

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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"American Opportunity and Education Reform"

An Essay

by Greg D. Kubiak

The principle of American "opportunity" has set us apart as a nation respected and envied around the globe. This basic trait has promised growth, prosperity and progress in the United States and other nations who made good use of the American model.

While this precept weaves through our systems of business, government, and technology, it is increasingly absent from the critical institution of public education. If the United States is to match 21st century learning to 21st century students, we must have a new focus on American opportunity in education to replace failed reform finger-pointing and provincialism.

Opportunity in Education

America has long been a refuge for opportunity with an economic system that rewards ingenuity and hard work. We have embraced a system of competition and freedom of choice made more abundant with the strength of an educational system accessible to everyone. President Bush, in his unveiling of the "America 2000" education strategy, appropriately quoted from the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision: "It is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education."

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, showing the non-partisan nature of this objective, in a response to Bush's 1991 State of the Union Address said, "there must be a quality education for every child." Summing up his party's domestic philosophy, Mitchell added there should be "no guarantees for anyone, but an equal chance to succeed for everyone."

Public officials and citizens would agree that society is well-served by public dollars being utilized to educate American children. Dating from the first compulsory school attendance law of 1852 in Massachusetts, the system of public education has grown and evolved into a foundation for democracy.

Common schools, with taxpayer support, have been perhaps the most important social development in our nation's history. However, recent reports of poor student performance, low SAT scores, increased dropout rates, and violence and drugs threatening students' safety - not to mention their learning environment - have finally captured the attention of the public.

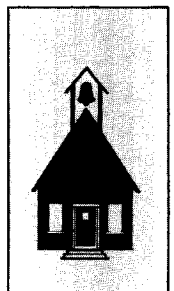
The Blame Game

Perhaps the major reason no real gain toward public education reform has been made is that time and energy have been over-expended in protecting turf and blaming other facets of the educational establishment. The matrix of finger-pointing can

easily be constructed. Taxpayers will not support higher taxes for mediocre schools, parents will not become involved in schools that are run from their states' capitols, teachers cannot teach poorly parented kids in overcrowded, underfunded classrooms, administrators have grown in numbers more than students, and principals battle state regulations, teacher unions, angry parents, and low budgets.

In the blame game of 'why do some schools work and some don't', a not-so-startling conclusion in a book published by the Brookings Institution, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, suggests why. Research by authors Terry M. Moe and John E. Chubb showed that effective schools - where learning took place - were those that had a "focus" and clear mission of purpose, a principal who was a "leader" with authority to make decisions, and teachers who were treated like, and expected to be, professionals in a "team" effort to help their students learn.

Moe and Chubb conclude the book with a recommendation based on the "market principles of parental choice and school competition." How is it that a liberal Washington think tank could help produce such a conservative ideal as "parental choice?"



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Market Principles and Democratic Values

Public education zealots and teacher union officials immediately criticize any comparison of our system of education to selling cars to consumers. They argue that bottom line profit motives are not the same as making universal, quality and equal education available to all. Since corporations can close plants, lay off workers, and stop service to large groups of customers in an effort to save or make money, the market force approach is a difficult model to use in making arguments for choice in education. But the reactionary opponents of "choice" miss the essential element of accountability to which thoughtful reformers speak.

The common thread that weaves through the market principles of choice and the democratic values of our educational system is that people should have the opportunity to decide. The same parents who have a choice of automobiles to purchase as free enterprise consumers, should have more say as parents in the education provided their children.

Since most of the public school establishment measures commitment to education purely by dollars, consider the revenue saved by the existence of private schools. With the \$5,208 average national per pupil expenditure, our 5.3 million private school students save the nation nearly \$28 billion annually. That amount, by any standard, is real money. It further proves that public ends do not always have to be achieved by public means.

The crucial issue is that the public school establishment is far more accountable to the state funding, administrations and teacher unions which serve them, than to the parents of students they serve. Private schools are, by definition, accountable to the parents who choose to pay tuition for their children's education, in addition to their taxes which support public education. Such accountability should be seriously studied as a model for reform.

