

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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Whittle's "Edison Project" Challenges Education

Chris Whittle, head of a communications and education conglomerate, addressed the National Association of Independent Schools detailing his mission to redefine and alter American education. The innovator shared his vision with an intrigued, skeptical, and fascinated audience of independent school educators at their annual conference in New York on February 25.

Whittle, as he was introduced to the NAIS audience before his address, has been regarded as "a visionary, a pioneer, the devil, and the world's greatest salesman". As a parent of an independent school student, the businessman has undertaken the Herculean task of constructing a third, large sector of American elementary and secondary schools -- added to the current public and private sectors -- with plans to educate up to 2 million students in 1,000 schools by the year 2010.

Inspired Innovator

As the head of Whittle Communications, Chris Whittle has 20 years experience in education. The empire was built from the humble beginning of a magazine for college students at the University of Tennessee to the development of "Channel 1", a nationwide electronic educational news program for students.

The impetus for bringing current events news programming into the nation's classrooms came from a network news program

that Whittle and his colleagues experienced. The program took a look at what teenagers knew about the world around them. Some of the findings were startling, according to Whittle. "When one teenager was asked 'What's Chernobyl?', they confidently replied 'Cher's full name.' The gross national product is the worst product a company makes ... Geraldine Ferraro was a popular talk show host."

"What if we tried to start over? What if we took education and treated it like most other enterprises, if you will, and invested serious time and serious energy and research and development ... (to determine) what school in the 1990's and the 21st century should be?"

Chris Whittle, Chairman, Whittle Communications

More seriously, Whittle reported that not one student of a senior class in a California high school "could name even remotely the dates of the Civil War, World War I, World War II, or Vietnam."

At the same time, the Whittle company was conducting focus group research with teachers about the Whittle magazines in schools. One teacher informed the study that print news for students had limited effectiveness, unlike the electronic medium of televi-

sion, which students relate to so "much more significantly."

The two events lead the Whittle group to develop Channel 1 as a means of giving students valuable information and stimulating the learning process through an effective format. The program reaches into 340,000 classrooms with eight million students viewing nationwide. Whittle reported that 40% of public middle and high schools and 65% of all parochial schools tune in each day. "More students watch Channel 1 each morning than watch network news on ABC, NBC, CBS and CNN combined," Whittle said.

Despite controversy stemming from the two minutes of advertising necessary to finance the program, the 1988 experiment has turned into a huge success story. Concern and opposition came from many in the education field early on, as education groups felt that advertising and profit-taking was an exploitation of school children. Whittle said, "We were condemned by virtually every national education association -- I felt like I'd been condemned by the alphabet soup."

At the time of the experiment's inception, only one in ten classrooms in the United States were equipped with televisions. Whittle commented that nearly every classroom in Great Britain had a TV and then quipped that in Japan,



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"they **make** television sets in class". However, after only a few years of the project's activity, Whittle Communications has installed 12,000 satellite dishes, 6,000 miles of cable and 340,000 TV sets in schools across the country.

A New Idea

Whittle related that a few years ago he was asked to make a major address on how he would reform education in America. Having several months to ponder the topic, he deliberated at length with his associates on the issue. It was from that thought process that the new idea of the "Edison Project" originated.

Whittle said he asked himself the question, "What if we tried to start over? What if we took education and treated it like most other enterprises, if you will, and invested serious time and serious energy and research and development ... (to determine) what school in the 1990's and the 21st century should be?"

Whittle only placed two assumptions on the project. The first was that it would cost no more than was spent per student at any public school in the United States, and secondly that it would be beneficial to all children. He further proposed in that speech that such a project would not involve merely a "nice blue ribbon report" on what school should be, stating his belief that the nation "has been Christmas wrapped with blue ribbon reports on what should be done". Rather, he proposed that such an effort should be launched on a broad scale.

"When I made the speech I didn't intend to do it, but like all of us, I fell in love with my thoughts," Whittle said. And that was three years ago.

Since that time Whittle has indeed assembled a team to study, reflect, argue, talk, and construct how schools for the 21st century should be viewed. The Edison Project team includes "an eclectic crowd", according to Whittle, with multi-disciplined backgrounds: Lee Eisenberg, Nancy Hechinger, Daniel Biederman, Chester Finn, John Chubb, Silvia Peters and Dominique Browning. Additionally, thirty full-time researchers and analysts round out the staff. The entire effort is now lead by Benno Schmidt, former president of Yale University, as the CEO who joined the team in May 1992, "bringing international attention to the

project."

Whittle displayed a large, confidential document to the NAIS audience, the school design plans -- a synthesis of competitive design teams within the project completed on December 23. A similar prospectus exists outlining the business and financial plans for the undertaking. He reported that he had just begun the task of raising capital on February 23 to continue over the next 150 days.

