

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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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

School Groups Unite Behind Telecom Proposal

EdLiNC has been busy. Ever since November, when the Federal-State Joint Board released its recommendations on how to implement key provisions of the *Telecommunications Act*, the Washington-based coalition of education and library organizations has been working diligently to develop a mutually-agreed-upon response.

As it turns out, the hard work was worth it. EdLiNC's response, recently filed with the FCC, represents a seldom-seen united front among organizations that frequently follow separate paths when it comes to public policy.

(The coalition's 30+ members include the National School Boards Association, the American Library Association, the National Education Association, the National Association of Independent Schools, the United States Catholic Conference, the National Catholic Educational Association, and CAPE.)

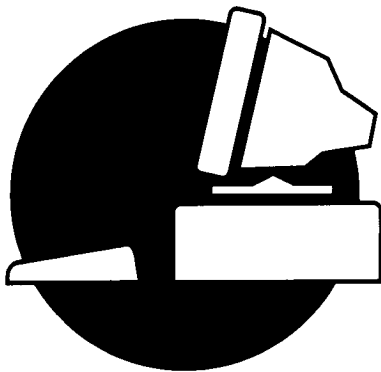
Although EdLiNC's comments cover a wide range of issues, one significant area of agreement centers on the discount mechanism for private schools. When the Joint Board proposed last November that the percentage of students in the national school lunch program be used to determine the level of

economic disadvantage — and the telecommunications discounts — for public schools, it recognized that such an approach presented a problem for private schools. Consequently, it recommended that the FCC seek comments on minimally burdensome alternative ways to

identify economically disadvantaged private schools. Answering the call, EdLiNC's members were able to engineer a mechanism that offers what the coalition's comments describe as "a minimally burdensome approximation of affordability" for private schools.

According to EdLiNC's filing with the FCC, the school lunch program "faces a number of unique difficulties when applied to private schools..." and "does not always adequately measure the issue of an institution's ability to afford services." EdLiNC's solution is simple: If a private school draws 60 percent or more of its students from the public school attendance area or district in which it is located, it should receive the same telecommunications discount as that school or district.

Alternatively, if a private school draws less than 60 percent of its students



Secretary Riley Reappointed

Ending six weeks of speculation about a possible change in the country's top education post, President Clinton last month reappointed Richard W. Riley to a second term as U.S. Secretary of Education. Many educators across the country reacted with enthusiasm.

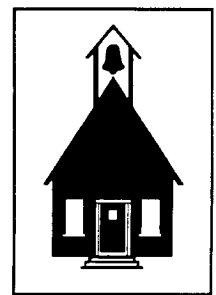
In accepting the appointment, Secretary Riley said, "This is an important time for American education. The American people are tuned into education and have made it one of their highest priorities. We have more children than ever before in our nation's schools, and we will be breaking enrollment records for the next 10 years. And our schools must continue to pick up the pace to meet the challenges of the Information Age."

The Secretary went on to say, "[A]s always, public education must play its traditional and vital role of passing on to each new generation the uniqueness of what it means to be a 'good citizen.'" The common school, full of Americans of every race, creed and ethnic background, remains the great bastion of our democracy."

In responding to the reappointment, Joe McTighe, executive director of CAPE, said the private

Continued on

page 3



Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

from the public school attendance area or district, or if it does not wish to use the public school as a proxy, it could turn to one of two options to determine its telecommunications discount:

- It could use any of the methods currently approved for identifying the number of income-eligible children under Title I of ESEA (an approach convenient for schools already participating in ESEA and already measuring income eligibility) and could then obtain the telecommunications discount appropriate for public schools with the same percentage of income-eligible students.

OR

- Using census data to determine the percentage of families that would be eligible for the school lunch program in a region from which it draws its students, the private school could receive the telecommunications discount appropriate for public schools with the same share of eligible students. This one requires an illustration: If a private school draws all its students from Lansing County, and census data show that 35 percent of families in Lansing County have incomes that make them eligible for the school lunch program, the private school would secure a telecommunications discount appropriate for a public school where 35 percent of students were eligible for the lunch program. (Under the Joint Board's proposal, the discount for schools in that category

would be 60 percent.) If the private school were to draw students from more than one county, the discount would be determined proportionately. Also, the school could elect to do the calculation by school district or zip code area, rather than by county.

Finally, for schools — public and private — where the need is great but the discount isn't, the EdLiNC proposal calls for the establishment of a hardship appeals process through which additional discounts could be requested.

Joe McTighe, CAPE's executive director, praised the proposal as a "fair and relatively easy way of trying to provide all students an even start as they enter the Information Age."

