

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

Research Agenda Focus of Meeting

For all the similar research interests they share, private school associations across the country have never engaged in a national conversation about developing a comprehensive and coherent approach to research — until now, that is. Last month, leaders representing the rich variety of private schools in America gathered in Dayton, Ohio, to try to cobble out a common research agenda. The event proved to be an exciting first step.

To begin with, the group that gathered at the University of Dayton, which hosted and organized the conference, was remarkable for its diversity. Delegates from private schools, including Lutheran, Jewish, Conservative Christian, Catholic, and Independent schools, joined forces with public policy analysts and researchers from academia to examine the implications of various trends in education and to identify the research issues most persistent, pressing, and worthy of further inquiry.

Provocative Ideas

The conference boasted a slate of impressive presenters, who sowed an assortment of stimulating, and sometimes provocative, ideas. Bruno Manno, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, talked about the profound impact that consumer-oriented public schools could have on private education. He argued

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Legislative Tally: Win, Lose, Draw Congress Adjourns for 1997

After the pounding gavel signaled the close of Congress for 1997, legislators left town last month with an education agenda only partly realized. It was win, lose, or draw for various legislative proposals, though in true Washington style everyone emphasized the wins and minimized the loses.

Win

In the win column was a huge \$3.2 billion increase in federal funding for education. Overall discretionary education spending for FY98 rose to \$29.4 billion dollars, 12 percent more than FY97, which itself had posted a 15 percent hike over FY96. Nearly every major program in which private school students participate saw

Appropriations for Key Education Programs

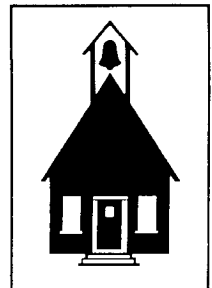
	FY97	FY98
Title I	\$7.7 billion	\$8.0 billion
Capital Expenses	\$41.1 million	\$41.1 million
Title VI	\$310 million	\$350 million
TLCF	\$200 million	\$425 million
Safe and Drug-Free Schools	\$556 million	\$556 million
Goals 2000 (State Grants)	\$476 million	\$466 million
Charter Schools	\$51 million	\$80 million
IDEA (State Grants)	\$3.8 billion	\$4.5 billion
Eisenhower Grants	\$310 million	\$335 million

significant funding gains (chart), with one program, the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, more than doubling in size (see related story).

Lose

In the lose column was Congress's failure to approve the education savings account initiative, which would have allowed parents and others to contribute up to \$2,500 each year in an A +

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Account to be used for a child's K-college education in a public or private school. The buildup of interest in the account would be tax-free. Although the House approved the savings account bill by a decisive vote in October, the Senate in November fell four votes short of the 60 that were necessary to stop a Democratic filibuster of the proposal. Senate leaders have vowed to bring the measure to the Senate floor again after Congress reconvenes in January.

Another action expected when Congress returns is a House vote on a Senate bill (S. 1502) that would provide scholarships of up to \$3,200 to low-income students in the District of Columbia. Shortly before it adjourned, the Senate approved the measure by a voice vote after separating it out from the DC appropriations bill. The House, although approving the Senate version of the appropriations bill, did not vote on the scholarship initiative. It is likely to consider the bill sometime in February.

Draw

After months of contention, including threats of filibusters and vetoes, Congress and the President finally reached an agreement on national testing. But at its core the agreement amounted to nothing more than a draw, merely delaying a Congressional decision on the tests until next year.

The agreement authorizes the National Assessment Governing Board to develop the tests but withholds funds for piloting and field testing the tests during the current fiscal year. The delay in field testing effectively makes it impossible to implement a testing program any sooner than the year 2000, and that's only if Congress ultimately authorizes and funds the program.

Furthermore, the agreement makes explicit that participation in any phase of the testing program would be voluntary. In private schools, students would be able to participate in pilot or field tests only with the written consent of parents or guardians.

Other provisions require the National Academy of Sciences to review the test items and to conduct a feasibility

study to determine if an equivalency scale can be developed that would allow test scores from commercially available standardized tests and state assessments to be compared with each other and the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The Academy is to submit a final report on its findings no later than September 1, 1998.

