

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

THOMAS B.
FORDHAM
INSTITUTE
ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE



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2012 HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY



Report: State of State Science Standards 2012

This much-noticed fifty-state analysis of science standards revealed trouble: Most states earned Ds or Fs for their K–12 standards in this crucial subject, and only six jurisdictions received As.

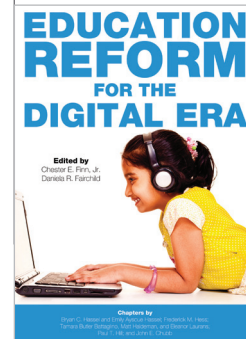
FEBRUARY



Ohio event: Embracing the Common Core: Helping Students Thrive

Hundreds gathered in Columbus for this conversation about implementation of the Common Core standards in Ohio. Speakers included Mike Cohen, president of Achieve; Debe Terhar, president of the State Board of Education; and Stan Heffner, (then) state superintendent.

APRIL



Book: Education Reform for the Digital Era

Can we be smarter about taking high-quality online and blended schools to scale—and to educational success? Yes, says this volume, as it addresses such thorny policy issues as quality control, staffing, funding, and governance for the digital sector.

MAY



Ohio event: Digital Learning: The Future of Schooling?

Also in Columbus, national and state experts and policymakers discussed digital learning in the context of the Common Core, teacher evaluations and school accountability, governance challenges, and school-funding dilemmas.

JUNE



Washington event: Is American Education Coming Apart?

Acclaimed scholar/pundit/provocateur Charles Murray—building off his most recent book—explained what America's growing class divide means for K–12 education.



Blog post: The Fastest Gentrifying Neighborhoods in the United States

Which communities in the U.S. are witnessing the greatest amount of gentrification? In this post, Mike Petrilli used Census data to track which zip codes saw the greatest demographic shifts. Columbia, SC, and Chattanooga, TN, turned out on top.

2012 HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

JULY



Washington event: Ten Years After NCLB: Is the GOP Moving Forward, Backward, or Sideways on Education?

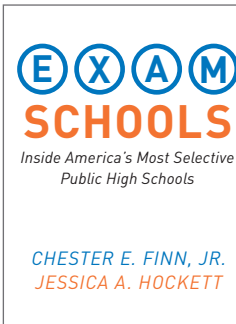
The Republican stance on education, and particularly on federal education policy, is shifting. But is it moving in any clear direction—or for the better? Fordham brought together two former GOP secretaries of education, Senator Lamar Alexander and Margaret Spellings, to consider these questions.

SEPTEMBER

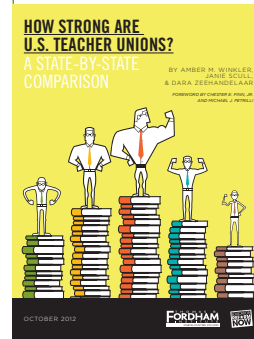
Book: Exam Schools: Inside America's Most Selective Public High Schools

In this pioneering study, Chester Finn and Jessica Hockett showed that for more than 100,000 high-achieving students each year, the key to a quality education is an academically selective public high school. This Princeton University Press

book opened a new window on a small, sometimes controversial, yet crucial segment of U.S. public education.



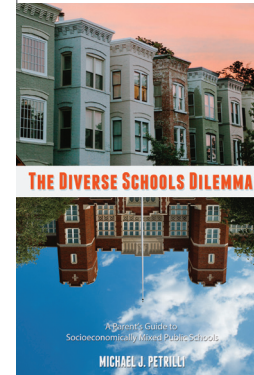
OCTOBER



Report: How Strong Are U.S. Teacher Unions? A State-By-State Comparison

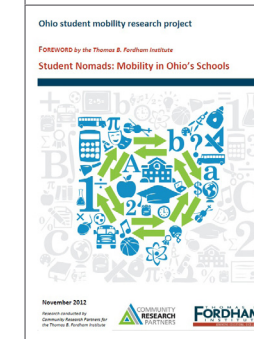
This study represented the most comprehensive analysis ever made of American teacher unions' strength, ranking all fifty states and the District of Columbia according to the power and influence of their unions.

NOVEMBER



Book: The Diverse Schools Dilemma

Mike Petrilli offered parents a candid, eye-opening explanation of what goes into the decision to send one's child to a school with youngsters from a variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Can these schools successfully meet the educational needs of all those kids? How do middle-class children fare in these environments?



Ohio report: Student Nomads: Mobility in Ohio's Schools

This pioneering and comprehensive study—the farthest-reaching ever conducted by Fordham's Ohio team—investigated student mobility among 3,000 Ohio schools and their districts, with close-up analyses of five metro areas.



FROM CHECKER'S DESK: REFLECTIONS ON 2012

2012 was a lively and promising year for education reformers across much of the United States, including even a bit of (highly controversial) activity in Washington, D.C., thanks to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's No Child Left Behind waiver program. Because

Congress was gridlocked, Duncan took it upon himself to ease some of the misery caused by NCLB's decade-old eccentricities—and seized the opportunity to impose his own top priorities on waiver-hungry states. This yielded the bizarre combination of promising policy via a mechanism of dubious constitutionality. Such is life in the nation's capital during these peculiar times.

The other big development with national significance was the continuing evolution of—and arguments over—the Common Core standards for English language arts (ELA) and math. Such was the enthusiasm of Messrs. Duncan and Obama for these generally strong academic expectations that it was intermittently hard to remember that this was and remains a state-driven initiative. But it was—and is—and it's one of the many big-picture policy shifts that we at Fordham have remained immersed in.

Some of our friends on the political right—and we have many there, as well as in the center and across a swath of the left—charged us with selling out to the forces of top-down, federally driven reform. It's not true, but that's how things are seen in our polarized, politicked time. Similar challenges get hurled when we insist that schools of choice, when they accept public dollars (including those attached to vouchers), must account to the public for their educational accomplishments.

But we don't really care about political correctness, whether from right or left. Our pole star is what's good for kids—and communities, taxpayers, and the public interest. We call 'em as we see 'em. And after a decade and a half, I do believe we get some respect for speaking the truth as we see it, without much concern for being thought well of by one faction or another.