EdLiNC's private school representatives Jeff Burnett, NAIS director of government relations, and Beth Perretta, USCC educational research associate, agreed, commenting that the discount mechanism goes a long way toward realizing Congress's intent to make telecommunications services affordable for schools and libraries.

Of course, EdLiNC's proposal is just that — a proposal — and as such is subject to final approval by the Federal Communications Commission. But if the FCC is looking for a private school discount mechanism that is fair, administratively simple, and supported by almost every major national education organization in the country, EdLiNC's bid should fit the bill.

Court Watch

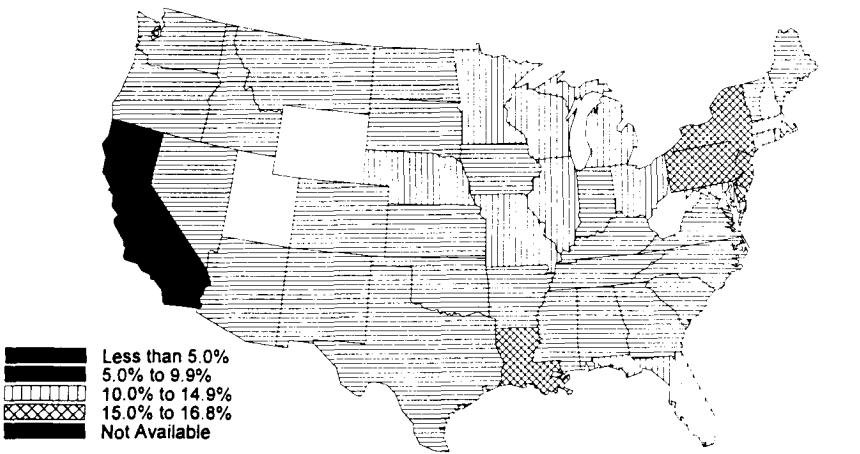
- The U.S. Supreme Court has asked the Justice Department to submit a brief for a case in which private school parents have sued an Indiana school district for the services of a full-time aide for their physically disabled daughter. Although it has not yet decided to hear the case, the High Court at least showed signs of interest by asking the solicitor general for an opinion on the matter. The U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in *K.R.R. v. Anderson Community School Corporation* that the district did not have to provide the aide at the private school site. The girl's parents then took the case to the Supreme Court.

- The U.S. Supreme Court could decide as early as January 21 whether to revisit this term its 1985 ruling in *Aguilar v. Felton*. Last fall the Clinton Administration, the NYC Board of Education, and others, encouraged by Court pronouncements suggesting that a majority of Justices would overturn *Felton* if given the chance, asked the Court to permit public school teachers to deliver Title I services in religious schools.

- In yet another school-related religious freedom case involving the 1984 *Equal Access Act*, the U.S. Supreme Court in December let stand a ruling by the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals allowing a Bible club at a Roslyn, NY, public school to require its officers to be Christian (*Roslyn Union Free School District v. Hsu*).

cape-scope...

% of State Enrollment in Private Schools



Source: *Profile of Children in U.S. School Districts*, NCES 96-831.

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march 11-12



Bipartisan Choice

When policy wonks from both a Republican and Democratic administration start singing the same tune, it's time to give a listen. In this case the wonks are William Galston, former domestic policy adviser to President Clinton, and Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretary of education for President Bush. The tune is school choice.

Cross-pollinating the different partisan perspectives from which they emerge, the two current academicians recently co-wrote an article in *The Washington Post* calling for "means-tested" scholarships to allow low-income children in poor-performing urban public schools to attend private schools.

Concluding that strong reform measures must be tried for children "most at risk of failure," Galston and Ravitch urge that the school choice initiatives currently underway in Wisconsin and Ohio be extended to "no fewer than 10 hard-pressed urban school districts for a period of no less than five years, with carefully designed monitoring and evaluation."

The scholarships, they say, should be used only at state-recognized schools, only at schools that comply with the

1964 *Civil Rights Act*, and "to ensure accountability," only at schools that administer the same achievement tests as public schools. Scholarships would equal the average per-pupil cost in the public school district plus "whatever federal funds (Title I or special education) the students would ordinarily be entitled to receive."

Responding to critics of the plan who claim the scholarships would not be large enough, the authors argue "there are many nonpublic schools with tuitions and fees no higher than the average per-pupil cost of public schools, and in some cases considerably lower."

And taking on the oft-heard charge that such a program would leave behind worse-off students in public schools, they contend that a 5 percent to 10 percent ceiling could be set on the number of scholarships, "hardly enough to undermine the leading role of public schools or to draw away their best students." Besides, they say, "schools that find themselves losing students might respond to the challenge by upgrading their offerings."

