

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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Telecom Discount Proposal Doesn't Work for Private Schools

Alternative Approach Needed to Give Private Schools a Fair Break

When the FCC's Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service recommended last month that telecommunications discounts for public schools be pegged to the percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches, it set the stage for hefty price breaks for most public schools. An estimated two-thirds of those schools will receive discounts of 50 percent or more (see chart).

But for private schools, there's a problem with the lunch measure: It doesn't work. For starters, only 22 percent of private schools participate in the national school lunch program, compared to 94 percent of public schools. Many private school principals, often the sole administrators in the school, simply don't have the time to coordinate the program; others shun any government aid as a matter of principle.

Of course, the low participation rate in the school lunch program does not

mean that private schools do not want or deserve industry discounts for telecommunications services - and generous ones at that. In fact, if one purpose of the Joint Board's proposal is to ensure the deepest discounts for schools least able to pay (and it is), many private schools

How Discounts Would Work for Public Schools Using the National School Lunch Program		
Students in Lunch Program	% of All Public Schools	Telecom Discount
0-1%	3%	20%
1-19%	31%	40%
20-34%	19%	50%
35-49%	15%	60%
50-74%	16%	80%
75-100%	16%	90%

should be at the front of the line.

By any measure of "ability to pay," private schools as a group seem deserving of substantial price reductions. For the overwhelming majority of private schools, budgets are very tightly framed, providing little, if any, discretionary income. Average per-pupil expenditures

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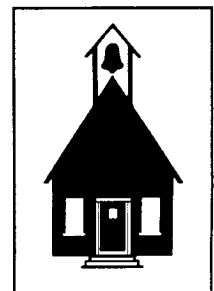
Technology Aid On the Way

New Program to Start Soon

For students and teachers who think they could use some TLC when it comes to technology, help is on the way, though its name is actually TLCHF, the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund.

Congress and the President agreed last October to a \$200 million appropriation for the program, designed to help students in public and private schools prepare for the high-tech world they will face as graduates. Like technology itself, TLCHF is on a fast track. States could receive allocations - ranging from \$1 million to over \$20 million - before the start of the new year. In turn, the states distribute the funds to school districts in the form of grants awarded on a competitive basis.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's non-regulatory guidance on the program, the grants can be used "for a wide range of activities to strengthen instruction through the use of technology." For example, they can be used to provide teachers with training and support, to provide stu-



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are significantly lower than those of public schools. For teacher salaries, the single largest expenditure item in any school's budget, the private school average (\$21,968 in 1993-94) is 36 percent less than that of public schools (\$34,153).

Limited Resources

What's more, there is limited opportunity for private schools to secure additional resources. To remain affordable to the parents who support them, private schools must keep their tuitions at reasonable levels. The average tuition was \$3,116 in the 1993-94 school year, the last time the National Center for Education Statistics measured it. Given the bare-bones budgets of their schools and the tight fiscal constraints they face, it should come as no surprise that 61 percent of private school administrators consider funding a major barrier to the acquisition of telecommunications services.

Digital Divide

Perhaps the single best indicator of the difficulty private schools have in affording telecommunications services is their current level of instructional technology. Most private schools can be found on the "have-not" side of the digital divide. The percentage of private schools having access to the Internet is half that of public schools; the percentage of private school instructional rooms connected to the Net is lower still. Access rates to e-mail, modems, cable television, and high-speed connections are all substantially lower in private schools

% of Schools Having ...		
Type of Technology	Private School	Public School
E-Mail	24%	47%
Cable Television	37%	76%
Two-Way Video/Audio	2%	7%

than public schools (see charts). In sum, the two sectors are worlds apart when it comes to telecommunications.

And here's a telling statistic. Even those public schools with the highest percentages of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch are more likely to be able to access the Internet than private schools - and more likely to do so at higher speeds (see charts).

Recognizing that the school lunch measure might not work for private schools, the Joint Board suggested that the FCC seek comments on alternative measures of economic disadvantage. It suggested that such measures be readily available or, if not available, minimally burdensome to obtain.

Various national private school associations are hard at work trying to develop a measure or formula that fits the bill. One approach being considered is to provide a private school the same

discount as its neighborhood public school, while at the same time allowing schools that can prove greater need the chance to secure additional discounts.

The hope is that EdLiNC, a coalition of libraries, public schools, and private schools concerned with the *Telecommunications Act*, will be able to reach agreement on one or more equitable approaches for determining private school discounts, and will then advance them with one voice to the FCC.

In May 1997, the FCC will issue final rules governing the discount rate. Let's hope that the final formula truly provides the deepest discounts to the schools most in need - public and private.

Technology Access by Public Schools, Private Schools, and Public Schools with 71% or More Students in the National School Lunch Program			
	Public Schools	Private Schools	Public Schools with High NSLP Rates
% of Schools With Internet Access	50%	25%	31%
% of Instructional Rooms with Net Access	9%	4%	5%
% of Schools Having Net Access Via...			
Modem	40.5%	23.5%	40%
SLIPP/PPP	11.5%	4%	8%
56Kb	5%	0.5%	3.5%
T1	3.5%	0.5%	4.5%
ISDN	1.5%	0.75%	5%

Source for both charts on this page: National Center for Education Statistics. "Advanced Telecommunications in U.S. Public Schools" (1996) and "Advanced Telecommunications in U.S. Private Schools" (draft).

