

# cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

October 1996 • Number 218

**Council Members:** American Montessori Society • Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the U.S. • Christian Schools International • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America • Friends Council on Education • Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod • National Association of Episcopal Schools • National Association of Independent Schools • National Catholic Educational Association • National Society for Hebrew Day Schools • Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education, K-12 • Solomon Schechter Day School Association • U.S. Catholic Conference • Affiliated State Organizations in 30 States

## Private Schools In Public Spotlight

These days it's hard to turn on the news or pick up a paper without seeing a story about the media's newest curiosity: private schools. Why, in one week alone (September 23), such schools and their remarkable record of success were the focus of feature stories in both *Time* and *Newsweek*.



A number of high-profile public policy developments have helped push private schools center stage:

- Bob Dole's proposal for "opportunity scholarships" for low- and middle-income students to use in the public or private school of their choice;
- New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's plan to ease overcrowding in the city's schools by raising private funds for scholarships to enable some needy and poor-performing public school students to attend private schools;
- the start in Cleveland this school year of the first-ever low-income voucher

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## \$3.5 Billion Boost in Ed Spending Public and Private Students Benefit

For those who monitor federal education spending, the past two fiscal years have been a study in contrasts. Compared to the spending cuts, short-term resolutions, and government shutdowns that marked last year's budget battle, this year's spending bill was a stroll in the park on the path of plenty.

Measured against fiscal 1996, overall discretionary education spending rose by \$3.5 billion - 15 percent - in fiscal 1997, the budget year that began the first of October. The sheer size of the increase took many observers by surprise.

Every major program in which private school students participate will see a substantial increase (see chart). Especially noteworthy is that the Capital Expenses program, which helps districts to provide equitable Title I services to private school students, will be funded at \$41.1 million, an increase of \$2 million. Title I itself will receive \$7.2 billion, up nearly \$500 million.

Appropriations for Some Key Education Programs		
PROGRAM	FY 1996 APPROPRIATION	FY 1997 APPROPRIATION
Title I	\$6.7 Billion	\$7.2 Billion
Capital Expenses	\$38 Million	\$41 Million
Title VI - Block Grants	\$275 Million	\$310 Million
Special Education	\$3.2 Billion	\$4.0 Billion
Safe and Drug-Free Schools	\$466 Million	\$556 Million
Eisenhower Grants	\$275 Million	\$310 Million
Technology Challenge Grants	\$48 Million	\$70 Million
Bilingual/Immigrant Ed	\$188 Million	\$262 Million

The generous election-year budget seemed to emerge from a variety of factors, including a heightened public interest in education and a desire by Congress to avoid a replay of last year's stalemates and shutdowns.

Responding to the budget increase, Joe McTighe, CAPE's executive director, said, "The task at this point is for public and private school educators to make certain that the new funds are used wisely and fairly, and result in measurable improvement for all the nation's students."



**Continued from page 1**

program to include religious schools.

**Presidential Debate Topic**

Even the first Clinton-Dole debate included an extensive "mini-debate" on private schools. Senator Dole reiterated his position that federal funds should be used to help give poor parents the same chance that parents with "power and prestige" have to choose their child's school. President Clinton, while opposing the use of federal funds for such purpose, expressed an openness to private school voucher programs funded at the local or state level.

**Neediest Kids Educated**

One of the earliest of the recent wave of stories about private schools was a scholarly article this summer by Sol Stern in the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal*. Stern focused on Catholic schools, saying they are "constantly reminding us that the neediest kids are educable." He subsequently adapted the article for shorter pieces in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. His work was also cited in *Time* and *Newsweek*.

**Educational Role Models**

In feature stories that ran in their September 23 editions, the nation's top two news magazines suggested that private schools could serve as models for other educational institutions. "[T]hey can provide valuable lessons for beleaguered public schools," claimed *Newsweek*. *Time* suggested that public schools should be a little more like their private counterparts.

Predictably, such coverage has sparked additional media interest. What's more, in connection with their new focus on private schools, reporters have uncovered the compelling research documenting the success of those schools. They have come to discover what those in private education have known all along: that the disciplined environment, core curriculum, caring communities, and high expectations private schools provide make them some of the most effective schools in the country for educating children in need.

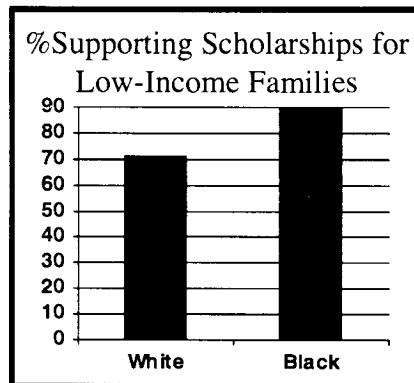
Survey says...