In concluding their piece, the pair assert that the only way to find out what we need to know to determine the effects of such a scholarship program is "to allow a serious experiment to proceed." As they succinctly put it, "We cannot afford to write off another generation of urban schoolchildren."

Continued from page 1

school community was looking forward to working closely with Riley, whom he described as a man of "deep concern for the well-being of children."

Noting the important new initiatives proposed by the President for the next four years, including classroom access to the Internet, McTighe said he believed the Administration is committed to programs that would enhance educational opportunities for all the nation's students, regardless of the school they attend. "Secretary Riley realizes that a needy student in a public school and a needy student in a private school share a common name: Child in Need. His inclination is to reach out and help all such children, wherever they may be."

McTighe also said private schools stood ready to assist the Secretary in formulating new partnerships to address the daunting problems of educating disadvantaged youth. "No potential solution should be left unexplored in our efforts to enhance educational opportunities for children most at risk," he said. "As they each continue to educate a rich diversity of America's students for productive citizenship and the good life, both public and private schools must become better partners, sharing with one another their wisdom and success — especially their success with students most in need. The private school community is eager to work with the Secretary in what he calls the 'great patriotic cause' of improving American education."

Clinton on Choice

At a news conference on December 14, 1996, President Clinton responded to a question on school choice. The following is a transcript of the exchange.

Mr. President, when you begin your campaign to improve public education in this country, are you going to follow up on a suggestions that you made in the first presidential debate which is to encourage states and cities to offer vouchers for private school choice? I don't believe I made that suggestion.

You said that states and cities should be allowed to do it. No, well I've always thought they should be allowed to do [it] by supporting Milwaukee's right to do it. But I'm not going to encourage or discourage it. I think it should be made based on the facts of the case. I am opposed to the federal government doing it. Our aid is limited, and it is too targeted and is too much needed for what is done now. And if I were at the state or local level, I would not be in favor of it because I think the schools are underfunded. I don't think they're overfunded. But I do believe that they have the legal right to do it. And I don't support any action to take that legal right away from them. And if they think that the situation is totally out of hand and they want to try what they did in Milwaukee, I think they ought to have the right to do it.

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capenotes

• Calling Loyola Academy a school “proudly stuck in the past,” columnist **George Will** recently penned a piece in praise of the Baltimore-based private school for “adjudicated and at-risk” boys, citing its extraordinary academic success and its ability to mold character. He also liked a line in the school’s handbook, which says the school strives to help students become “competent men for others” -- a goal sometimes out of tune with our I-centered culture. The main point of Will’s article, however, was not to praise a particular school, but to note that religious observance is a “predictor of the capacity to resist the myriad pathologies of modern metropolitan living,” and to state that religious institutions, with their sense of mission and their ability to situate human existence within a framework of the transcendent, are “better than secular institutions at molding character.”

• Another advocate for religion in education is **Education Secretary**

Richard Riley. At a Washington news conference in mid-December on drug use among teenagers, the Secretary said, “A young person in a Bible club may not be drawn to drugs so easily.” He also noted, “religion and character education have a place in the lives of our young people and a place in the public space that is public education.”

• In the “vouchers gaining ground” department, a **Family Research Council** poll of 1,000 registered voters taken in November found that 71 percent favored and 24 percent opposed “an education voucher program giving parents the ability to choose the private or public school their child attends.”

• A massive letter-writing campaign by private school families seeking state assistance for their children in the form of technology, textbooks, and transportation was rebuffed by **Maryland Governor Parris Glendening**. “Unfortunately, the constraints on the state’s budget will not permit us to undertake the new major aid programs you have requested,” Glendening wrote in reply to parents.

• Leading education experts and business leaders from throughout America will examine growing public and private efforts to increase family involvement in education at **The Conference Board’s 1997 Business and Education Conference**, to be held May 15-16 at the Swissotel in Boston. The registration fee for educators is \$325. *For further information, including a copy of the complete program, please call The Conference Board’s Conference Service Department at 212-339-0345, or e-mail them at: orders@conference-board.org.*

• The **National Endowment for the Humanities** has openings for 23 summer seminars (four to six weeks each) and 11 summer institutes (three to five weeks) covering a variety of cultural topics. Depending on the institute or seminar, teachers selected receive room, board, supplies, and stipends for travel and living expenses. Full-time teachers in private or public schools are eligible. *For more information contact the National Endowment for the Humanities at 202-606-8463 or by e-mail at: research@neh.fed.us.*