The What and When

The Edison Project plans to disclose the concrete outline of school design and finance in a July 1, 1993 announcement. However, Whittle did discuss a few specifics. The project expects to begin purchasing land late this summer with construction to start in the Summer of 1994. By the 1996-97 school year, Whittle expects 155 campuses to be complete and open. Each campus would actually contain four schools -- pre-school, elementary, middle and high schools.

Edison schools will accept children from age 3 to 18, with no entrance requirements -- a first come, first served basis. Whittle added that "if our research is an indication, there will be long lines." He estimated that Edison schools would enroll 800,000 students by the year 2003.

Whittle also reported that the schools will have a "very different use of time", remaining open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with a "central core and flexible wings" on the school day. The schools will have fewer, but longer classes with significant recesses between. Further, the academic year will span 210 days.

The Edison Project will have its own Teachers College -- one on-site in Knoxville, Tennessee as well as "a long distance system". It will also maintain a national studio, allowing for live and interactive instruction throughout their classrooms. This will involve a great investment in high technology for each school, which Whittle estimated at \$700,000 of technological infrastructure per campus.

Whittle stressed that his schools will obviously have high academic standards, including language arts. "We expect all children to be fluent in three languages," Whittle said. Pre-schools will begin to teach Spanish, with expected fluency by grade 5.

He further expressed his confidence that all Edison students will reach an advanced placement in mathematics and science.

In addition to a traditionally academic curriculum, Whittle mentioned four other "domains" that will be a part of the Edison schools: Creativity, Character and Values, Physical Fitness, and Practical Skills.

Whittle expressed concern that schools today seem to be haphazardly cutting art and music programs. While elementary schools typically have 45 minutes per week devoted to such programs -- with middle and high schools requiring even less -- Whittle reported that his schools will have "that much every day" at every level. In the physical fitness area, while most states require only 1 hour per week, the Edison schools will devote 1 hour every day to such activity.

Whittle stated that the project seeks not simply to redefine schools, but to "alter the infrastructure that both and oppress schools." He credited those in the reform community, including private schools, who have parts and pieces of what the Edison Project will incorporate in its schools. He illustrated the point by saying "When Ford invented the car, he didn't invent the wheel [or] the gasoline engine ... what he did was put all those together in a fundamentally different way" to create something new and better.

Whittle also addressed the issue of the for-profit status of his schools. He said they "do plan to make a profit" and that a solid plan for re-inventing schools would attract capital and high quality people, "something direly needed in schools". He stated that the profit-making status would act to "force a certain level of accountability" that does not exist in the public school system today.

He concluded by saying the Edison schools should be "a positive factor in your world of education", although there could be negative ones as well. However, he claimed to have the same mission of most private schools, "which is to give as many children as possible the best possible beginning in their lives."

ADA Access Issues Raised

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was signed into law in July,



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1990, provides comprehensive civil rights protection to persons with disabilities in the area of employments, public accommodations, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. Under the act, the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) is responsible for developing the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).

ADAAG applies to the design, construction, and alteration of buildings and facilities to the extent required by regulations issued by the Department of Justice and the Department of Transportation which are responsible for implementing certain titles of the ADA.

The Access Board issued an "Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" on February 3 in the *Federal Register* to gather information necessary to supplement the existing ADAAG. When completed, the guidelines will address such places as private and public day care centers; nursery, pre-school, kindergarten, elementary and other school programs; and children's museums.

The notice seeks comment from the public on various issues related to the development of accessibility guidelines for children's environments. Comments should be submitted to the Access Board by April 5, 1993. Questions about the notice can be addressed to Jay Murdoch, Office of Technical and Information Services at (202) 272-5434 ext. 33 (voice) or (202) 272-5449 (TDD).

Interested private schools can take advantage of the opportunity to comment on this advance notice of proposed rulemaking. Comments will greatly assist the Board in developing final guidelines that ensure full access to private and public facilities in a fair and comprehensive manner.

Legislative Update

President Supports Charitable Gift Incentive

In his tax and economic proposals announced February 17, President Clinton recommended permanent, full deductibility of charitable gifts of appreciated property, an important issue to the private school community and all non-profits. Legislation

has been introduced in the House as well.

Before the Tax Reform Act of 1986, taxpayers who made "non-cash" contributions to charities were allowed a tax deduction for the fair market value of that property. However, the 1986 change in the tax code significantly limited the number of taxpayers who could fully deduct the appreciated portion of such gifts.

In 1990, Congress passed an allowance for gifts of "tangible" property -- such as artwork or manuscripts -- to be fully deductible as they were before the '86 Act, as a part of the omnibus deficit reduction legislation. That temporary, partial allowance expired last year. In the fall, the Congress passed a permanent, full allowance in H.R. 11 -- an omnibus tax bill. However, President Bush vetoed the legislation.

In addition to the Administration's stated support of the tax change, Representatives Mike Andrews (D-Texas) and Clay Shaw (R-Florida) have introduced **H.R. 882**, making all gifts of appreciated property fully deductible. A similar Senate bill is expected to be introduced by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-New York) with Senators David Boren (D-Oklahoma) and Jack Danforth (R-Missouri).

