



Newsire - November 25, 2008

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Vol. 10, No. 44

FOOD FOR THOUGHT. The turkeys at Newsire wish you and your families a Blessed, Happy and Healthy Thanksgiving. We are thankful for your many kindnesses throughout the year, especially that which you do for children young and old, and especially those who most need something for which they may be thankful. We believe that includes a guarantee to a GREAT (not just a "free and appropriate") education of their parent's or guardian's choosing. As you're sitting around the dinner table Thursday, see what your relatives think about that, and if they don't know about it, take time to feed them a little bit of knowledge with their stuffing. If you need talking points, there's a gravy boat load of them [HERE](#).



TRANSITION

WELCOME TO D.C. Dear Sasha and Malia - Let us be one of the first to welcome you to Washington. We were so glad to hear of your parents' decision last week to [enroll you in Sidwell Friends](#) (it is a fabulous school). Many in the education space were hoping you would attend a D.C. public school or perhaps even one of the city's many successful charters. We'd like to think of the choice of Sidwell as an indication of your father's private support of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program, even though vouchers are not a part of the education plans promoted by his biggest supporters (more on that below). Your new school participates in a wonderful program that has provided the opportunity for more than 6,800 students from failing public schools throughout D.C. to enjoy the benefits of an education at schools such as yours, and to achieve academically in environments once closed to them. We hope that through your school experience, your father soon understands that the true advantage that choice brings families is one the country as a whole will benefit from as well.

STATUS: QUO. Two weeks into the transition, and already we see that Obama the Reformer is taking a few steps back from his campaign rhetoric on education. His [closest education advisor](#) is Linda Darling-Hammond, a status quo technician with throw-back ideas on unions and funding. His [DOE transition team](#) includes a handful of Berkeley attorneys. This group is looking oh so 90's. One bright spot is the addition of Jon Schnur, co-founder of New Leaders for New Schools and friend of charters, though he will certainly have an uphill battle to make his voice heard above the collective agreement among the others.

CHOICE

A FAMILY AFFAIR. When John Schnatter, founder and chairman of Papa Johns, found himself shocked by the state of America's education system and wanted to [commit to bettering the opportunities for students](#) in his home state of Kentucky, his research led him to School Choice Scholarships, a program that since 1998 has helped offer school choice to more than 2,500 students in the Louisville metro area. Most important to Schnatter was parental involvement and investment in the program. In fact, his interest in how school choice affects parents led to the creation of a survey to study how student participation in the SCS program related to their parents' attitudes. He also instituted the beginnings of a "Balanced Parenting" workshop with the hope of increasing "parents' effectiveness in parenting their children and instilling values and integrity that promote success in academics and in life in general." Learn more about School Choice Scholarships [HERE](#).



CHILDREN FIRST. Last week, the Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia offered [1,300 four-year elementary school scholarships](#) to low-income families who wish to send their children to nonpublic schools - 300 more than last year. 3,000 students currently get assistance from the privately underwritten Fund, and more than 200 nonpublic schools in the area participate in the scholarship program.

A [recent annual report](#) found that "the lives of 96,000 children across the United States have been changed for the better by CSF scholarships worth more than \$315 million."

This is just one example of a scholarship that is working for students and their families, allowing them to leave broken schools for new chances elsewhere. Parents need to keep fighting and advocating for school choice and opportunities for children throughout the country.

UNIONS

BUYER BEWARE. In what has been billed as her first major policy speech since taking the lead as AFT head, Randi Weingarten pledged that her union would [consider ideas](#) to reform the Nation's education, saying, "In the spirit of this extraordinary moment and as a pledge of shared responsibility, I'll take the first step."

"With the exception of vouchers, which siphon scarce resources from our public schools, no issue should be off the table, provided it is good for children and fair for teachers."

Though children come before teachers in her statement, Randi clearly feels that adults come first when it comes to vouchers, even though study after study clearly shows students and their parents overwhelmingly praise the results. Reading between the lines, perhaps the AFT sees their stranglehold on education loosening, with battlefronts being set in D.C. and elsewhere with education reform advocates such as D.C. School Chancellor Michelle Rhee, Newark, NJ Mayor Cory Booker [newly elected Sacramento, CA Mayor Kevin Johnson](#) and others.

Other News

LEADERSHIP. Do you demonstrate a "burning commitment" to student achievement along with an optimistic, "can-do" world view? If so, The Leadership Academy for Charter and Alternative Schools, a free year-long professional development program offered by The University of Minnesota's Center for School Change, may be a great fit. Application materials for 2009-10 will be made available online by January 2009. To learn more, visit the Center for School Change [HERE](#).