Outside the Beltway, a number of good things happened for American kids in the education sphere during 2012:

- Louisiana's new statewide voucher program got off to an excellent start, striking just the right balance between choice and accountability. (A former Fordham staffer now working for Governor Jindal deserves some credit for this.)
- Despite all the fuss and fury, the Common Core stayed on track—and we've embarked on several studies of its implementation and long-term governance and weighed in a few times when false accusations were hurled at it.
- The November election brought Washington State its first charter school law—and repudiated a scurrilous union-led effort to enshrine collective bargaining in the Michigan state constitution

But not all the news was good. Tony Bennett, Indiana's crusading state superintendent, failed to win a second term. The Chicago Teachers Union showed its true colors—which are not student-centered, to put it mildly.

And the dreadful murders of schoolchildren at Sandy Hook caused national mourning—while also surfacing the issue of school safety (as well as a huge brouhaha over gun control).

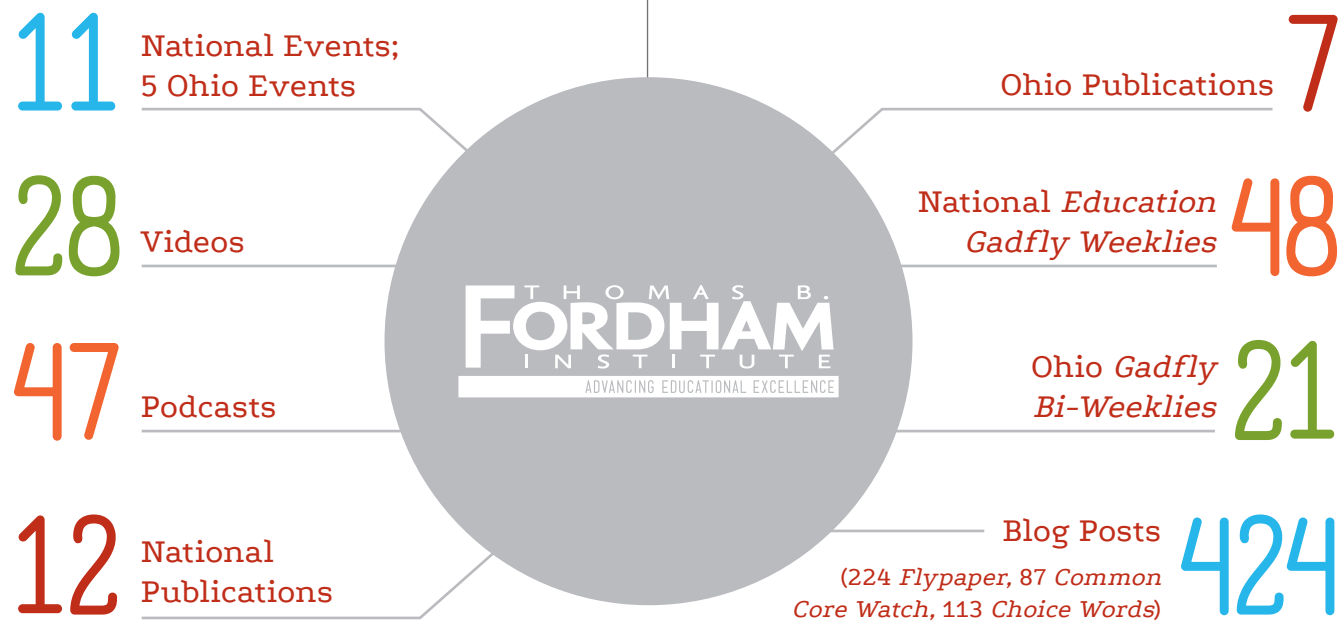
As you'll read in the pages that follow, Fordham has been in the midst of most of these issues and many others at the national level, as well as all sorts of developments in Ohio. We've got a great staff, a fabulous board, and enough—just enough—outside support to maintain a lively, productive, and (we like to think) constructive presence in the major education debates of the day. Please stay tuned for more to come.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Chester E. Finn, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

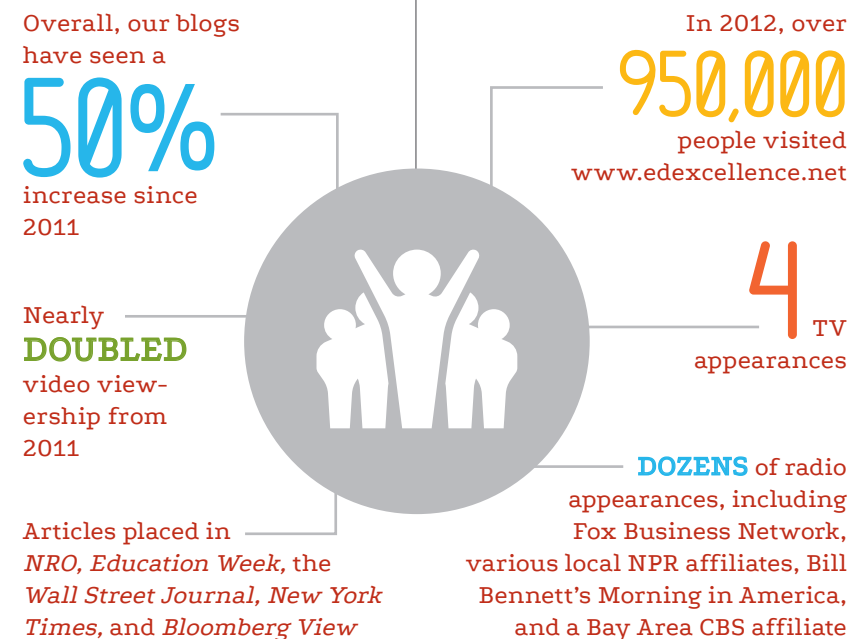
Chester E. Finn, Jr.
President
February 2013

