools in Wichita. Edison operated three schools under one roof as Boston Renaissance in Boston and two schools in Sherman.

The Wichita school district removed Edison from Ingalls and Isely elementary schools, citing declining enrollment, high teacher turnover and low test scores. The move came on the heels of a test cheating scandal at Ingalls, including charges by teachers that Edison executives had ignored their complaints about testing irregularities. The school's two top administrators were removed after the scandal and the results of the MAT-7 tests thrown out.

Reports about Edison's departures from school districts tend to follow a pattern. Early coverage often mentions district dissatisfaction with Edison over low achievement, high costs or other problems, while later reports tend to indicate that the separation was mutual or give an explanation less unflattering to Edison.

Sometimes the changing story hints that the school district may have agreed to soften the account. When Minneapolis decided to sever ties with Edison in August 2001, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune reported that the company's Edison/PPL school had "fail(ed) on the academic end ... many say (the) experiment was a bust. The school got off to a rough start when it opened in 1998 and never recovered." The St. Paul Pioneer Press concurred: "The school has had disappointing test scores."

But a few months later, district spokespeople were publicly describing Edison's exit in bland terms that omitted any mention of achievement problems.

In the case of Edison's departures from Boston Renaissance and the Mount Clemens schools, the explanation changed within days or hours of the initial version.

News and PR reports about Boston Renaissance reveal hasty damage control and hints of arm-twisting after the May 16, 2002, Wall Street Journal attributed the severed contract to

lagging test scores. Associated Press reports cited test scores, quoting school president Dudley Blodget, who also told the Boston Globe that school administrators were “disappointed that we hadn't seen more progress.”

But after issuing its own May 16 press release via PR Newswire on the “change in relationship” between Edison and Boston Renaissance, Edison rushed to send out a corrected version adding a more flattering quote from Blodget: “In many ways we have experienced academic success and we have done so with Edison as our partner.”

In Wichita, the daily Eagle covered the Ingalls test cheating scandal heavily when the story broke in December 2001. More recent reports nationwide about Edison's departure from Ingalls and Isely have omitted any allusion to the cheating. Edison still operates two more Wichita schools – the only intact schools from its earliest contracts.

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 never made a profit. Edison Schools' stock has recently plummeted, losing more than 90 percent of its value.

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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Media citations:

Detroit Free Press 6/18/02

Mt. Clemens, firm to dissolve contract school district, Edison to end pact a year early

By Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki

[http://www.freepress.com/news/education/edison18\\_20020618.htm](http://www.freepress.com/news/education/edison18_20020618.htm)

Minneapolis Star-Tribune 8/26/01

Innovative schools nearing end

By Allie Shah

St. Paul Pioneer Press 8/15/01

Six small schools likely to close

By John Welsh

Wichita Eagle 12/22/01

Ingalls-Edison ignored test rules

Two administrators at the Wichita school encouraged teachers to flout procedures on achievement tests, district says

By Josh Funk

Wichita Eagle 2/3/02

Teachers: Edison was warned

Three former Edison teachers say they told the company about testing irregularities, but school officials say that isn't so

By Josh Funk

Associated Press 5/17/02

Boston charter school severs ties with Edison Schools

By Jay Lindsay

Excerpt: Boston Renaissance's test results have been decidedly middle-of-the-pack, Blodget said.

Boston Globe, 5/17/02

Boston Charter School Dropping Links to Edison

By Anand Vaishnav

Excerpt: Blodget said [:] "But it would be disingenuous of me to say we weren't disappointed that we hadn't seen more progress..."

Bloomberg News 5/16/02

Edison Schools Loses Boston Contract, Delays Filing

By David Russell, Miles Weiss and David Evans

Excerpt: The Wall Street Journal reported earlier today Edison lost the Boston Renaissance contract because of lagging test scores. Edison spokesman Tucker said there were "a variety of factors," including problems with the structure of the school's leadership.

PR Newswire, May 16

[http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/020516/nyth112a\\_2.html](http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/020516/nyth112a_2.html)

Correction -- Edison Schools Inc.

In the news release, Edison Schools (Nasdaq: EDSN - News) Announces Change in Relationship With Boston Renaissance Charter School, issued earlier today by Edison Schools over PR Newswire, we are advised by the company that a paragraph was omitted.

The fifth paragraph should now read:

"Edison has played a critical role in the development and growth of Renaissance,' said Dudley Blodget, president of the Renaissance Board. 'Our decision to separate represents the Board's belief that we have the strength on-site to move the school forward. In many ways we have experienced academic success and we have done so with Edison as our partner.'"

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