

CAPE OUTLOOK



Educational Studies: Private School Reactions

Within the background of at least eight critical national studies of education, mostly precollege public education, CAPE OUTLOOK decided to check its member organizations and schools to find out what is being done and thought regarding their findings. Perhaps not surprisingly, only one report "A Nation At Risk" of the National Commission on Excellence in Education refers specifically to private schools as being within the focus of its interests (Richard Wallace, Principal of Lutheran High School East in Cleveland Heights, Ohio was a member of the Commission). But clearly all the reports refer to a broad set of conditions, issues and problems, the significant commonalities which touch the workings of all schools.

In checking with our various school heads and organizations leaders, the following observations can be made:

1. The reports are eliciting widespread interest. A number of CAPE organizations, as well as organization schools are considering ways to respond positively. For example, the Chief Administrators of Catholic Education will devote a full session of their coming meeting in the third week of October to the reports, their implications and appropriate activities in response to them. John Esty, President of the National Association of Independent Schools, commented at length on the National Commission on Excellence Report in the October issue of "Independent School." Among his reflections is one heard from a number of others: the reports may have the consequence of increasing state regulatory pressures on private schools.

A forum and panel discussion will be devoted to "A Nation At Risk" during a conference of the Association of Seventh-day Adventist School Administrators conference which is held every three years and attended by several hundred educators. And CAPE's fall Board Meeting will devote much of a morning to a discussion led by Ernest Boyer,

author of "High School" and head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, on steps CAPE might take in response to the reports and the interest they have generated.

2. Private schools widely share the view underscored in all the reports that schools should focus on academic learning. Everyone we spoke with avowed that vigorous pursuit of the core academic subjects is a major component of their schools. And that had been true, albeit with variation in approach, since the school began. But a number of respondents also lamented the fact that as nearly as they could tell the reports did not really reflect the equal concern private schools have for the development of students' values and character — moral learning. Several felt that the student as a person was the critical missing ingredient in all the reports.

3. Concern was expressed by several about the difficulty of keeping up with the high cost of equipping their schools to have strong programs in the sciences and to meet the recommendations that students achieve literacy with the computer.

4. Broad agreement was expressed with the recommendation, particularly emphasized by the reports of the Commission on Excellence and the Twentieth Century Fund that English is *the* core subject of the curriculum — that their school's priority academic goal is literacy. Some school heads said they made it clear to all their teachers that each, regardless of subject taught, must also be a teacher of English. The connection between clear writing and clear thinking was expressed by one interviewer.

The most serious complaint about the reports came from several school heads who found them to be overly simplistic and not adequately attentive to the human and humane dimensions of education. As one headmaster put it: "Improving schools is a long-term, exacting business. How much are schools, teachers, school heads and school Boards willing to demand of themselves? How much sacrifice are they willing to make in the interest of improved school performance? And somewhere we've lost sight of the person inside the student — what are our goals for him and her in addition to knowing lots of important things and scoring well on tests?"

There was enthusiasm expressed by about all we queried regarding the Carnegie Foundation's report

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The Uses of Technology in Education

Rep. Wirth proposes more educational TV and computers in classrooms

The relationship between television and learning is a matter of continuing revelation as well as debate. According to Representative Tim Wirth (D-CO), what has been overlooked in all the recent reports on the quality of American education is the role of television in education. As Chairman of the House Telecommunications Subcommittee, which oversees all communications law, Rep. Wirth initiated a joint hearing with the Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education Subcommittee on the potential of television for children's education.

"Television had become an integral part of everyday life with profound effects on the values of children and their ability to learn a wide variety of skills and behavior," Wirth said. In fact, . . . by the time the average child finishes high school, he or she has spent an astonishing 10,000 to 15,000 hours in front of a television set — more time than in the classroom. Yet, little has been accomplished to maximize the tremendous educational, cultural and social potential that television holds for children."

Inspired by a recent report from the National Science Board Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology, Wirth introduced the "Children's Television Education Act of 1983," which would require commercial television stations to devote at least one hour of broadcast time a day to educational programming. The report, which called for "sweeping and drastic change" in math and science education, recommended that commercial broadcasters be required to present more air time geared to education.

