

CAPE OUTLOOK

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Joining Forces for Educating a Competitive Work Force

"The American work force is running out of qualified people," says David Kearns, president of Xerox, and "If current demographics and economic trends continue, American business will have to hire a million new workers a year who can't read, write or count." As this is now the consensus of so many who will be directing our economy into the twenty-first century, and will soon become an issue in the 1988 presidential campaign, Congressman James Scheuer, Chairman of the Joint Economic Subcommittee on Education and Health chaired hearings over the course of three months on the topic of educating for a competitive U.S. work force. His purpose was to learn what education, corporate and urban leaders, economists and scholars see is the federal role for education. It became clear that the health of American industry depends upon the U.S. system of education, and vice versa. This is the final in *Outlook's* series on the hearings.

The National Academies of Sciences and Engineering and the Institute of Medicine have identified a list of *core competencies* necessary for successful future employment for our students and for all. They are: the ability to reason, read, write and compute; an understanding of basic scientific principles; the ability to interact productively with a group; good work habits and attitudes, and an understanding of the American economy and lifestyle. To this core, "adaptability and trainability" were mentioned by the majority of industrialists and economists as the most essential traits a worker brings to his or her job in order to keep our economy productive. All of these speakers presented data proving that our work force is dangerously deficient in these skills. One of the examples mentioned was that of the 21,000 applicants to the New York Telephone Company recently, 84 percent failed the basic reading and reasoning test.

(continued on page 3)

Peace Corps Partnerships With Schools

The Peace Corps is alive and active in many American classrooms today. In the past two years 16 private schools across the U.S. have participated in the Peace Corps Partnership Program, founded in 1963 to support community-initiated and directed development projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to the two former volunteers who now administer this program, more schools are becoming partners all the time. When an American school commits itself to a partnership, it begins a cultural exchange with the school in its partner community, and both sides anxiously await communication from their partner as an international friendship takes root.

The partnership works like this: A village or community in a developing country decides to take on a construction project to improve services in their area. Perhaps it needs to expand its one-room school; to reconstruct a bridge, or to build a clinic. The villagers exhaust their resources, and seek assistance from the Peace Corps through the local Peace Corps volunteer. The volunteer helps draft a proposal with the village project leader in which the village commits itself to providing 25 of the remaining 75 percent of the total cost of the project. The volunteer then sends the proposal to the Peace Corps office in Washington, which issues a list of all such proposals to potential partners—businesses, foundations and schools. The new U.S. partner selects a proposal from the list, and must raise 25 percent or more of the remaining project cost, which the Peace Corps will match from outside gifts, if necessary. The field volunteer then helps carry out the project under the direction of the leader, and also coordinates a cultural exchange between the American and the foreign school. The children send photos, music, drawings, letters and gifts reflective of their culture.

American students gain immeasurably in becoming partners. At the Dwight Englewood School in Englewood, New Jersey, Betsy Carson's seventh graders raised money for a well project in Benin, West Africa. The fundraising itself proved rewarding and exciting, as the students opened a "restaurant," serving West African delicacies to family and friends, and donating their earnings to the well fund. These enterprising students kept water glasses at their sides all day long, and each time they used water for drinking, washing, watering plants or feeding pets, they added a coin to the glass for Benin's well.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

The Partnership provides curricular possibilities to every department in the school, and the Peace Corps publishes a *Teacher's Guide* with many good ideas. Spanish classes benefit from friendships with Paraguayans; math and science classes take on real engineering problems posed by a construction project; interdisciplinary topics bring the school together; art classes learn to imitate African design, and the school can reach out to its community and thus form another sort of partnership. The American students are always impressed by the extent to which their foreign partners sacrifice for their education, and this motivates them as well to learn.

The Peace Corps issues two free 10-minute videotapes or films describing school partnerships. One portrays the relationship between the village of N'Diane, in Senegal, and the Ten Acre Country Day School in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Together they build a classroom in N'Diane. In the process they built an understanding under the guidance of Ten Acre's librarian, Diane Holzheimer, a former Peace Corps volunteer. The other, also portraying an exchange in Senegal, includes commentary from the former U.S. ambassador to Sierra Leone who commends the Peace Corps as "the most effective American presence" in developing countries. To become a partner, write the Peace Corps Partnership Program at 806 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20506, or call (800) 424-8580, extension 227 or 277.