Unleashing our Potential

American opportunity, educational excellence, and the blessings of freedom are not only fodder for great oratory and flag-waving rhetoric, but pure objectives which a democratic nation should foster. So, how best can we "unleash the potential"

of our nation's students, as Bush called on us to do in his 1991 State of the Union?

If we are to have a reformed educational system which gives every child "an equal chance to succeed" and "the opportunity for an education", as our political leaders have implored, perhaps we should start viewing education as a shared responsibility, as the "America 2000" strategy clearly states. Entrusting parents as partners with schools, giving principals the latitude to lead, and allowing teachers to be "team-playing" professionals, will bring about better schools and thus better students prepared for the 21st century. Private schools have done this for over 350 years and there are 25,000 of them today to prove it works.

One view of education is that, as a regulated utility like water and electricity, our schools should merely be monitored for, funded by, and supplied to, the masses. However, if schools are viewed as a means to American opportunity, implicit in the venture is the assumption of varying needs, divergent interests and, most certainly, freedom of choice.

Esty's Look Ahead

John C. Esty, Jr., who has served as president of the National Association of Independent Schools since 1978, leaves that office July 31. In his final report to the membership at the NAIS annual meeting in March, he declared seven challenges he sees to independent education over the next decade. In tribute to Esty, an outgoing member and former president of the CAPE board of directors and a true visionary in the education community, the following synopsis is presented:

1. "The challenge of educating our children for a smaller and smaller world."

Foreign languages, history and cultural studies must be strengthened and broadened to keep pace with a global economy and world community. We must further redouble our understanding of and efforts in environmental issues.

2. "The challenge of integrating new knowledge of such things as computers with creative and humane concerns, of putting to work new research on teaching, learning, how the brain works, different kinds of intelligence, and doing the hardest job of all - integrating theory with practice."

3. "The challenge to teachers of being in a profession that may be honored in rhetoric but is more often misunderstood or even disdained."

Teachers face a curious paradox in that, although they are taken for granted and looked down upon, they are expected to right all wrongs and teach all the things that parents weren't able to in the first six years.

4. "The challenge to independent schools of withstanding public misperception and criticism - in fact meeting it head on."

We must take on the myths of elitism and exclusivity. It is ironic to note the increasing number of public schools systems which are discovering that the power of parental choice keeps a school on its toes and enhances student motivation.

5. "The challenge of the decline of our traditional sources of students; what to do about the demographic and economic factors."

We must adjust to the changes of fewer parents having disposable income for our tuition and more working and single parents, as well as creating a receptive multicultural climate for "new" students from different backgrounds.

6. "The challenge of preserving independent education - by being clear about who we are and what we do for children."

We must all work together to promote the best of independent education and to be vigilant over threats to our independence.

7. "The challenge of creating an ethical context for our teaching and for our schools."

Participants in the first NAIS Administrative Seminar thirty years ago stated that technological developments with "potential for destruction have been amply commented on in the public press", but there has been much less "commentary on the lack of similar growth in moral control." That group of school administrators went on to conclude that "the first concern to education... should be strengthening traditional moral standards and community concerns... and developing [in students] the independence of spirit and strength of character to live by these standards."

Esty concluded, "I believe [that] is still our moral imperative."



Blue Ribbon Schools

The U. S. Department of Education announced the selection of 222 exemplary middle, junior, and senior high schools in the 1990-91 Blue Ribbon Schools Program. The program recognizes consistently high-achieving and improving schools and was designed to celebrate the diversity of effective American Schools.

Winning schools are noted for their visionary leadership, a shared sense of purpose, a conducive climate for effective teaching, an environment that conveys that all students can learn with programs to challenge gifted, average, and at-risk students, evidence of impressive academic achievement, and a high degree of parental involvement, as well as other qualities.

