

The Education Network

News release

RELEASE IMMEDIATE: 12 February 2004

Taking education Beyond the Third Way

Key aspects of education policy, including performance league tables, need to be reviewed, according to a new pamphlet entitled *Beyond the Third Way* published today by The Education Network (TEN).

In the first of a new occasional series of TEN 'polemical pamphlets', Tony Dessent, Luton Council's Director of Lifelong Learning, argues that despite the plethora of education reforms, initiatives, targets and legislation since 1997 there has been no coherent account of what the Government's 'Third Way' philosophy would mean for education policy.

In *Beyond the Third Way*, Dessent, argues that:

- * The negativity generated by the 'weapons of mass accountability' - targets, tests and tables - has significantly outweighed the positive initiatives. The balance between challenge and support in the education service should be adjusted.
- * School targets should be 'bottom up', taking more account of differences as well as similarities between schools.
- * Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) tests should be replaced by a simpler system that wasted less teacher time and caused less stress for pupils and parents.
- * League tables, which compare 'apples with pears', should be scrapped. The focus should be on those schools and local education authorities (LEAs) which are 'on the move', from whatever their starting point, and from which lessons can be learned about the factors leading to improvement.
- * A more sophisticated and thorough approach to school improvement is required, taking fuller account of the range of factors that must be tackled, and linking more effectively progress in tackling deprivation with progress in raising school standards.
- * A new approach to funding is needed that gives schools and LEAs the flexibility to develop programmes that fit their local context to achieve outcomes agreed with central government.

Martin Rogers, Co-ordinator of TEN, said: "I hope that TEN's new series of pamphlets will make a constructive contribution to the debates on various aspects of the way forward in education policy."

ENDS

For further information contact:

Kevin Morton Tel. 020 7554 2858; Mobile 07958 314846; E mail kevin.morton@lgiu.org.uk

Mary Wimbury Tel. 020 7554 2845; Mobile 07958 521344; E mail mary.wimbury@lgiu.org.uk

Notes to Editors

1. The Education Network (TEN) is an independent policy, research and information organisation set up to develop, promote and disseminate the role and good practice of local authorities in raising educational aspiration and achievement. Around 90 per cent of local education authorities in England and Wales subscribe to TEN.
2. Beyond the Third Way can be downloaded from the TEN website at www.ten.info or by emailing Kevin.morton@lgiu.org.uk for a PDF version.
3. The printed version of Beyond the Third Way is available for £5 from each from Central Books on 0845 458 9910, 0845 458 9912 (fax) or e-mail mo@centralbooks.com