**Public Supports School Choice**

It was yet another indication of the public's growing support for school choice. The *Survey of Americans' Attitudes Toward Education and School Reform* was released last month by the Washington-based Center for Education Reform, and its findings were startling.

For starters, 86 percent of Americans support "providing parents with the option of sending their children to the school of their choice - either public, private, or parochial - rather than only to the school to which they are assigned."

In addition, 72 percent favor state legislators enacting programs that "assist children in failing schools to opt out of the school and attend an alternative school, either public, private or parochial, of the parents' choosing."



When asked "How much in favor are you of allowing poor parents to be given the tax dollars allotted for their child's education and permitting them to use those dollars in the form of a scholarship to attend a private, public or parochial school of their choosing?" 73 percent of all Americans and 90 percent of African-Americans said they were strongly or somewhat in favor.

The telephone survey of 1017 people was conducted by International Communications Research, which claims the survey is 95 percent accurate.

**For more information contact CER at 202-822-9000**

**Court Watch**

• **Felton Revisited:** Last month, the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals brought the overturn of *Felton* one step closer to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Second Circuit upheld a lower court decision disallowing the petition of New York City and others to return Title I teachers to parochial school classrooms. The petition was prompted by indications in some recent Supreme Court rulings that the Court may be willing to reverse its decision in *Felton*. The Second Circuit in essence agreed with the lower court that only the Supreme Court can overturn a Supreme Court decision. Petitioners have now brought the matter to the Supreme Court, and observers believe the case could be heard sometime during the 1996-97 session.

• **State Testing of Private School Students:** This past summer the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled (*Ohio Association of Independent Schools (OAIS) v. Goff*) that Ohio can require private school students to pass a basic competency test in reading, writing, math, science, and citizenship before being granted a diploma. The court found that while some state testing of private school students could be constitutionally problematic, the particular test in question did not violate the right of parents to direct the upbringing of their children and did not interfere with the ability of private schools to teach their own curriculum.

• **Kiryas Joel Continues:** The New York State Court of Appeals has issued a stay which allows the continuation of the school district that was established to serve special education Hasidic children residing in the village of Kiryas Joel. The district will remain in existence pending a decision by the court on the constitutionality of the law that established it.



## National Leaders Push Partnership

In a ceremony in Washington last month, representatives of various national education associations, including CAPE, joined Secretary of Education Richard Riley in signing a pledge of support for family-school-community partnerships.

"We believe that it is vital for all the adults involved in children's learning to join together," read the statement signed by the group. "We believe in building and promoting mutual trust and respect between families and schools, and also between the school and the community at large."

In an address at the ceremony, the Secretary outlined the importance of having the entire community come together in support of education. His maxim *Better education is everybody's business* concisely captures the heart of his comments.

Three national association directors also addressed the group: Anne Bryant of the National School Boards Association, Joan Dykstra of the National PTA, and Joe McTighe of CAPE.

### All In This Together

In his remarks to the group, Joe McTighe commented on the sense of personal worthlessness that plagues too many young people today, and said the only way to face this problem is together. "This is a problem far too deep and complex for any single individual or institution to solve on its own," he said. "Only by acting together will we have the capacity and scope to ever hope to make a difference."

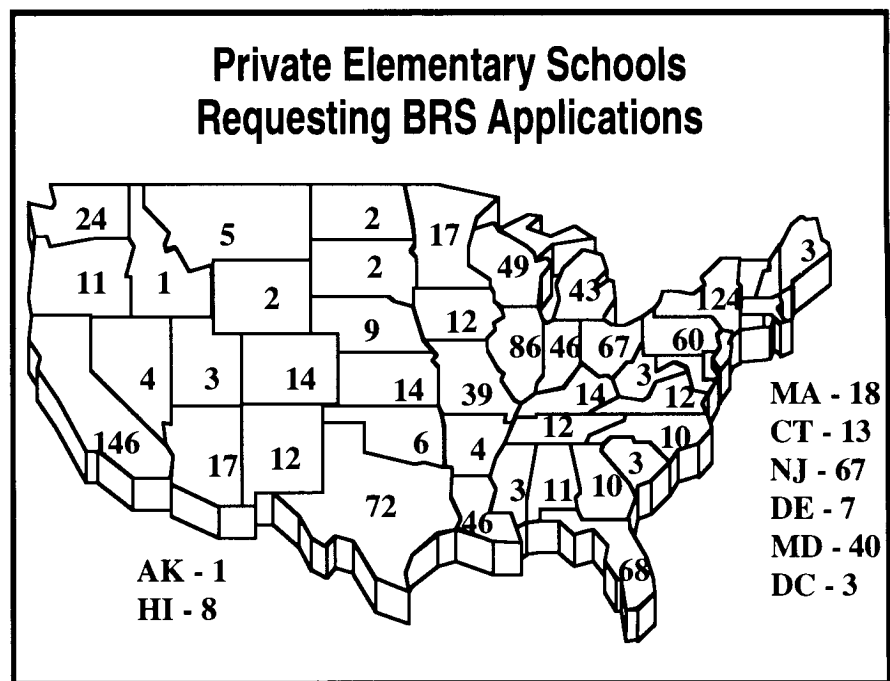
McTighe went on to say that the task of addressing the needs of vulnerable students is too massive to write anyone off as partners. "No resource should be left untapped, no institution uninvolved. Like it or not we are all in this together. We each have gifts to contribute to the task, insights and wisdom to share with one another, and much to learn from one another."