CAPE congratulates the following 53 private schools for the excellence they represent:

Coyle and Cassidy HS, Taunton, MA
 The Williston Northampton School,
 Easthampton, MA
 La Salle Academy, Providence, RI
 St. Mary Academy-Bay View,
 Riverside, RI
 St. Johnsbury Academy, St. Johnsbury, VT
 Catherine McAuley HS, Brooklyn, NY
 Convent of the Sacred Heart School,
 New York, NY
 La Salle Institute, Troy, NY
 Mount St. Michael Academy, Bronx, NY
 Xavier HS, New York, NY
 Colegio Ponceno, Coto Laurel, PR
 DeMatha Catholic HS, Hyattsville, MD
 Gwynedd Mercy Academy,
 Gwynedd Valley, PA
 The Mercersburg Academy,
 Mercersburg, PA
 Gullivar Prep. School, Miami, FL
 Melbourne Central Catholic High School,
 Melbourne, FL
 Mount De Sales Academy, Macon, GA
 Trinity HS, Louisville, KY
 Girls Prep. School, Chattanooga, TN
 St. Cecilia Academy, Nashville, TN
 St. Mary's Episcopal School, Memphis, TN
 Boylan Central Catholic HS, Rockford, IL
 Madonna HS, Chicago, IL
 Mother McAuley Liberal Arts HS,
 Chicago, IL
 Southfield Christian Schools,
 Southfield, MI
 Beaumont School, Cleveland Heights, OH
 Central Catholic HS, Toledo, OH

Regina HS, S. Euclid, OH
 St. Joseph Academy, Cleveland, OH
 Archbishop Chapelle HS, Metairie, LA
 Episcopal HS, Baton Rouge, LA
 St. Joseph's Academy, Baton Rouge, LA
 Ursuline Academy, New Orleans, LA
 Xavier University Prep. School,
 New Orleans, LA
 Bishop Lynch HS, Dallas, TX
 Jesuit College Prep. School, Dallas, TX
 Monsignor Kelly HS, Beaumont, TX
 Cor Jesu Academy, St. Louis, MO
 Genesis School, Kansas City, MO
 Nerinx Hall HS, Webster Groves, MO
 Villa Duchesne School, St. Louis, MO
 Westminster Christian Academy,
 St. Louis, MO
 Lutheran HS, Denver, CO
 Xavier College Prep., Phoenix, AZ
 Bishop O'Dowd HS, Oakland, CA
 The Bishop's School, LaJolla, CA
 Fairmont Private Junior HS, Anaheim, CA
 Holy Names HS, Oakland, CA
 Notre Dame Academy, Los Angeles, CA
 St. Francis HS, Mountain View, CA
 The Thacher School, Ojai, CA
 The York School, Monterey, CA
 Holy Names Academy, Seattle, WA

Also named by the Department were 56 schools designated as 1990-91 Drug-Free School Recognition Program winners. The following six private schools were honored at a June 7 White House ceremony:

Brophy College Preparatory School,
 Phoenix, AZ
 Mount Carmel Academy, New Orleans, LA
 The John Dewey Academy,
 Great Barrington, Mass.
 Andrews Academy, Berrien Springs, MI
 Red Cloud School, Pine Ridge, SD
 All Saints Episcopal School of Lubbock,
 Inc., Lubbock, TX

Legislative Update

America 2000

The federal legislation to accompany "America 2000: An Education Strategy" unveiled by the President in April was sent to Congress and introduced by leaders in both chambers on May 23. The identical bills, S. 1141 and H.R. 2460, would authorize \$690 million in new spending to support model choice programs, establish "Governors' Academies" to enhance principal training and offer advanced instruction for teachers, and develop a generation of "new

American schools".

Hearings on this and similar legislation are expected in the Senate this month with a potential mark-up of the bill in early July.

Public School Choice

Earlier that day, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), Chairman of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, introduced five bills to assist in restructuring urban and rural schools, help at-risk students, and surprisingly, provide support to states and local districts which implement public school choice programs.

