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FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is the short version of the *SQE Forum* to read on your monitor. To read the full version on your monitor, click [here](#). To download the print-friendly version, click [here](#).

Highlights in this month's newsletter include information about a book that says **IQ's are for stupid people**, resources to **improve students' organizational skills**, new information on **whether students should repeat a year**, and a web-site that predicts **who will win the Ontario election**.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others. We would like to extend our reach.

Regards, Malkin

YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT TO US

Although last month's survey provided too few respondents for the results to be statistically significant, we thought you'd be interested to know that about half of the respondents supported funding faith-based schools to some extent, a quarter disagreed because they don't agree with segregating children by religion, and the rest didn't support funding faith-based schools without funding for all private schools. [actual results](#),

This month, we are asking for feedback about SQE's newsletter. Please click [vote](#) to tell us what is important to you in our newsletter. We will print some of your comments in the next newsletter.

SQE ACTIVITIES

- SQE's video, *Charter Schools: Alberta's Best-Kept Secret*, is now available for viewing on YouTube. [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#) [Part 3](#)
- SQE recently published quick studies on the myths of Ontario education reform [more](#) and funding faith-based schools [more](#).
- The C.D. Howe Institute's report on school choice, *Breaking Down Monopolies: Expanding Choice and Competition in Education*, was published on October 4. [more](#)
- SQE's executive director, Doretta Wilson, recently made a presentation to the Toronto District School Board's School Community Safety Advisory Panel, recommending that parents be empowered with school choice in order to get a safer environment for their children.

EVERYONE CAN BE WELL-ORGANIZED

Many students/people have the potential to do well in school/life but lose marks/effectiveness because of their lack of organization. Click [here](#) for a list of web-sites with tips on ways to become better-organized.

MAIL BAG

Our readers' comments are always interesting and insightful. Click [here](#) for some of the feedback we've received on funding faith-based schools, book tips, and educational blogs.

WEB-SITE OF THE MONTH

This month, we feature a web-site called [Illinois Loop](#). This site is designed for parents who want to learn more about what's going on in their children's schools and what they can do about it. There is a great deal of information about practical matters like desk arrangements, math issues and battles, and semestered high schools, all presented in a very readable format. There are many personal stories, as well as a humour section. We especially like the [math page](#) – check out “Mindful of Symbols: Educational Ramifications” in the “Do Manipulatives Make Math Harder?” section – not quite halfway down the page.

ASK AUNT MALKIN

A veteran of the school wars herself, with the scars to prove it, Malkin Dare has all kinds of advice to offer. If you would like some been-there-done-that advice from Aunt Malkin, call her at 519-884-3166 or e-mail her at mdare@societyforqualityeducation.org. This month, Heather asks a question about a teacher going on maternity leave and leaving her students high and dry.... Click [here](#) for Aunt Malkin's answer.

FEATURE ARTICLES

Advancement

Promoting the end of social promotion

By Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters

Until now the bulk of the research favored social promotion. Most studies found that students who were retained tended to fare less well academically than demographically-similar students who were promoted. The problem with this previous research is that it was never entirely clear whether retained students did worse because they were retained or because whatever caused them to be retained led to worse outcomes. But in a new study conducted for the Manhattan Institute that avoids the pitfalls of earlier research, the researchers found that holding low-performing students back helps them academically. [more](#)

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Where Have All the Engineers Gone?

Technical thinkers are the leaders of tomorrow and Canada isn't producing enough of them

By Gwyn Morgan

Unfortunately for both the individual student and the future economic success of Canada, too few students are choosing a robust suite of math and science courses. For students, this means a myriad of challenging and fulfilling careers are already being closed off by choices made in the very first year of high school. For our country, it means falling behind in the technological edge that is key to maintaining our privileged living standards. [more](#)

Thank Heaven for Religious Schools

They keep our public system honest

By Christy Clark

A former BC minister of education thanks heaven for faith-based schools, because she found that religious and other independent schools inject an element of competition into the system that wouldn't otherwise be there. No institution improves when it has a monopoly. Schools are no exception. Knowing that parents can vote with their feet and get their kids an education elsewhere is part of what keeps public schools honest. [more](#)

WHAT'S NEW?

[Education at a Glance – 2007](#)

Every year, the OECD provides a rich, comparable and up-to-date array of indicators on the performance of education systems. The report includes indicators on a very wide range of outcomes, from comparisons of students' performance in key subject areas to the impact of education on earnings and on adults' chances of employment. [more](#)

[Teachers' Unions for Democracy](#)

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association has offered to pay their teachers release time money for up to 20 days during the current election campaign, provided that those teachers work full-time for a candidate targeted by the union. There is a strong hint that the candidate is likely to belong to the Liberal Party. [more](#) (go to Casebook Diary, page 2)

[Some Students Just Don't Listen!](#)

The Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network reports that many classrooms have such poor acoustics that the children can't hear what the teacher is saying – seriously affecting their learning. Teachers often end up straining their voices in an effort to make themselves heard. [more](#)

BOOK REVIEWS

School Choice: the findings

By Herbert J. Walberg

This book reviews the latest evidence on school choice. The author considers four forms of choice (charter schools, vouchers, private schools, and competition) in terms of five desired outcomes (academic achievement, achievement gains over time, cost efficiency, parental satisfaction, and civic values). “The evidence supports every single one of the 20 possible choice effects, and the evidence is conclusive rather than suggestive for 14.” Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt that discusses why parental satisfaction is an important and desirable outcome.

IQ: A smart history of a failed idea

By Stephen Murdoch

This book explores how and why IQ tests were created and how they have been widely used and misused over the past century. Although IQ tests were a great improvement over previous methods of sorting human beings (such as skull measuring), it is not anywhere near as reliable or important as we have been led to believe. The author is pleased that IQ tests are no longer quite as high-stakes as they used to be (low test scores could mean a death sentence in Nazi Germany, for example), but he is concerned that they can nevertheless be quite influential. Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt that discusses the worldwide rise in IQ scores, and the implications of such a rapid rise.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

With an election looming in Ontario, we thought our readers might like to see what the pundits are saying. Click [here](#) for the overall predictions. Finer-grained analysis is available by clicking on geographical regions and individual ridings.

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