Legislative Update

*Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary Education Improvement Act (S373 and HR5), formerly E.C.I.A.: On December 1 the Senate approved its \$7.4 billion omnibus education bill that would reauthorize Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and most of the elementary and secondary education programs through 1993. The bill is expected to go to conference early in 1988.

*The Senate passed the Continuing Resolution which would fund all federal agencies in FY 1988 at the level accepted in the deficit reduction agreement between the White House and congressional leaders last month. The House and Senate versions now go to conference. Most education programs will be cut from their 1988 Appropriation levels.

*The Act For Better Child Care Services (S1885 and HR3660) were introduced on November 19. Hearings are slated for early next year.



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*The National Education Association is offering 20 fellowships in memory of Christa McAuliffe to teachers interested in promoting the use of new technologies in the classroom. The recipients will attend a two-week conference from July 31 to August 11, 1988, and a two-day follow-up conference later in the year. Applications for the fellowships must be submitted by "teacher teams" of four. Teachers from elementary and secondary schools are eligible. Apply by February 1 to the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

*The Summer Seminars for School Teachers Program will bring together groups of 15 selectively chosen teachers for intensive college study of major texts in the humanities for either four or six-week seminars at various university campuses across the country and abroad. Participants will receive a stipend of \$2,000 or more, depending upon the length of the seminar. Write the National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Fellowships and Seminars, SSST-Room 316-JE, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20506.

*The 1988 Kennedy Center Teacher Fellowships offers up to seven teachers the opportunity to pursue an arts-related project of their choice in Washington this coming June 29 to July 19. Fellows will receive a \$2,000 stipend and free housing, and will have access to artists affiliated with the Center. Teachers who spend at least half their time teaching visual arts, dance, music, theater, film or creative writing may apply. Contact Teacher Fellowships, Alliance for Arts Education, Kennedy Center, Washington, DC 20566; (202)254-7190.

(continued on page 4)

COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN PRIVATE EDUCATION/1625 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

A coalition of 14 national organizations serving private schools (K-12)

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The New Federal Child Care Proposal

The Act For Better Child Care Services was introduced in Congress on November 19 and has the endorsement of a long and growing list of senators and congressmen. It is the first piece of comprehensive child care legislation since 1971, when the president vetoed a bill of similar magnitude. The bill would provide \$2.5 billion in federal funds for fiscal year 1989 to help states maintain the variety and increase the availability and quality of child care services, and improve the licensing and increase training opportunities for child care workers. Seventy-five percent of the money would go toward helping families whose income falls within 115 percent of the state's median income to pay for child care on a sliding-scale basis. The remaining 25 percent would be used to help states start new child care programs, train and adequately pay workers, develop referral programs to help parents find quality care, and enforce standards.

The bill was proposed by the Alliance For Better Child Care, a group of 103 seemingly disparate organizations ranging from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union to the YMCA, and including labor unions, health care professionals, political, social welfare, education and religious organizations. The Alliance collaborated extensively with private school representatives in drafting their proposal.

The bill is slated to go through many revisions before it becomes legislation, and private school leaders will continue to participate in the process. As the bill now reads, a state can choose to participate in this federal program by having its governor designate a state lead agency to administer the funds and oversee the program as described in the state's plan. The bill provides for licensing and regulation of all child care centers and family providers wishing to receive federal funds. It also requires 15 hours of broadly defined in-service training of all child care workers and provides for parental involvement in regulations and other areas; referral services, and provision for extended hours of service so that some weekend, emergency, and night time care is available.

Federal minimum standards would be established by a National Advisory Committee on Child Care Standards, and would include size and ratio limits, qualifications of personnel, health and safety requirements and parental involvement rules.

Funds would be distributed by way of grants or contracts to eligible providers, or by child care certificates to parents. Seven and a half percent of the state money would go to existing state and locally-funded pre-school programs in schools, Head Start, pre-school Chapter 1 and pre-school handicapped programs to extend their number of hours and days.

The private school community is pleased that this legislation had its origins in public-private sector collaborations. Private school representatives will continue to provide input as the bill moves forward.