2012 BY THE NUMBERS

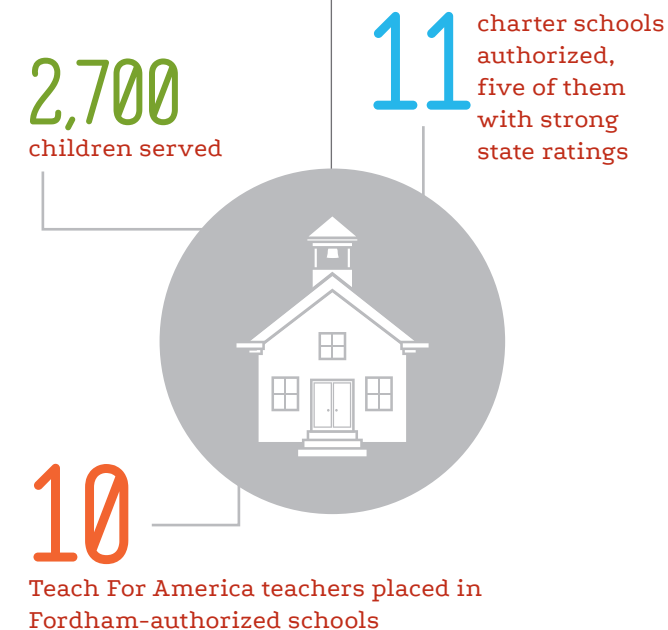
WHAT WE DID



WHO KNEW



ON THE GROUND



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING GADFLY

Over our fifteen years of existence, Fordham has helped to shift the education-policy conversation, bringing tough-minded reforms into the mainstream and then forcefully monitoring what comes of them. Our primary roles, both nationally and in Ohio, are to frame issues, sometimes in unconventional ways; to shape the terms of debate, often going against the education mainstream; to identify problems that are being ignored or papered over; and to offer independent, thoughtful criticism of friend and foe alike. We advocate policies and practices that we believe will advance educational excellence for young Americans, but we also bring to the process a measure of humility, a respect for data, and a willingness to change our minds.

We focus our work on three key policy priorities: quality standards and assessments, a vibrant marketplace of top-notch schools for parents, and a strengthened capacity to deliver quality education to all—though we occasionally reach beyond them as education issues, from ESEA reauthorization to human-capital improvements, hit the main stage.

We produce a steady flow of quality research that is not only credible and rigorous but also policy relevant and accessible to lay readers. In 2012, we published nineteen reports, books, and policy briefs, amassing a whopping 97,000 report-page views.

To further fight complacent thinking and counter dogmatism, we also maintain a sophisticated communications infrastructure—with our weekly *Education Gadfly* newsletter, four distinct blogs, ever-changing website and press operation, strong social-media presence, events, and more. This enables us to engage with the education-policy community and with broader audiences on a regular basis. And we're keen to keep our commentary fresh and our outlook fair yet critical. To further that end, we brought on blogger-and-thinker-extraordinaire Andy Smarick (currently a partner at Bellwether Education and formerly New Jersey Commissioner of Education Chris Cerf's right-hand man) as a Bernard Lee Schwartz policy fellow at Fordham.

“The Fordham Institute provides such a steady diet of thoughtful and provocative thinking that I never fail to read every word.”

— Chris Cerf, New Jersey Education Commissioner

A go-to media source

One of Fordham's distinguishing attributes is our capacity to reach influential audiences through the national media. We are a leading source of accessible, plain-spoken experts for top reporters chasing key education issues: National and regional, mainstream and insider, journalists from outlets of many shapes and sizes turned to Fordham spokespeople and research products. In 2012, Fordham's people, reports, studies, and op-eds appeared in print in such outlets as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Associated Press*, *The Economist*, *National Review Online*, *Education Week*, and more. Fordham also hit the airwaves in 2012, with analysts appearing on such programs as *NBC Nightly News*, *FOX & Friends*, and *The Kudlow Report*, as well as scores of local and regional radio stations.



Chester Finn discusses Mitt Romney's education plan on *NBC Nightly News* in July.



Fordham's Vice President for Research Amber Winkler discusses counter-bullying tactics on *Fox & Friends* in November.



Fordham's Executive Vice President Mike Petrilli discusses school integration on *The Kudlow Report* with Richard Kahlenberg in September.

Joining Forces

Along with our bully pulpit, we leverage strategic partnerships to expand the reach of our ideas. In 2012, for example, we joined with Student Achievement Partners to advance implementation of the Common Core standards in ELA and math and to monitor the forthcoming Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), particularly with an eye to their alignment with the Common Core math standards. We continued our push, together with the Center for American Progress, to bring education-governance reform squarely into the national conversation. We continued to work with other like-minded organizations and foundations on issues ranging from school leadership to federal policy to teacher preparation. And we reached local and state policymakers affecting change in real places through our collaborations with the Cities for Education Entrepreneurship Trust (CEE-Trust) and Policy Innovators in Education Network (PIE Net).

Further in 2012, we spoke at a number of edu-policy conferences—including the Foundation for Excellence in Education’s annual summit, the Philanthropy Roundtable’s annual meeting, the Council of Chief State School Officers’s members-only legislative conference, and NBC’s Education Nation—and events hosted by the Brookings Institution, Harvard University, and more. Informally, we give regular “backstage” advice to national, state, and local policymakers and organizations of all sorts that engage in education reform.

In Ohio, Fordham works closely with other reform-minded groups, including the state’s Alliance for Public Charter Schools; School Choice Ohio; the Cleveland Business Partnership; the Ohio Business Roundtable; and foundations such as the Cleveland, Gund, Nord, Mathile Family, and Lovett and Ruth Peters Foundation. We regularly engage with lawmakers, the governor’s office, state board members, and policymakers at the state department of education.

THE PROBLEM

Too many American children receive an inferior education because too many U.S. schools and school systems are dysfunctional or ineffective. This situation is most dire for our neediest children, who lack high-quality education options, receive dumbed-down curricula and weak instruction, and whose school systems are too often held hostage by adult interest groups, including but not limited to teacher unions. Nor are affluent youngsters getting the education they require to succeed. As a result, U.S. students trail our international competitors, and many are ill-prepared for college and career. Particularly galling is that these problems remain even though we spend more money per pupil than almost every other country.

In order for young Americans to succeed in college and the workforce, to participate knowledgeably in our democracy, and for our nation to maintain its leadership, prosperity, and security in the world, these problems must be solved. While the U.S. has made modest progress in some areas since being declared a “nation at risk,” we have a long way to go to create an education system worthy of our great country.

OUR MISSION

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is the nation’s leader in advancing educational excellence for every child through quality research, analysis, and commentary, as well as on-the-ground action and advocacy in Ohio.