State Action Alert

Just as the FCC is deciding how to implement the discounts for telecommunications services at the federal level, state public utilities or service commissions are NOW deciding on similar provisions at the state level. They are required by federal law to do so.

We recommend that private schools work through their regional or state-level associations to find out how to influence the state rule-making process for determining telecommunications services discounts for schools. Some states seem to be moving very quickly on this, so time is of the essence.

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dents and teachers with computers and software, and to connect classrooms to the information superhighway.

Equitable Participation

Public school districts that receive the grants must provide for the equitable participation of private school students and teachers. The program is governed by Title XIV of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, which, among other things, provides for timely and meaningful consultation with private school officials regarding (1) the needs of students and teachers and (2) the design and delivery of services to meet

those needs. Needless to say, the consultation should take place before any school district applies for the funds.

Further Information

Because the funding is moving quickly and because the program could vary slightly from state to state, private school officials would do well to contact their state education departments to find out exactly how the program is being administered in the state and how private school students and teachers can participate.

Information about TLCF is also available from the U.S. Department of Education at the following Web site:

<http://www.ed.gov/technology>

capenotes

• **TIMMS, The CD:** One of the more fascinating and innovative projects related to the **Third International Math and Science Study (TIMMS)** is a research component on the instructional goals and styles of math teachers in Japan, Germany, and the United States.

Videographers taped 250 math lessons (100 in the United States alone), and researchers had the tapes transcribed, translated into English, and stored in digital form. It all amounts to the most comprehensive videographic analysis of teaching styles ever.

The National Center for Education Statistics is releasing a CD which features excerpts from the study and enables viewers to observe some startling cultural differences in math-class content, emphasis, structure, and instructional technique. Viewers can also find out which country is tops at teaching higher-order thinking skills.

The CD is available from National Education Data Resource Center.

- Email: nedrc@inet.ed.gov
- Telephone: 703-845-3151

• **The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** announced the third annual Arthur and Rochelle Belfer National Conference for Educators. Middle and high school educators are invited to apply to attend one of two conferences, July 13-15 or July 20-22, 1997.

Museum educators and scholars will share rationales, strategies, and approaches for presenting this complex topic to students. Educators who complete the program receive a collection of educational resources and a voucher to purchase Holocaust-related resources.

Applications will be available in mid-January; the application deadline is March 15.

For information, contact Sylvia Kay by phone (202-488-2639), fax (202-314-7888) or email (skay@ushmm.org).

FAQs About Private Schools

How many private schools are there in the United States? How many students attend them? What's the average tuition? These are just a few of the frequently asked questions (FAQs) we get at CAPE. Permit us to provide some answers. (Unless otherwise noted, all data are from the National Center for Education Statistics and cover the 1993-94 school year, the last year the NCES administered the *Schools and Staffing Survey*.)

There are 26,093 private schools in the United States, serving 5,471,000 students. Just about one in four of the nation's schools is a private school; eleven percent of all students attend them.

Most private schools (85 percent) are religiously oriented, and most are small (81 percent have fewer than 300 students). The average tuition is \$3,116; the average salary for teachers is \$21,968.

A persistent myth about private schools is that they predominantly serve wealthy students. But according to a report on enrollment in the 1994-95 school year, which was recently released by the Bureau of the Census, less

than one-fourth of all private school students come from families with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more. In fact, it turns out that the vast majority - 80 percent, to be exact - of school children from families in the \$75,000+ income bracket are enrolled in the nation's public schools.

Private School Profile	
Enrollment	5,471,000
# of Schools	26,093
Average Tuition	\$3,116
Average Teacher Salary	\$21,968

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capenotes

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• The school board in **Falls Church, Virginia**, voted unanimously last month to permit students who live in the district and are taught at home or in private schools to attend certain classes and activities in public schools. Falls Church is said to be the first district in Virginia to approve such a policy, which would allow private school students to take, for example, the same band classes offered to public school students.

• *Bridging the Gap Between Neuroscience and Education* is a new re-

port from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) that looks at how neuroscience can help teachers teach.

The report examines the windows of opportunity for certain types of learning, looks at the way the brain processes certain information, and notes the importance of brain stimulation for neuron development in a child's early years. "Emphasis on the first years of life for all children is even more important than had been understood," says Frank Newman, ECS president.

For a copy of the report, contact the ECS Distribution Center at 303-299-3692.

• According to a national poll conducted for the **Education Commission**

of the States, half of voters in the November election said that the positions of congressional and presidential candidates on public education made a real difference in whom they voted for.

A majority of those polled also said that public schools are not meeting their expectations. However, there were mixed opinions on what should be done to improve public schools. Three approaches secured the support of nearly 30 percent of voters: minor tuning of public education (29 percent), a top-to-bottom overhaul (26 percent), and vouchers for private and parochial schools (27 percent).

For a copy of the results, contact Elizabeth Holman of the Education Commission of the States at 303-299-3625.

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