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Parents Advocating School Accountability
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Edison Likely to Lose 2 Wichita Schools

Developments raise more questions about “positive” achievement claims

Controversial, for-profit Edison Schools Inc. is expected to lose contracts for two troubled schools in Wichita, Kan.

The Wichita Board of Education intends at its Jan. 14 meeting to initiate returning Edison-Ingalls Partnership School and Edison-Isley Partnership School to district control, the Wichita Eagle reported.

Edison-Ingalls was rocked by scandal in December when the principal and assistant principal were removed over accusations that they helped students cheat on standardized tests.

Both schools are plagued by “low test scores, declining enrollment, high teacher turnover” as well as Ingalls’ testing violations, the Eagle reported. “Ingalls’ enrollment dropped from a high of 722 in 1997 to 426 this year, and of the 37 teachers there last year, 20 left,” the newspaper said.

Despite the catalog of problems, Edison Schools Inc. listed both schools as showing “positive gains” in its annual School Performance Report, released in October 2001.

The Wichita problems cast further doubt on Edison’s claim that 84 percent of the company’s schools showed “positive gains” in 2000-2001.

The School Performance Report listed 62 schools as “positive” in a year when the company ran 113 schools. The correct percentage for 62 out of 113 would be 54.86. In addition, many of the 62 schools Edison labeled “positive” are in reality badly troubled. The “positive” list includes at least eight schools for which contracts with Edison have been or are being severed – the loss of two Wichita schools would bring that number to 10. The positive list also includes at least 10 schools that have landed on their states’ lists of lowest-performing schools.

In Wichita, Edison would still run two other schools if the Ingalls and Isley contracts were severed, but school board members are discussing terminating those contracts as well. “My question is should we go further and ask Edison to leave entirely? ... I’m leaning that way,” board member Jim Ward told the Eagle.

It was unclear how Edison would react to such a move. When San Francisco’s school board moved to terminate its contract for an Edison school last spring, the company countered with a furious legal, public-relations and political-lobbying war. The Edison response appeared to contradict the company’s insistence that it is accountable because “if students don’t improve, the company can be fired,” as the Associated Press paraphrased Edison spokesman Adam Tucker in a

Jan. 7, 2002, article.

Amid a frenzy of legal maneuvers by Edison, international press coverage and pressure on Edison's behalf from such officials as U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the San Francisco district agreed to a compromise: Edison severed its ties with the district but was allowed to seek a charter for its one San Francisco school from the California state Board of Education. But Edison has allowed other contracts to be severed with less resistance.

The San Francisco school, Edison Charter Academy, ranks lowest in achievement of all the city's 75 elementary schools, and the state Board of Education has warned Edison Schools that the school must improve or lose its charter.

In another development, the principal of an Edison school in Peoria, Ill., is leaving amid problems at the school. "We are not happy with performance" at Northmoor-Edison School, Edison Vice President Donna Nicholson has told the Peoria Journal-Star. The Journal-Star also reported that only 25 percent of Northmoor families participate in the program that supposedly offers a free take-home computer to the family of every Edison student in third grade and up.

Edison Schools includes Northmoor-Edison on its "positive gains" list.

Edison Schools 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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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.

Wichita Eagle, Jan. 12, 2002

Article on possible severing of contract for 2 Edison schools

http://web.wichitaeagle.com/content/wichitaeagle/2002/01/12/education/0112edison_txt.htm

Northmoor-Edison School seeking a principal Peoria, Ill., school district website (scroll to 2002-03 administrative vacancies):

<http://www.peoria.psd150.org/employ.html>

Peoria Journal-Star, Jan. 8, 2002

Article on Northmoor-Edison School, which reports high parent satisfaction but many problems

<http://www.pjstar.com/news/topnews/g22124a.html>
(available free of charge only until Jan. 15)

Edison schools claimed by Edison Schools Inc. to show “positive gains” but for which contracts have been or are being severed*:

- Edison Charter Academy, San Francisco, Calif.**
- Edison-PPL School, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Elm Creek Elementary School, Southwest Independent School District, Atascosa, Texas
- Granville Charter School, Trenton, N.J.
- Kreiwald Road Elementary School, Southwest Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas
- McNair-Edison Junior Academy, Southwest Independent School District, San Antonio/Atascosa, Texas
- Mid-Michigan Public School Academy, Lansing, Mich.
- Timberview-Edison Junior Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.

*Note: This list includes only schools with severed contracts that appear on Edison’s list of schools purportedly showing “positive gains.” Edison has also lost contracts in Goldsboro, N.C., and Sherman, Texas, and has been removed from an additional school in Southwest Independent School District, San Antonio/Atascosa, Texas, that did not appear on the “positive” list.

**Note: The San Francisco Unified School District severed its contract with Edison Schools Inc. for Edison Charter Academy, but Edison sought and received a charter for Edison Charter Academy from the California state Board of Education. The state Board of Education has put the company on notice that the charter is in jeopardy if performance doesn’t improve.

Edison schools claimed by Edison Schools Inc. to show “positive gains” but that appear on their states’ lists of lowest-performing schools*:

- Boston-Renaissance Charter School, Boston, Mass.
- Edison Charter Academy, San Francisco, Calif.
- Edison-Bethune Charter Academy, Fresno, Calif.
- Edison-Henderson Academy, Dallas, Texas
- Edison-McNair Academy, East Palo Alto, Calif.
- Feitshans-Edison School, Springfield, Ill.
- Franklin-Edison School, Peoria, Ill.
- Henry E.S. Reeves Elementary School, Miami, Fla.
- Phillips-Edison Charter School, Napa, Calif.
- Seven Hills Charter School, Worcester, Mass.

*Note: This list includes only schools that appear on Edison’s list of schools purportedly showing “positive gains” and that researchers have located on various states’ lists of lowest-performing

schools. It does not include schools that appear on state low-performing lists but that do not appear on Edison's "positive gains" list. In addition, the list may not include all such schools because information is not equally accessible for every state.