## BRS Program Underway

### 1,250 Private Schools Request Applications

Forget the race for President. Forget the World Series. If you are a principal of a school seeking blue ribbon status, any spare time this October has been spent completing the program's extensive application documents in time for the October 21 due date.

Over 1,250 private elementary schools have requested applications for the 1996-97 cycle of the Blue Ribbon Schools Program. (Secondary schools will have a chance to apply next year, since the elementary/secondary cycles alternate.) A state-by-state breakdown of the application requests is provided in the accompanying chart. Almost every state was represented in the requests, and private schools in Puerto Rico bolstered the count by seven.



### Rigorous Review Process

While most schools that request applications do not end up applying, CAPE staff is still getting ready for what could be a record number of applicants. CAPE administers the private school component of the program; public schools apply through their state education departments.

All applications from private schools are carefully reviewed by a panel of private school educators. About 100 are then sent on to the U.S. Department of Education for another review by public and private educators. The most promising schools are then slated for site visits, and a final review of the site visit findings results in the best schools being recommended for recognition as Blue Ribbon Schools. All recognized schools are honored at a national awards ceremony in Washington.

In the most recent cycle, 50 private and 216 public secondary schools were named Blue Ribbon Schools.

Since its inception in 1982, the program has honored more than 3,000 schools.





## capenotes

• *The New York Times* reported on September 16 that **Paul Vallas**, superintendent of Chicago's public schools, has engaged in an ongoing dialogue with **Elaine Schuster**, superintendent of Chicago's Catholic schools, and in so doing "has broken new ground in cooperation between public and parochial schools." The *Times* went on to report that "a team of top Catholic school policy-makers has been assembled to help the public high schools analyze management techniques and revamp curriculum, with an eye toward better behavior and more demanding curriculum." The dialogue is a two-way. "This isn't all one-sided," said Dr. Schuster. "We're up against a lot of the same challenges." She went on to say there was plenty the parochial schools could learn from public schools.

• Don't panic! Enrollment in the nation's private schools, which is currently at 5.8 million, will not top 50 million students by the year 2000, despite what the U.S. Department of Edu-

cation claims. The September issue of the Department's **Community Update** included a front-page graph which depicted the upswing in the country's total K-12 enrollment but which was mistakenly labeled *Enrollment in Private Elementary and Secondary Schools*.

• The search is on for the middle school and high school students who best show their community spirit by volunteering to make their communities better places to live. **The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards**, sponsored by The Prudential Insurance Company of America in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, provides recognition of deserving students in local public and private schools, identifies the two best examples of community service in each state, and culminates in naming America's top ten youth volunteers of the year next May. For more information, contact Prudential's Sean McNerney at 212-682-4100.

• Wanted: 100,000 Teachers! The **21st Century Teachers** initiative is looking for 100,000 teacher volunteers to work with other teachers and educa-

tors to become more accomplished in utilizing the latest computer technology in their schools. Any teacher can sign up to volunteer. Each volunteer is asked to (1) build their own expertise in using new technologies, (2) share their expertise and experience with colleagues, (3) use their expertise with students, and (4) work to make classroom technology available to all students and teachers. Volunteers can register by using the 21st Century Teachers homepage at <http://www.21CT.org>.

### Mark Your Calendar!

CAPE will host its 7th annual Legislative Conference on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 11-12, 1997. Help us let the new Congress know the importance of responding to the needs of all the nation's students. For more information, call CAPE.

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