Kennedy, a vocal opponent of President Bush's choice plan which includes private schools, introduced S. 1136, the "Public Schools Choice Act of 1991". He introduced the bill after meeting with "parents, teachers, administrators, and students participating in the choice program in the Cambridge [Massachusetts] public schools" which he described as "one of the most respected choice programs in the country."

Testing Panel

The House passed a bill to establish a National Council of Education Standards and Testing. Despite previous opposition to the duplication of Department of Education efforts, H.R. 2435 was approved by voice vote on June 10.

The measure, introduced by Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education Subcommittee Chairman Dale Kildee (D-Michigan), would create a bi-partisan council to determine if and how nationwide education standards and testing could be implemented. The bill authorizes \$1 million to cover the 32-member panel's costs.

Values Education

Legislation by Representative Tony P.Hall (D-Ohio) was introduced recently to establish a commission to examine the issues associated with the teaching of values in elementary and secondary schools. H.R. 2125 would also create grants to fund innovative projects relating to civics and character values in education.

In a statement, Representative Hall charged that the "debate on how to improve education in our country ignores one crucial element: how to prepare students to make judgements of right and wrong."

A "Commission on Values Education"

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would be created to suggest legislation or other policies with a 17 member board made up of educators, parents, students, philosophers, theologians, religious leaders, elected officials as well as persons from business, sports, the arts and entertainment. The Commission would be authorized \$500,000 and have one year to report its findings and recommendations to Congress.

Final Budget Numbers

The House and Senate passed **H.Con.Res. 121**, the conference report on the fiscal year 1992 budget resolution on May 22. The measure recommended an increase in education and social service programs over the Administration's request.

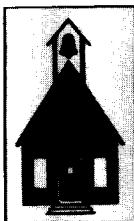
The President's budget called for \$29.6 billion for Department of Education programs. Although House and Senate plans called for \$2.4 and \$3.1 billion increases in education respectively, the final budget resolution gives no specific direction for the funds to the Department.

In a letter to Senators, CAPE executive director Joyce McCray wrote that "although private schools receive little or no federal funding, our national investment in education is critical to accomplishing the national education goals and achieving a fair and promising future for all our citizens."

Even though, the resolution is non-binding and appropriations committees in each

house exercise final discretion over spending, education leaders were pleased with the priority given education in the budget.

Capenotes:



▶ The National Education Committee of the **Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission** has announced an educators' conference entitled, "Seeds of Non-Violence" which will highlight techniques and strategies for infusing multicultural education into the classroom.

The October 11-13 meeting, to be held in Oakland, California, will focus on Dr. King's belief in a non-violent society in which people acknowledge diversity, respect differences and celebrate common humanity. Sr. Catherine McNamee, president of the National Catholic Educational Association and vice-president of the CAPE board, serves as the chair of the education committee.

For more information on the conference, contact Dr. Colden Murchinson with the King Commission at (202) 708-1005.

▶ The **National Diffusion Network (NDN)** provides funds to disseminate exemplary programs and materials. Before a program

can be included in the NDN program, it must be approved by a review group. A program requesting a review, including those from private schools, must provide data that indicate the program was effective in the school where it was developed.

Programs or materials that are judged effective are summarized in the Department of Education publication, *Education Programs that Work*. For more information on the NDN programs and private school participation, contact Dr. Charles Nunley, Director of the Private School Facilitator Project, at CAPE, (202) 659-0177.

▶ The **American Legislative Exchange Council**, an organization of state legislators, maintains a Task Force on Education with a primary focus on school choice legislation. It is composed of 50 state legislators and a variety of public and private sector experts.

As legislation on choice will continue to be the product of state governmental action, the Task Force serves a crucial role in assisting legislative leaders with information on education reform and choice.

NCEA President and CAPE Board Vice President Sr. Catherine McNamee and NAIS Vice-President John Sanders serve as advisors to the Task Force. For more information, contact Tim Beauchemin, ALEC Task Force legislative director, at (202) 547-4646.

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