Joint Committee Studies Internal Reform

The Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress has recently held hearings for its short term study of how to improve the way Congress conducts its affairs. In an historic first day of testimony, the five House and Senate leaders -- the Speaker and Majority and Minority of both Houses -- agreed that serious reforms must be made in the Congress. The 28 member panel heard from all five leaders on January 26.

The legislation establishing the bi-partisan panel outlined eight areas of reform for review: the budget process; committee structure and jurisdiction; floor procedure and scheduling; staff and support agencies; cooperation among the parties, the chambers, and branches of government; ethics and integrity; public understanding of Congress; and information technology.

Education leaders have been among those expressing concern about gridlock in government, a common theme from the 1992 elections. Over the previous four

years, despite widespread concern and discussion on education reform, no major reform legislation affecting elementary and secondary schools has been enacted.

The joint committee was patterned after similar panels established to review Congressional operations in 1946 and 1970.

Riley, Reich Before the Senate

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley recently appeared before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, stressing the need to renew and restructure education over the long term. In a February 24 appearance with Labor Secretary Robert Reich, the two Clinton Cabinet members urged cooperation and collaboration.

Riley stated that much of America is already ahead of Washington in making change in education. "Systemic school reform is not a new idea. Many business, education and parent groups ... [and] states and communities are beginning to move down the path toward coherent systemic education reform." Riley said.

Expressing some limitation of the federal government and his Department, Riley went on to say, "Another key to success is to build partnerships with the institutions of American involved in education -- with states, school districts, colleges and business and labor to improve education for all of our students. In the Department of Education we can help by convening and mobilizing attention to reform, by improving our own management, and perhaps more importantly, by creating less federal red tape and paying more attention to teaching and learning -- the heart and soul of education."

Reich talked of the Administration's commitment to improved school-to-work transition for non-college bound youth.

Clinton Education Bill Coming Soon

In meetings with education leaders, the White House and Education Department officials have provided a glimpse of the first education bill to come forward from the new Administration. CAPE was recently represented at such a briefing at the Department.

The legislation, to be called "Goals 2000: Educate America Act", would provide Congressional endorsement of the six national education goals set by the nation's

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governors and President Bush at the Education Summit in 1989. It would also support the ongoing activities of the National Education Goals Panel -- made up of representatives of the National Governors Association, the White House and Congress. It would further create a new council to oversee the process of voluntary standards and assessments.

The legislation will also apparently have a system of state grants to accelerate school reform projects, similar to the award system in legislation approved by the House of Representatives last year.

When asked at a recent hearing by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) if the legislation would be ready in "days, rather than months?", Riley replied the Department's round the clock efforts will produce legislation very soon.

School Lunch Bill to be Extended

The National School Lunch Act would be reauthorized by legislation introduced by Representative Dale Kildee (D-Michigan) through fiscal year 1999. The bill, **H.R. 8**, has been referred to the House Education and Labor Committee, which has yet to set hearing dates for the measure.

Capenotes:

▶ The Education Division of the **National Gallery of Art** in Washington, DC offers ongoing programs to provide information about art and its cultural context and to demonstrate techniques for teaching about art.

Focusing on one artistic topic each summer, the Teacher Institute presents educators of all subjects, K-12, with a forum for intellectual renewal and professional exchange with colleagues. The course of study is designed to meet teachers' needs as adult learners and offers educators the change to learn about art in a museum setting.

Three 5-day sessions are offered this coming summer from July 12 through August 14. A registration fee of \$200 is required and low-cost housing at nearby Marymount College is available. To receive an application form, contact Teach and School Programs, Education Division, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC 20565. Applications are due by April 30.

To receive an application form and more information, contact Teacher Institute, Department of Teacher and School Programs, Education Division, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565.



▶ **Follow Through** programs are known for their intensive staff development training, parent involvement and incorporation of effective early childhood teaching strategies. Fifteen different Follow Through programs may be observed in action on various sites across the country. One page descriptions of the programs are available through the CAPE sponsored Private School Facilitator Project.

For information contact Dr. Charles Nunley or Fay O'Brien in the CAPE office at (202) 659-0177.

▶ The national Endowment for the Humanities provides **Fellowships for College Teachers and Independent Scholars** who plan to conduct extensive studies in the humanities during the 1994-95 academic school year. Projects should last six to twelve months and explore topics in the subjects of history, philosophy, literature, archaeology, languages, jurisprudence, art history, and comparative religion.

For information and application materials, you may write Joseph Neville, Division of Fellowships and Seminars, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 316, Washington, D.C. 20506 or telephone (202) 606-8466.

COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN PRIVATE EDUCATION 1726 M Street, NW, Suite 1102, Washington, DC 20036 (202) 659-0016, fax (202) 659-0018

a coalition of 14 national associations serving private schools K-12

Editor: Greg D. Kubiak Executive Director: Joyce McCray

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