According to a survey of TV stations by congressional researchers, on the average a station only devotes 265 minutes, or 3.3 percent of total air time a week to children's programs. Of this amount, 61 minutes are educational while 152 minutes are cartoons.

At the hearing, the spokesman for the National Association of Broadcasters said, "An educational problem must be addressed through the educational system and not through the broadcasting system. If we want students to learn more, we should keep them in school for another hour rather than send

them home to watch TV."

Congressional debate on how technology affects education does not end with a discussion of electronic media. Everyone involved in computer education is waiting to see if Congress will boost the Federal role in the movement for technological literacy.

Rep. Wirth's interest in communications and education has prompted the latest proposal — the "Computer Literacy Act of 1983," which would help schools bolster their computer education programs by providing funds for both purchase of computers and teacher training.



Another House Committee concerned with the role of technology in education held oversight hearings on the capacity of computers to add to educational excellence. A panel of witnesses representing education groups told the Science and Technology Committee that gifts of hardware, courtesy of Congress or the private sector, are the last things schools need to bolster their computer programs. Instead, educational strategies must first be implemented, emphasizing teacher training, curriculum development, research on the impact of computers on students and parental involvement.

A researcher for the University of Minnesota told the Subcommittee that little substantial research has been done on the effects of computers and learning. It would be unwise to leap forward with major hardware purchases, he said, until educators are sure of the niche computers fill in the schools.

Secretary Bell testifying before the same Subcommittee, said the Federal government should launch a major effort to get the computer revolution under way in the nation's schools. "Education needs the equivalent of the R&D effort of the Manhattan Project in World War II or the NASA space shuttle of today. . . . If we don't do it, it won't get done."

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A coalition of 15 national organizations serving private schools (K-12)

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recommendation that there be a service requirement for all school students. Boyer writes: "Today it is possible for American teenagers to finish high school yet never be asked to participate responsibly in life in or out of the school, never be encouraged to spend time with older people who may be lonely, to help a child who has not learned to read, to clean up the litter on the street, or even to do something meaningful at the school itself."

This activity is practiced in many of our schools and most school heads questioned saw this requirement as a central component in education for the development of character and values.

As the CAPE staff reviewed responses and comments it received from its questions, we were struck by the fact, or simply reminded strongly again, that private school administrators tend to view education as essentially a human activity involving real people in a living community — their school or schools they know. This helps to explain the difficulty we sometimes had in getting respondents to comment on the cosmic issues, the generalizations, and the broad recommendations of the reports.

On the other hand, we found ourselves concerned that among some we spoke with, there did not seem to be much awareness of the contents of the reports. We also sensed a feeling among some that there was little the reports could tell private schools that was not well known in practice or being worked at hard. Which leads us editorially to make a final observation: One of the most important points these reports made is that education is inextricably connected; that the issues and problems of public education are those with which many of our schools must continually contend even if the setting is usually very different. Leadership, intellectual challenge, staff development, student attitudes toward learning and work, and societal problems are all matters of the greatest importance to the work of most of our schools. It would not be inappropriate therefore to remind ourselves that "A Nation At Risk" is our nation and "Making the Grade" is just as much our job as that of our colleagues in public education.

Legislative Update

Recent Action. . .

National Summit Conference on Education

On October 3, the House approved H.R. 3245 (Williams, D-MT), the measure authorizing \$500,000 for a series of regional meetings on the topic of excellence in education culminating in a national conference. A similar Senate bill, S. 1495 (Kennedy, D-MA), awaits action in the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Tax Treatment of Fringe Benefits

H.R. 3525 (Stark, D-CA) was approved by the House Ways and Means Committee with amend-

ments on October 5. Because a moratorium on taxing fringe benefits will expire next year, this legislation would provide exclusion from income tax qualified tuition reductions, furnished after June 30, 1984. In Committee, the category of qualified tuition reduction was expanded to include education provided by another education institution. The education also could be provided to the child or spouse of a retired or deceased employee.

Still Pending. . .

Tuition Tax Credits

S. 528 (Dole, R-KS) Approved by the Senate Committee on Finance with amendments on June 20. Awaiting Senate floor action.

H.R. 1730 (Gradison, R-OH) Pending in the House Ways and Means Committee.