(continued from page 1)



Business is invested in education and training at all levels. IBM developed an illiteracy prevention program called Writing to Read that has proved so successful that the Educational Testing Service endorses it, as do parents and teachers. In fact, all of the 83 public elementary schools in Atlanta use the program. Kindergarten students are taught pre-reading skills on a computer. The program fosters confidence, self-discipline, creativity and independence. Students later learn to read with amazing results, and their other academic skills test equally high. The program was piloted in a small, poor rural school district in North Carolina. The first graders taught by Writing to Read scored in the ninetieth percentile in reading and non-reading areas, and the results were the same for blacks, whites, boys, girls, poor and middle-class students. The high scores in non-reading areas were attributed to the positive self-image that the students developed from using the program. IBM has a comparable program for adults and high school drop-outs used in high schools, community colleges and prisons, which is said to be just as successful.

Those attending the hearings were reminded by the speakers that ability transcends socio-economic and cultural differences. But Carl Holman, who is president of the National Urban Coalition, pointed out that our cultural differences with competing nations can work to subterfuge this reality. Whereas Chinese and Japanese parents attribute the success of their children in math to effort, for example, American parents believe that success in math stems from natural talents. Holman and an anthropologist, a high school principal, and the New York State Commissioner of Education were among those who testified that disadvantaged and minority children receive negative messages early on in their education.

There was general agreement that schools do continue to turn out good students who go on to become some of the most successful and sought-after experts in the world. The problem is that the proportion of success to failure is increasingly low in a shrinking work force and a fiercely competitive international economy. The panels' solutions to the new challenges for education are the very solutions posed by those groups proposing national reforms in education: the Carnegie Forum, the Governors' Conference, the Committee for Economic Development, the Education Commission of the States and others. They suggest more and improved early childhood education, public school restructuring, upgrading the teaching profession, improved vocational education, using technology in schools, granting schools and teachers more autonomy, and greater parental involvement.

(continued from page 2)

*The Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution is launching a second round of the 1988 Educational Grant Competition, awarding up to \$2.2 million in grants for use at elementary and secondary schools. These grants are for such projects as films, seminars for teachers, and development of materials. The Commission especially seeks themes emphasizing the ratification of the Constitution and the formation of the legislative and executive branches of government. Apply to the Commission at 736 Jackson Pl., N.W., Washington, DC 20503.

*The 1988 Sallie May Teacher Awards Program honors 100 first-year elementary and secondary teachers, who in addition to receiving recognition for superior achievement in the classroom, will receive \$1,000 and a recognition certificate for his or her school. The Student Loan Marketing Association invites administrators to submit nominations. Contact S.L.M.A., 1050 Thomas Jefferson St., N.W., Washington, DC 20007; (202)298-3015.

*The Presidential Academic Fitness Award is made to graduating students from elementary, middle and high schools chosen by the principal because they meet the criteria set by the U.S. Department of Education. Call (800)438-7232.

*The Close Up Foundation will sponsor an International Youth Forum for one week in April called "The Individual's Role in Society" for high school students and teachers from the U.S. and abroad. Using New York City as their classroom, participants will examine health, education, security and other concerns common to all communities by learning on site how New York responds to these challenges with public and private sector groups. The program costs \$485. Call (800)336-5479.

*The World Bank publishes a catalogue of inexpensive educational materials describing their multimedia learning kits on Third World Development Issues. Some are in Spanish and French. Write World Bank Publications, Dept. 0552, Washington, DC 20073.

*The National Association of Secondary School Principals issues a list of new audiovisual inservicetraining materials useful for faculty meetings, study groups, etc. in cassette or videotape. Topics include adolescent development, learningdevelopment, discipline, and administrative issues. Write NASSP, P.O. Box 3250, Reston, VA 22090.

*The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) sponsors outstanding high school science students for all-expense paid summer research programs. These are two-week sessions conducted at major DOE laboratories throughout the country. There are six such labs: Lawrence Berkeley in California, conducting research in life sciences; Brookhaven National in Upton, Long Island, conducting x-ray and ultra-violet radiation research; Lawrence Livermore National in California, programming supercomputers; Fermilab in Batavia, Illinois, home of the new Tevatron machine, the world's largest high energy particle accelerator, studying the structure of matter; Oak Ridge National in Tennessee, conducting environmental research; and Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago, studying superconductivity. Sophomores, juniors and seniors who demonstrate excellence in science and math are selected by their governors. Contact your governor's office, or the State Science Supervisor in the State Department of Education after November 15.

*Time Magazine is sponsoring a High School Student Writing Contest, offering college scholarships to the winners. Essay categories correspond to the sections of the magazine: World, Nation, Economy and Business, and Ethics. There are three art categories as well: Political Cartoon, Maps and Charts. Contact TIME Education Program, 10 North Main Street, Yardley, PA 19067.

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