What's Next?

In addition to the expected votes on education savings accounts, DC scholarships, and national tests, next year looks like it will bring stepped-up efforts to convert many categorical education programs into block grants. The Senate passed an education block grant amendment last September, and Republican governors, meeting in Miami last

month, strongly supported the push for block grants, calling for less categorical aid and more state control in education. South Carolina Gov. David M. Beasley, the new chairman of the Republican Governor's Association, sounded the call at the group's closing session: "It is time to do the same thing with education we did with welfare. Today, there are 760 programs in 39 agencies spending \$100 billion a year. Imagine what we could do with that money if it was block-granted to the states."

Education block grants pose a serious threat to many students in private schools. Without safeguards for the equitable participation of such students, block grants could swiftly wipe out the little federal assistance they currently receive.

Making the Most of TLCF

With funding for the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) now at \$425 million and likely to continue climbing in coming years, private school educators need to know how the program works and how to access services.

First, some fundamentals. The monies available under TLCF are distributed to states on the basis of a formula, and the states, in turn, distribute 95 percent of the funds they receive to school districts on a competitive basis. Districts can use the grants for a wide range of activities related to technology, including training teachers, acquiring hardware and software, and connecting classrooms to the information superhighway.

Recently, Tom Fagan, who directs the program for the U.S. Department of Education, issued a letter clarifying that education law "requires local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving funds under the TLCF to provide special educational services or benefits on an equitable basis to children enrolled in private schools *after* [our emphasis] timely and meaningful consultation with appropriate private school officials." According to Fagan, the consultation should cover:

- (1) identification of children's needs,
- (2) services to be offered,
- (3) how and where those services will be offered,
- (4) assessment of services, and
- (5) service delivery mechanisms.

If the technology needs of students and teachers in private schools are different from those of students and teachers in public schools, the benefits and services must be different in order to meet those needs. Further, the state education agency "has the obligation to inform applicants of their responsibilities to non-public school students and to ensure, prior to awarding the grant, that these responsibilities have been carried out by the LEA."

What should private school educators who want their students to benefit from the program be doing right now? Fagan counsels that they "work to identify those LEAs that have submitted or are planning to submit applications for TLCF funds and emphasize to those LEAs their obligation to consult with private school officials throughout the design and development of the application." Good advice.

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that the new "hybrid" public schools of choice — schools that display "some of the prized features of private schools" — are "blurring the line that now exists between the public and private education sectors." Participants realized the need to find out more about the impact that new types of public schools, such as charter schools, are having on private education. (It is worth noting here that in the education spending package for FY98 that Congress approved last month, funds for charter schools jumped 57 percent. By the end of next year the U.S. Department of Education estimates it will be providing partial funding for nearly 1,000 charter schools nationwide, with a goal to develop 3,000 such schools by the early part of the next century.)

Private School Distinction

At the same time, however, many in the group recognized that certain fundamental elements of private education, including an emphasis on spiritual and religious development, would always serve to distinguish private schools and help define their unique role in American education. Father James Heft, chancellor and professor at the University of Dayton, concluded his keynote address by asserting a belief that more Americans are coming to recognize "the important role religion should assume in shaping our public life together as a nation." He said private schools were especially well suited to help integrate religious values with public life by educating students "for a citizenship that is religiously informed, and precisely because religiously informed, more apt to contribute to the common good."

Rabbi Michael A. Paley, who is working on developing a new type of Jewish high school, addressed the topic of the distinctive identity and value of private schools. He drew from the experience of the Jewish community in America, explaining that some segments of the community have become so integrated into American culture that they may be on the verge of "assimilating [themselves] out of existence." To preserve the Jewish "narrative and

memory," to nurture Jewish values and identity, and to maintain Jewish culture, a number of groups not traditionally associated with Jewish schooling are joining forces to establish new Jewish high schools across the country. Paley examined the research questions associated with that effort.