We advance:

- High standards for schools, students and educators;
- Quality education options for families;
- A more productive, equitable, and efficient education system; and
- A culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and excellence.

We promote education reform by:

- Producing rigorous policy research and incisive analysis;
- Building coalitions with policymakers, donors, organizations, and others who share our vision; and
- Advocating bold solutions and comprehensive responses to education challenges, even when opposed by powerful interests and timid establishments.

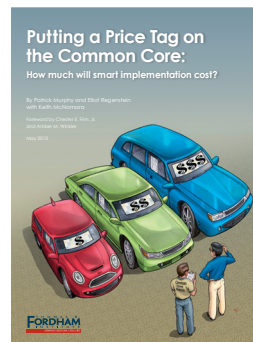
POLICY PRIORITIES

Standards and accountability

Since we released our first review of state academic standards in 1998, Fordham has been on the front lines of the push for all states to adopt rigorous expectations for their students and schools in *all* core subjects—and to attach well-designed assessments and forceful accountability structures to them.

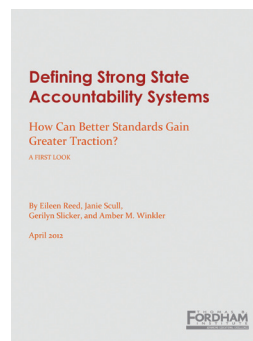
The bulk of our current work in this realm relates to the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and math, now adopted by forty-six states. These drew our support when our own reviewers found that they were stronger—in content, rigor, and more—than the standards that most states had devised on their own. With help from several foundations, we’re doing our best to help states understand and address Common Core implementation challenges, while also puzzling over the long-term governance arrangements for these standards and their assessments.

In 2012, we saw two immediate threats to faithful implementation of the Common Core: fears that increased costs associated with these standards would cause states to pull back from them and the possibility that states would not accompany the new standards and assessments with sound accountability systems.



Fordham addressed the former in our May 2012 report *Putting a Price Tag on the Common Core: How Much Will Smart Implementation Cost*, in which we estimated the implementation cost of the CCSS for each adopter state. (In fact, we made three separate estimates, depending on how elaborately the state chose to put the new standards into operation.) On the accountability front, April brought the publication of *Defining Strong State Accountability Systems: How Can Better Standards Gain Greater Traction?*

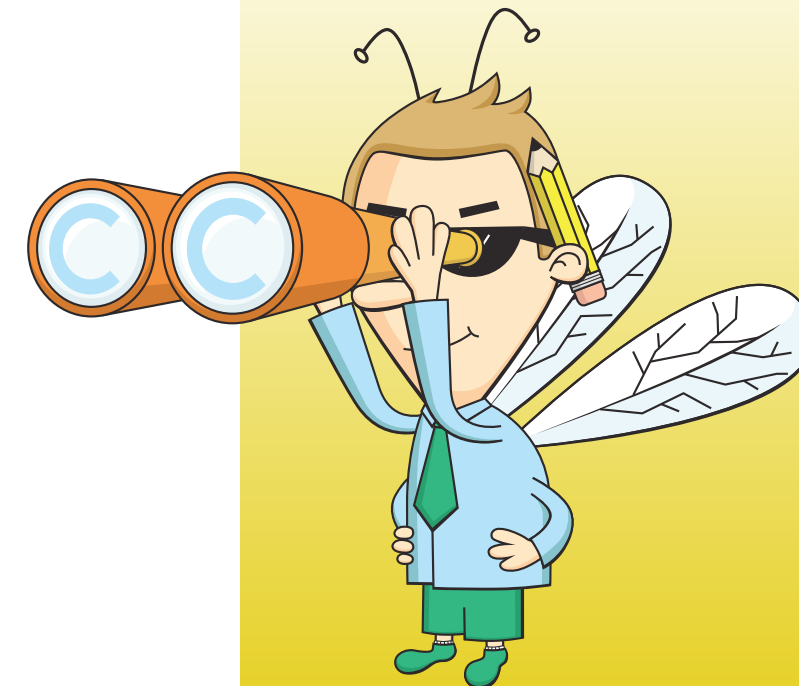
We didn’t limit our standards work to ELA and math—or to Common Core implementation. In January, we published a blockbuster review of every state’s science standards. The overall picture was dark: Twenty-six states earned a D or an F from our expert reviewers. Only six states earned an A or A-minus grade.



With multi-state (“Next Generation”) science standards now under development, we’ve been monitoring and trying to ensure the successful conclusion of that process. So far we’ve commented on two public drafts of the new science standards (one in 2012 and one in early 2013) and provided their drafters with much advice as to how to improve them. This process continues (see Mike’s letter on page 26).

In addition to research and analysis on standards-related issues, we attend to this work through partnerships with other organizations (most recently, Student Achievement Partners), thought sharing, events, and our *Common Core Watch* blog, edited by Kathleen Porter-Magee. In 2012, that blog featured eighty-seven posts, averaging over 600 unique views each. The following are among the most influential:

- “How will reading instruction change when aligned to the Common Core?,” January 27, 2012
- “Are ‘just right’ books right for the Common Core?,” April 18, 2012
- “New York Provides Much Needed Common Core Assessment Guidance,” June 29, 2012
- “Real Lessons from Finland: Hard Choices Rigorously Implemented,” December 27, 2012



EXCERPT FROM “*Are ‘just right’ books right for the Common Core?*”

by Kathleen Porter-Magee, April 18

In the 1990s, much of the fireworks in the education-policy debate centered around a “reading war” where supporters of whole language squared off against the forces of phonics. Now, in the Common Core era, I predict a similar firestorm is on the horizon. Only this time, the debate will not be about how to teach students to read in the first place, but rather how to help them build knowledge and improve comprehension over time. More specifically: It’s about how to choose the books you are asking students to read. And the outcome of this debate could go a long way towards deciding the long-term impact of CCSS ELA standards.

The prevailing view among many educators in the United States today is that the best way to improve student reading comprehension is to assign books that are “just right” for individual students.

Enter the Common Core. The “Grade Appropriate” approach that drives its ELA standards is based on a very different assumption. Teachers who follow the “Grade Appropriate” theory select books, poems, articles, and stories that are appropriate for the grade level, even if that level is above the students’ instructional or independent reading level.