Mathematics, Science and Foreign Language Education Improvement, S. 1285 (Pell, D-RI; Stafford, R-VT), H.R. 1310 (Perkins, D-KY).

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee May 11 approved a \$425 million bill to authorize fiscal 1984 math and science education programs administered by the Education Department and the National Science Foundation. The House bill, passed March 2, would authorize the same amount for fiscal 1984. Senate floor action has not yet been scheduled.

Fiscal 1984 Education Appropriations, H.R. 3913

The House passed its version September 22. The Senate approved its bill on October 4. A House-Senate conference committee will meet in late October to iron out their differences.

Introduced. . .

Children's Television Education Act of 1983

H.R. 4097 (Wirth, D-CO) pending before the House Committees on Education and Labor, Science and Technology.

Tax Treatment for Gifts to Private Foundations and Public Charities, S. 1857 (Durenberger, R-MN), H.R. 3043 (Conable, R-NY).

This legislation would remove major impediments to foundation philanthropy. It has received the unanimous support of Independent Sector, a coalition of major nonprofit organizations. Members of the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees are interested in how public charities, grantmaking and grant-seeking organizations view this legislation.

Cable Telecommunications Act of 1983

H.R. 4103 (Wirth, D-CO) S. 66 (Goldwater, R-AZ). S. 66 which passed the Senate June 20, is pending before the House Energy and Commerce Telecommunications Subcommittee. Representative Wirth introduced H.R. 4103; hearings are expected in October/November. This legislation would establish national policy for cable telecommunications and it affects issues related to children's television and public affairs programming.

Copies of some of the recent reports on American education today may be obtained from the following:

A NATION AT RISK: THE IMPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM. The National Commission on Excellence in Education. Washington, D.C. April, 1983. \$4.50 each: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Stock No. 065-000-00177-2.

MAKING THE GRADE: REPORT OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND TASK FORCE ON FEDERAL, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY. New York, 1983. \$6.00 each: Twentieth Century Fund, 41 E. 70th St., New York, NY 10021.

AMERICA'S COMPETITIVE CHALLENGE: THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL RESPONSE. April, 1983. \$17.50: Business-Higher Education Forum, Suite 800, One Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE: A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO IMPROVE OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS. Task Force on Education for Economic Growth. June, 1983. \$5.00 each: Education Commission of the States, 1860 Lincoln St., #300, Denver, CO 80295.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE: WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO. New York, 1983. Single copy free: The College Board, 888 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10106.

HIGH SCHOOL: A REPORT ON SECONDARY EDUCATION IN AMERICA. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. New York, September, 1983. \$15.00: Harper & Row, Publishers, 10 E. 53rd St., New York, NY 10022; or 1-800-638-3031; also available in bookstores.

THE PAIDEIA PROPOSAL: AN EDUCATIONAL MANIFESTO. New York, 1982. \$2.95 each: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 866 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022; also available in bookstores.

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Among its recent activities on behalf of its constituency, CAPE:

... has joined with over 500 nonprofit and charitable groups in a petition to the Office of Management and Budget to drop proposed restrictions relating to advocacy activities of voluntary organizations. The current OMB draft is a watered down version of the restrictions unveiled last January to a storm of protest. CAPE and other organizations believe that until there is clear evidence of voluntary organization abuse, the case for having new regulations has not been made.

... met with state private school leaders in North Dakota to give an update on private school concerns nationally and to discuss the formation of a North Dakota CAPE organization.

... participated in a Capitol Hill press conference announcing the release of the Congressional Task Force on Merit Pay Report. CAPE's Executive Director was a member of the 21 member bipartisan committee.

... participated in the Fall Meeting at Arden House, in Harriman, N.Y. of the Round Table of National Organizations for Better Education. The topics for discussion were "Public and Private Education/Collaboration and Competition/The Reality and the Ideal," and the new Christian School Movement.

... has been notified by the Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools that two bills were introduced on October 13 to provide tuition tax deductions similar to Minnesota's. On the same day, the New Jersey state legislature held its first hearing on a similar proposal. When state legislatures go into full session, we expect more states to consider tuition tax programs. We would be pleased to hear about similar legislative activities in your state.

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