

******NEWS RELEASE******

Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2002

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**The Performance of For-Profit School Management Companies:
The Case of Edison Schools**

TEMPE, Ariz.-- A new report, "The Market in Theory Meets the Market in Practice: The Case of Edison Schools," by distinguished educational psychologist Gerald Bracey scrutinizes the record of Edison Schools, Inc. Bracey finds that the company repeatedly misled the public about the academic performance of its schools.

Edison has failed to demonstrate significant achievement gains among students who attend schools the company operates, which are primarily public or charter schools, reports Gerald Bracey, an independent researcher and a fellow of the Education Policy Research Unit at the Education Policy Studies Laboratory. The laboratory and the research unit are located in the College of Education at Arizona State University in Tempe.

Drawing on a series of studies conducted by independent outside researchers using widely accepted methods, Bracey found that the performance of Edison schools is sharply at odds with the company's claims in its promotional materials.

"No other project ... illustrates so clearly the difference between the theory of market operations and the cold water of reality in schools," Bracey writes. "Furthermore, no other project contrasts so sharply the gap between the demands of the bottom line inherent in for-profit Education Management Organizations and their avowed desire to help American public education."

For instance, Edison's own reports gave Washington Elementary School in Sherman, Tex., its highest rating for "strongly positive" achievement gains. Yet close examination of the company's own data reveals that test scores fell over a three-year period – a fact obscured by the way the company presented its information.

In an independent report by the American Federation of Teachers, the same school was ranked among the company's worst. Indeed, the company's contract to operate Washington was not renewed when it expired at the end of the 1999-2000 school year.

Journalists' accounts, Bracey reports, have also challenged Edison's claims that it reduces costs

in the schools that it operates.

The report includes a summary of Edison's contentious attempts to gain contracts to manage schools in New York City and Philadelphia.

Bracey's report is based on research he conducted for his forthcoming book, *The War Against America's Public Schools: Parents' Edition*, Allyn & Bacon, to be published in Spring 2002.

It can be found at <http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/news.htm> on the Web page of the Education Policy Research Laboratory at Arizona State University.

The Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) at Arizona State University offers high quality analyses of national education policy issues and provides an analytical resource for educators, journalists and citizens. The Lab houses the Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU), the Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU), and Education Policy Analysis Archives (EPAA), a peer-reviewed on-line scholarly journal published entirely without cost to readers since 1993.

The Education Policy Studies Laboratory is directed by ASU Professor Alex Molnar.

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