Teaching with this approach can be more challenging, particularly in schools where many students are far behind grade level. Figuring out how to target remediation and how to scaffold difficult texts is exactly the kind of work that needs to happen to make a serious push to close the reading gap. And for those looking at whether CCSS is going to live up to its promise to drive student achievement, we could do worse than to start tracking the type and complexity of texts being assigned in classrooms across the country as Common Core implementation ramps up.

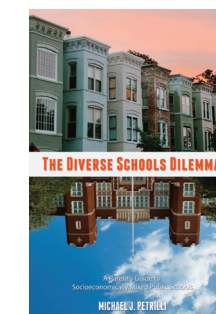
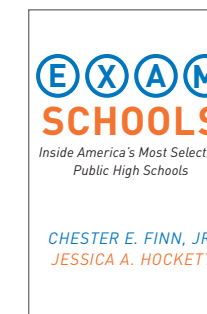
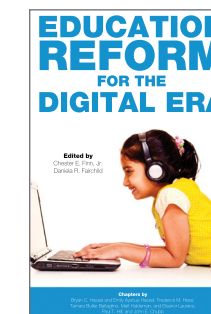
Quality choices for all students

Fordham’s passion for school choice is long standing. We’re keen on choice because it frees individuals and families to select the education options best suited to their children while also building dynamism, entrepreneurialism, and client-responsiveness into what is too often a stodgy, adult-centered monopoly. We are equally insistent that these be *quality* choices and that, if public dollars pay for them, they be held accountable to the public for their results. (To that end, we practice what we preach as a charter school sponsor in Ohio—see page 21).

“The Fordham Institute provides a clear and consistent voice in favor of quality educational options and strong accountability for all stakeholders. Its commitment to closing the achievement gap and fostering a long overdue national discussion on education reform should be applauded. Fordham will continue to be a key force on the education-reform scene for years to come.”

— Tony Bennett, Florida commissioner of education

Quality choices can take many forms, and in 2012 we highlighted several of these—and how they can contribute to a robust marketplace of worthy options for parents and students. To this end, we published three books, each dealing with a different niche in the school-choice edifice. In April, we published *Education Reform for the Digital Era*, which addressed a quintet of thorny policy issues that impede sound digital instruction from going to scale—including quality control, staffing, and funding. In September, Chester Finn co-authored *Exam Schools: Inside America’s Most Selective Public Schools*, the first close-up look at America’s academically selective public high schools, 165 of which serve more than 100,000 of our best and brightest youngsters. Then in November, Mike Petrilli authored *The Diverse Schools Dilemma*, in which he offered advice for parents trying to balance their desire for a racially and socioeconomically diverse school with their wish for quality instruction in a child-centered environment.



In 2012, we also brought on board a new face to help lead our program on parental choice. Since starting with Fordham, Adam Emerson has briefed policymakers and legislative aides, spoken on panels, and advised national and regional advocacy organizations on choice-related initiatives—be they charter, voucher, or other. He also regularly contributes to Fordham’s *Choice Words* blog, producing 113 posts in 2012, and edits our monthly *Charters and Choice* e-digest. The following are among his top blog posts:

- “It SHOULD be hard to pull the parent trigger,” February 22, 2012
- “Private school choice AND quality control,” July 24, 2012
- “What the Democratic Party platform used to say about school choice,” September 7, 2012
- “A new business model for Catholic schools amid tough times,” October 18, 2012



EXCERPT FROM “*What the Democratic Party platform used to say about school choice*”

by Adam Emerson, September 7

The 2012 Democratic Party platform released this week calls for the expansion of “public school options for low-income youth,” a position that has appeared in varying language in every Democratic platform since 1992. But as Marc Fisher of the *Washington Post* reported this week, the Democratic platform historically has been “a jagged series of experiments” that once made room for more than just *public*-school choice.

Today, the national party fervently rejects vouchers for private and parochial schools, but that wasn’t the case thirty years ago. In 1972, Democrats sought to “channel financial aid by a Constitutional formula to children in non-public schools,” a position that reflected not only the influence of the Catholic Church at the time but also the drive, the values, and the persistence of the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Moynihan once urged liberals to rethink their view of education. “State monopoly is no more appropriate to liberal belief in this field than in any other,” he wrote in his 1978 *Harper’s* essay. More state Democratic legislators have come to accept this, but they share no kinship with their party’s leaders. The Democratic Party deserves credit for embracing and enhancing public school choice, but it has failed to see what Moynihan would later describe as “the essentially liberal nature of this pluralist proposition.”

The standards and choice reforms need one another—and both require the “capacities” outlined below. We intend to sustain and deepen our understanding of how school choice plus outcomes-based accountability yield good results for kids. Our ongoing work includes probing the regulatory environments surrounding charter schools and voucher programs; studying the mechanisms (such as charter authorizers and new-school incubators) that make success in education’s entrepreneurial sector more likely; and understanding parents’ education preferences in finer detail.

“The sweeping education changes that we’ve witnessed in recent years owe much to the Fordham Institute and its able thinkers/advocates. In this time of major—and mostly constructive—upheavals in K-12 policy, Fordham’s tenacity, clear vision, and commitment to excellence have made a huge contribution that I hope will continue.”

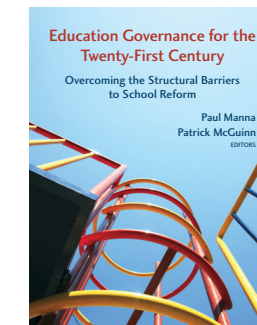
– U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander

Building capacity

In one sense, “capacity building” is our newest priority. Yet it’s also the sum of several strands and mini-strands of work that we’ve engaged in for years. We’ve come to understand that in order to succeed on the ground and to having staying power, both standards- and choice-based reforms depend on first-rate human talent, adroit deployment of modern technologies, smart structural and governance arrangements, and a fidelity to efficiency and productivity.

In this vein, we released a series of reports in 2012 that showed how states and districts can boost efficiency—in general and special education alike—while maintaining quality education. A policy brief by Mike Petrilli offered tangible recommendations for districts looking to “stretch the school dollar” (including paying for productivity and thoughtfully integrating technology). A survey of the American public explained where folks think budget cuts, when necessary, should be made. And a report by former Arlington (MA) superintendent Nathan Levenson provided insights into special-education spending, staffing, and program quality.

