

Contact: Christy Hicks ~ Phone: (212) 452-7723 ~ Email: hicks@tcf.org

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**NEW POLICY BRIEF FROM THE CENTURY FOUNDATION MAKES THE CASE
FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO BUILD ON THE SUCCESS OF STATE
AND LOCAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

March 5, 2009 — As President Barack Obama continues to shape his domestic agenda, he has indicated that he plans to identify, support and expand programs that work, while eliminating things that don't work. In a new policy brief from The Century Foundation, Greg Anrig, vice president for policy, looks at three highly successful state education initiatives that are working for children, their families, and their communities.

“Educational Strategies That Work” examines Oklahoma’s universal pre-K program, the voluntary inter-district transfer program in St. Louis, Missouri, and New Jersey’s innovative low-income public schools.

- Oklahoma’s state-funded pre-kindergarten programs are recognized as the gold standard among state efforts to broaden the reach and improve the quality of preschool services. The program has high quality standards while offering more generous pay and benefits than most other states. The program has been carefully evaluated and found to boost skills such as pre-reading, pre-writing, and pre-math.
- The New Jersey Supreme Court decision *Abbot v. Burke* channeled substantial additional funding to the state’s poorest communities, resulting in remarkable success in improving children’s educational attainment in some, but not all, districts. A recently published Century Foundation report about the Abbott experience found that while the additional money helped make the gains possible, it was the educational strategies within the districts that proved to make the difference between the highly successful districts and those that did not make significant improvements. Successful strategies included: stressing early literacy; continuous measuring of student progress; and enlisting teachers to work collaboratively on issues.
- St. Louis is among a handful of cities that for many years have enabled thousands of minority students to attend suburban schools on a voluntary basis. The main findings from the St. Louis research show that African-American students from the city who transferred to suburban schools showed significant academic gains, far surpassed

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those of their peers who remained in city schools. This is consistent with a multitude of studies going back to the 1960s that show that students from low-income families who attend predominantly middle-class schools—where parents are more likely to be engaged, classroom disruptions are less pervasive, buildings are in better repair, and instructional materials are higher quality—have a much better chance of succeeding than those who go to high poverty schools.

“In each case, the ideas pursued were an outgrowth of pragmatic experimentation as opposed to adherence to rigid ideology,” writes Anrig. He proposes that the federal government create incentives for states and localities to pursue similar approaches to the ideas that have worked in practice while undertaking an active campaign to explain how to implement these successful strategies across the country. “All of these ideas would promote long-term, broadly shared benefits, and at least in some cases have the dual virtue of helping to create productive jobs during a period when the United States is experiencing what may be the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression,” Anrig concludes.

“Educational Strategies that Work” is the first brief in The Century Foundation’s “Building on Success” series. This series will examine ideas and strategies that are successful at the state and local levels that could be expanded or emulated nationwide. The brief and related reports are available on The Century Foundation web site at www.tcf.org.

Greg Anrig is the author of **The Conservatives Have No Clothes: Why Right-Wing ideas Keep Failing** (John Wiley & Sons, September, 2007). He is available to discuss this brief and other issues related to current domestic and economic policy debates. For more information, contact Christy Hicks at hicks@tcf.org or (212) 452-7723.

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