Trends in Private Education

Another speaker, Dr. Stephen Broughman, who oversees private school data for the National Center for Education Statistics, outlined some key demographic information and trends in private education. He noted, for example, the high growth rate in enrollment in conservative Christian schools, Jewish schools, and Islamic schools. Also, he pointed out that while average tuition in 1993 was \$2,157 in elementary schools and \$5,513 in secondary schools, during the three year period from 1987 to 1990, average tuition "increased at an annual rate of 10.3 percent while median family income increased at an annual rate of 5.2 percent." Participants were quick to realize that the trend of tuition taking a bigger bite of family income was not sustainable.

Sr. Lourdes Sheehan, who heads the office that serves diocesan leaders of Catholic education at the National Catholic Educational Association, suggested some practical issues which a national research agenda might address. Among them:

- How do private schools identify, prepare, develop, and retain teachers and administrators who subscribe to and promote the mission of the school?
- How does a private school effectively communicate its core values?
- What influences the attitude of private school parents on the issue of financial support for school choice?
- What is the correlation between technology and student achievement?

These and numerous other research questions identified by participants will soon be synthesized and published by conference organizers, who are hoping the event will result in further discussions aimed at refining the private school research agenda and marshalling the re-

sources to carry it out.

At CAPE, the hope is to have board members, whose organizations collectively enroll about 75 percent of private school students in the nation, review the key research suggestions offered during the conference and identify priority items. Following that internal process, CAPE intends to dialogue with other involved parties to see where the respective research agendas coincide and to map out collaborative strategies for implementing whatever falls on common ground.

Telecom Update

The Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC) recently announced that its website for receiving applications for telecommunications discounts will probably not be operational before January 12, 1998. The 75-day window period — during which all applications filed will be treated as if filed on the same day — will begin on the date that the website is up and running. The SLC plans to distribute the applications, instructions, and support materials to schools via mail shortly, but by the time you receive this edition of *Outlook*, you may be able to access the applications on the World Wide Web at:

www.neca.org/funds/slc.htm
 or
www.fcc.gov/learnnet

At the NECA site, you can also find the following important documents: *Nine Steps You Can Take Now to Prepare for the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Program and Questions and Answers on the Implementation of the Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries.*





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• New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said last month he believes the city's privately-funded scholarship program is partly responsible for a turnaround in public school reading scores. "I think the public school system is being challenged to do better," the mayor said of the program.

Bruce Kovner, chairman of New York's School Choice Scholarships Foundation, announced that the number of students awarded scholarships will nearly double next school year. This year the foundation awarded \$1,400 scholarships that enabled 1,200 public school students to attend private schools. The students came from families with an average annual income of \$9,634. In the 1998-99 school year the program will serve an additional 1,000 students, who will be selected from the city's worst-performing districts. The program is the focus of a long-term study to see if the scholarships make a difference in academic performance.

• Add Illinois to the growing list of

states considering school choice. The state's Republican-controlled Senate and Democratic-controlled House last month approved a \$500 state tax credit for parents who choose private schools. The measure's uncertain fate is now in the hands of Governor Jim Edgar.

• Move over, NELS, here comes ECLS. What the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS 88) did for secondary education, the **Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS)** promises to do for elementary education, i.e., provide a rich set of data to help us understand the factors that affect success in school.

The National Center for Education Statistics is undertaking the ambitious study, starting in the fall of 1998, which will track the educational progress of 23,000 children in 1,000 private and public elementary schools. As NELS 88 followed the progress of eighth graders through high school and into college, ECLS will follow the original cohort of kindergartners for six years through grade 5. The study could help parents, teachers, schools, and communities develop conditions and activities that improve education.

• Looking for the perfect holiday gift for that hard-to-please reform-minded educator? Try the latest book from NYU professors Diane Ravitch and Joseph Viteritti. They have edited a thought-provoking collection of essays on school reform entitled *New Schools for a New Century: The Redesign of Urban Education*. A host of innovations in education, including charter schools, contracts, and choice, are examined by distinguished scholars such as John Chubb, Chester Finn, Paul Hill, Valerie Lee, and Paul Peterson. The authors look at the lessons we can learn from successful urban private schools and present some exciting approaches to schooling. Nathan Glazer of Harvard University calls the collection "an excellent book that presents a strong and consistent argument for major urban school reform."

**CAPE's Legislative
Conference
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