As 2013 opened, we also released—in partnership with the Center for American Progress—a seminal volume on restructuring education governance for the twenty-first century, available through the Brookings Institution Press.



In the trenches: Ohio policy and advocacy

As important to Fordham as our research and commentary from Washington is our policy and advocacy work in our home state of Ohio—and our on-the-ground operation as a charter school authorizer. Not only do those real-world efforts inform and influence our national perspective; they also bring tangible change to a state that needs it. With offices in Dayton and Columbus, we engage in pressing education battles at the statehouse, in the media, and in a growing number of local communities.

Our Ohio policy work has three main components:

1. Thought partner. In this role, sometimes played behind the scenes, sometimes in plain view, we provide innovative, fair-minded ideas—shaped by data—to the movers and shakers in Ohio’s K–12 education world. We offer research, analysis, and communications on pressing education-reform issues, opportunities, and challenges for lawmakers, the Governor’s office, state and local board members, school and community leaders, and many others. Much of this work is inherently reactive and some of it is lonely—when Fordham finds itself going against the tide. Our goal here is to help move sound policies and practices—and stop the really atrocious kind—in ways that reflect our understanding of what’s best for kids, communities, taxpayers, and the common good.

2. Shaping the reform agenda. Our Ohio team works with our D.C. team and other partners to identify significant longer-term issues facing the Buckeye State. To inform this process, we generate two or three substantial research projects per year, often on issues that otherwise go unexamined (e.g., special-education costs, school funding, pupil mobility). Such studies tackle important topics in interesting and sometimes provocative ways and establish our credibility at the statehouse, with the media, and in schools and school districts.

3. Gadfly. As Fordham-National does from Washington, so Fordham-Ohio does from Columbus: We comment publicly and often on the education issues of the day and the challenges and agendas for tomorrow. In this way, we communicate problems, possibilities, options, preferences, warnings, and ideas to state officials, policy elites, and the broader public via “new media” (our blog, the *Ohio Gadfly Daily*, the bi-weekly *Ohio Gadfly* newsletter, etc.), traditional media (newspapers, radio, etc.), and public events of various sorts and sizes across the state.

In 2012, for example, Fordham helped champion legislation requiring students to demonstrate reading proficiency before leaving third grade and we were strong proponents of the state’s recent move to an A–F rating scale for schools, rather than the more confusing terminology that was previously used. (Under the new law, a middling school will get a “C” rather than be dubbed “Continuous

Improvement.”) In recent months, we’ve been much involved with school-finance reform as Governor Kasich’s team developed its ambitious plan to overhaul the state’s antiquated system of paying for public education.

The past year also saw our Ohio team becoming more active at the district level, particularly in Cleveland and Columbus. In Cleveland, for instance, we worked with Mayor Jackson, the philanthropic and business communities, and district leadership to shepherd legislation through the General Assembly that will (along with much else) provide high-performing charter schools in Cleveland with local levy dollars to support their operations.

To further this work—both state-based policies and district-level implementation—we hosted a series of public events, as well as briefings for legislators, gubernatorial aides, state board members, and others. Our February session on “Embracing the Common Core,” for example, brought teachers, district personnel, and others together to hear from local, state, and national leaders as to what the Common Core will mean for Ohio education. Throughout the year, we also brought national experts to the Buckeye State to discuss issues ranging from school funding to voucher accountability.

Not Your Average Think Tank: Charter Sponsorship

Fordham speaks from a unique vantage point in the education-policy arena, as we’re both a national and Ohio-based policy-research organization and a sponsor (aka authorizer) for eleven charter (aka community) schools in the Buckeye State. As a charter sponsor, we struggle every day with real challenges facing educators and students. This work grounds and informs our policy, research, and advocacy efforts.

In 2012, the schools we sponsored served some 2,700 students throughout Ohio—with largely positive results (though not uniformly so). Two of the eight schools we sponsored in 2011–12 (our other three schools opened in autumn 2012) received a state academic rating of Excellent (A), two were rated Effective (B), and one was rated Continuous Improvement (C). However, three Fordham-sponsored schools continued to struggle, with two rated Academic Watch (D) and one in Academic Emergency (F).



Students at Fordham-sponsored Columbus Collegiate Academy-Main

FORDHAM-SPONSORED CHARTER (“COMMUNITY”) SCHOOLS AT A GLANCE 2012–13

SCHOOL	GRADES SERVED	ENROLLMENT	LOCATION
Columbus Collegiate Academy – Main	6–8	190	Columbus, OH
Columbus Collegiate Academy – West	6	70	Columbus, OH
Dayton Leadership Academies – Dayton Liberty Campus	K–8	304	Dayton, OH
Dayton Leadership Academies – Dayton View Campus	K–8	384	Dayton, OH
DECA (Dayton Early College Academy) PREP	K–2, 6	240	Dayton, OH
KIPP: Journey Academy	5–8	317	Columbus, OH
Phoenix Community Learning Center	K-8	348	Cincinnati, OH
Sciotoville Community School	5–12	304	Sciotoville, OH
Sciotoville Elementary Academy	K–4	141	Sciotoville, OH
Springfield Academy of Excellence	K–6	244	Springfield, OH
Village Preparatory School – Woodland Hills Campus	K–2	161	Cleveland, OH
Total students served		2,703	

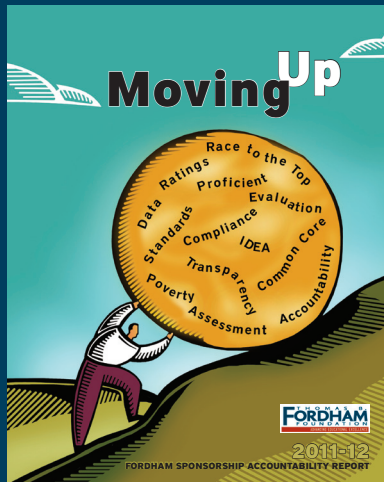
In all three cases, Fordham staff and board members worked closely and collaboratively with school leaders to encourage significant changes in management, curriculum, and operations. This led to some tough decisions about the schools’ futures. To illustrate these challenges—and opportunities—we asked Ellen Belcher, award-winning journalist and former editorial-page editor of the *Dayton Daily News*, to look into why two of the schools haven’t lived up to their promise and why we (the sponsor, the schools’ governing board members, and the larger community) should continue to hold out hope that the schools can in fact become high-performing academic centers of excellence.

Today, Fordham’s portfolio of charter schools is among the strongest in Ohio—and it’s growing. We expect to add three schools in the autumn of 2014 and more thereafter. Although we once regarded charter authorizing as a temporary activity for Fordham—helping to fill a worrisome void in Ohio—after much reflection we’ve decided to stick with it, and get steadily better at it, for the foreseeable future.

We’ve also worked hard to share insights and tools gained from our nine years of charter authorizing with others. In the fall of 2012, we offered perspectives on charter closures at the annual conference of the National Alliance of Charter School Authorizers. We review charter applications for other sponsoring organizations—including other nonprofits, state departments of education, and national entities—and are a member of Ohio’s sponsor performance-review workgroup. Looking forward, we’re developing a sponsor evaluation based on NACSA’s principles that will be helpful not only for our own work in Ohio but also for others across state lines.

EXCERPT FROM “*Breaking Up is Hard to Do (The Edison Story in Dayton)*”

by Ellen Belcher



there have been heated public meetings and recriminations. But the rationale for the firing was not a new one: The company, now known as EdisonLearning, never delivered.

What does Edison’s exit mean in Dayton?

Edison Schools, Inc. had everything going for it when it opened a charter school in Dayton, Ohio, in 1999.

Twelve years later—and twenty years after the national Edison experiment began—the company was fired in Dayton. There was none of the fanfare and public notice that accompanied Edison’s entry. In that sense, Edison’s experience in Dayton ended better than it did in other places, where

The need to provide a quality alternative to Dayton public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods hasn’t gone away. But the naïve or heady or uninformed notion—pick your adjective—that stubbornly poor test scores can be dramatically improved if only business acumen is thrown at the problem has been painfully discredited.

John Chubb, who was senior executive vice president of Edison until February 2010, said the “biggest challenge” in Dayton was hiring good people. Edison struggled to recruit principals and teachers to come to Dayton. The company, he said, offered signing bonuses to prospective employees and hired Teach For America leaders, hoping they could connect with eager, young teachers.

Chester E. Finn, Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, whose sister organization sponsors the two schools overseen by the Alliance for Community Schools board, is among the most disillusioned about Edison’s effort in Dayton. He said that the company’s “horror show” in his hometown is a special embarrassment.

“They did an abysmal job in Dayton,” Finn said. “I think it was an implementation and accountability failure.”

So why are the local school board and Fordham hopeful that Edison’s former schools can be turned around? What’s different today? What are the lessons of the Edison experiment in Dayton?

Ellen Ireland, the board chair, said that teachers have new authority about how the schools are run and that there’s a laser-like focus on individual student performance. She points to what are called the “data rooms” where each student’s academic strengths and weaknesses are displayed for teachers.

“It’s very powerful,” Ireland said.

Asked why he believed the schools can yet succeed, Fordham’s Finn quipped, “As far as I know, T.J. [the school’s director] does not walk on water.” But he added that there is ample evidence in Ohio and elsewhere that high-poverty schools can produce excellent results when the right school leader and teachers are hired. T.J. Wallace said his strategy is “working the plan”: hiring exceptional people and involving them in important decisions. Teachers say that they

appreciate being empowered to choose the schools’ curricula—which includes sticking with some Edison choices and bringing in different ones.

Wallace has also eagerly hired six teachers from Teach For America.

Said Brandie Larsen, one third-grade teacher, “I don’t know if there’s a secret sauce, but everybody has to be committed. It’s the level of commitment you have with your entire staff.”

Rev. Vanessa Ward, a member of the Alliance Community school’s board, said, “It’s so fragile. If you don’t have a school leader, you’re doomed. If you don’t have a strong vision, you’re doomed.”

Dick Penry, formerly the liaison to Edison, said, “Now, of course, there are no excuses. We can’t blame Edison if we’re not successful.”

Full text available at
<http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/moving-up.html>

FROM MIKE'S DESK:

EDUCATION REFORM AND THE FORDHAM INSTITUTE IN THE YEAR AHEAD

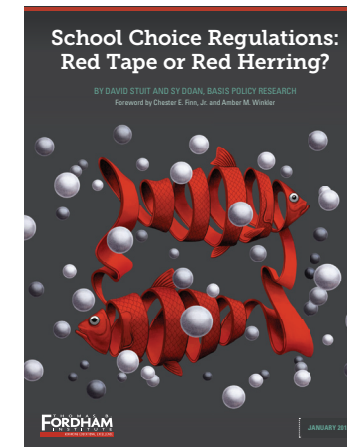


Mike Petrilli with Rhode Island State Superintendent Deborah Gist, Cumberland Mayor Daniel McKee, and students from Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy

Fordham friends,

Has our recap of 2012 exhausted you? Buck up, please, because there's a lot more to come in 2013. Here's some of what to look forward to:

- **Common Core implementation gets real (or so we hope).** With Common Core testing just two years away, it's fish-or-cut-bait time for states that have adopted these ambitious new academic standards. Some jurisdictions will likely fall by the wayside—two have already dropped out of the new assessment consortia—but those that are serious face the hard work of designing curricula, retraining teachers, and upgrading classroom practices—plus preparing the public for what will almost surely be a fall-off in the percentage of students deemed “proficient.” Fordham will keep tabs on all of this via our *Common Core Watch* blog and through a series of implementation studies that focus on both states and districts.
- **School choice keeps on growing.** Tennessee will almost surely join the roster of states with voucher or tax-credit-scholarship programs; North Carolina might, too. Meanwhile, governors in Wisconsin and Ohio have already proposed expanding their states' initiatives. As the details take shape, we expect that Fordham's recent study *School Choice Regulations: Red Tape or Red Herring?* will inform program design. And stay tuned for groundbreaking work from Fordham about parents' educational



preferences, which will inform choice initiatives of the public, private, and charter varieties.

- **The pension bubble bursts.**

While most states have moved to address shortfalls in their teacher-pension systems in recent years, few have done more than tinker around the edges—and stick new teachers with the bill. The disastrous consequences of such irresponsibility will come into clearer view this year, in part due to some contributions

from Fordham—including our February paper *When Teachers Choose Pension Plans: The Florida Story* and other forthcoming publications.

- **States debate common science standards.** Achieve plans to release the final version of the Next Generation Science Standards this year, and states will then face adoption decisions, akin to Common Core circa 2010. Will they go for it? Should they? Fordham's science experts haven't been sanguine about the two drafts of science standards that have been made public so far—and have offered extensive recommendations for improving them.

We intend to review the final standards shortly after they are released and to provide what guidance we can to states (whose existing science standards we reviewed in early 2012).

All of these national issues confront policymakers in **our home state of Ohio**, where legislators will enact a biennial budget for 2013–14. Other key items on the Buckeye State agenda include the following:

- **Governor John Kasich’s plan to overhaul school finance.** He wants to move toward “student-based funding,” with extra money for kids with extra needs, less red tape, and more dollars and autonomy for schools and districts to innovate. Fordham has already weighed in on the plan and will continue working hard to make sure that growth in school choice is linked with heightened accountability around outcomes.
- **Columbus’s efforts at education reform.** In the wake of its data-scrubbing scandal, Ohio’s capital (and biggest) city may be poised to embrace breakthrough policies for K–12 education, including a major expansion of its charter sector. Fordham will be engaged as a critical friend, advice-giver, and potential authorizer of more high-quality charter schools.
- **Implementation of the Cleveland Plan.** Mayor Frank Jackson successfully pushed through a \$15 million levy in November, and now it’s time for action in C-Town. Plans include an expansion

of pre-K programs, a move toward “portfolio” management of schools, and greater attention to quality in the charter sector.

Of course, we’ll also continue to weigh in on the breaking news of the day, as well as a number of additional topics that are near and dear to Fordham, both nationally and in Ohio. We’ll be an honest arbiter of the president’s pre-K proposal and other federal initiatives and policies that emerge. We’ll speak frankly about social mobility and the testing backlash. We’ll keep strong in our push to bring issues of education governance into the policy limelight—kicked off by the release of our seminal book *Education Governance for the Twenty-First Century* in February. And we’ll remain focused on school leadership, special education, and international comparative education.

Tune into *The Education Gadfly*, *Flypaper*, or *The Education Gadfly Show Podcast*, or follow us on Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube. It’s going to be a lively ride.

Best,



Michael J. Petrilli
Executive Vice President
February 2013

PEOPLE AND FINANCES

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Amber M. Winkler, PhD
Vice President for Research

Head to our website (www.edexcellence.net) for an up-to-date listing of Fordham’s full staff.

Finances in Brief

Fordham’s budget is projected to be about \$5.6 million in 2013, of which about 35 percent will be supported by our own endowment and 65 percent must be raised from private donors. Our charter-sponsorship operation is largely supported by school fees. (For a host of reasons, we don’t chase other government funding.)

How quickly is Fordham growing?

Prudently—though the 2011–12 numbers below hide that. (Up until 2012, we acted as fiscal agent for the Policy Innovation in Education Network (PIE-Net), housing their accounts in our books. PIE-Net became independent in 2012. That exit accounts for the small dip in revenue.) In 2012, we created four new positions: a school-choice expert, a research manager, and two new positions in Ohio, one to beef up our external relations and the other to expand our sponsorship work.

Isn’t Fordham also a foundation? Does it make grants?

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is a “Type I supporting organization,” controlled by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. These sister organizations are both tax-exempt public charities under section 501(c)3 of the tax code. Today, most of our work is conducted under the Institute name, ordinarily with partial funding from the Foundation’s endowment, which—combined with the Institute’s tiny endowment—reached \$58M in late 2007 before falling to a low of \$34M in early 2009. It has since rebounded somewhat (to \$46.9M as of December 2012).

Fordham does make a few grants each year, but these are targeted and small, often Ohio-centered, and total approximately \$200,000 annually. Recent grantees include Teach For America, Common Core, the Philanthropy Roundtable, School Choice Ohio, and several promising Ohio charter schools.

OPERATING REVENUES	2011 (actual)	2012 (actual)	2013 (budgeted)
Fordham endowment	\$2.1 M	\$1.6 M	\$2.0 M
External funding	\$2.8 M	\$2.9 M	\$3.6 M
Total revenues	\$4.9 M	\$4.5 M	\$5.6 M

How much does Fordham spend on management and staff versus project costs?

In our audited 2011 financials (the most recent available), 21 percent of total spending supported management (and minor fundraising outlays) and personnel, but the bulk of the staff’s time is devoted to substantive project work, conducting direct research, and coordinating, editing, and disseminating the studies that we commission.

Are your finances audited? Are additional details available?

Yes. Fordham’s books are audited by Lane & Company, in Washington, D.C., and we’ve had clean audits every year since commencing this process in 2003. Copies of our audited statements are available on request. Fordham’s 990 and 990-PF filings with the Internal Revenue Service are also available by request or online at www.guidestar.org.



2012 FUNDERS (exclusive of gifts from individuals)		
Achelis and Bodman Foundations	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	Nord Family Foundation
American Federation of Teachers	GE Foundation	Noyce Foundation
Laura and John Arnold Foundation	Hewlett Foundation	Ohio Grantmakers Forum
Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation	Hoover Institution	Lovett and Ruth Peters Foundation
Louis Calder Foundation	Houston Endowment	The Randolph Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York	Joyce Foundation	School Choice Ohio
Cincinnati Business Committee	Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation	Charles & Helen Schwab Foundation
CityBridge Foundation	Kern Family Foundation	Bernard Lee Schwartz Foundation
Cleveland Foundation	KidsOhio.org	Searle Freedom Trust
College Board	KnowledgeWorks Foundation	Siemer Institute for Family Stability
Columbus Foundation	Koret Foundation	William E. Simon Foundation
Diggs Family Foundation	Kovner Foundation	United Way of Central Ohio
Education Reform Now	Learn to Earn Dayton	United Way of Greater Toledo
Doris and Donald Fisher Fund	National Association of Charter School Authorizers	Walton Family Foundation



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