

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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Council Members: American Montessori Society • 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 31 States

Education Community Gears Up for New ESEA

In its capacity to consume the time and energy of Congress next year, few legislative issues can rival the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. With 14 titles and some 60 programs, the 12-billion-dollar ESEA accounts for more than one-third of all federal discretionary education spending.

Title I

By far the largest subdivision of ESEA is Title I, an ambitious federal program aimed at ameliorating performance in schools that serve some share of low-income students. The debate in Congress over Title I's reauthorization promises to be lively, if not contentious. Some educators and policy groups, convinced of the program's core value, are urging Congress simply to fine-tune Title I, while others, equally convinced that a major overhaul is needed, are proposing sweeping changes, including direct assistance to parents in the form of vouch-

ers. Both sides are gearing up for what could be a tough battle.

Also getting ready for the reautho-

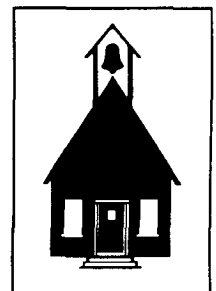


rizatio are representatives of the private school community, who have weighed in with a list of grievances about Title I in its current form. They are talking with each other, with Education Department officials, and with congressional aides in an effort to develop politically viable solutions. Currently, more than 180,000 students in private schools receive Title I services, though the number of eligible students may be much higher.

One of the top private school concerns is the method used to allocate funds for services to students. In both public and private schools, the enrolled number of students from low-income families determines the amount of funds available for Title I services. For private schools, the monies generated must be targeted to help educationally disadvantaged children in the school. For public schools, the funds can be used for the same targeted purpose or, in schools with 50 percent or more low-income students, for general school-wide improvements that benefit all students, disadvantaged or not. About 70 percent of public school students who benefit from Title I do so under school-wide programs.

The method for determining the number of low-income students is fairly easy in public schools: count the number of children who receive free or reduced-price lunch. About 94 percent of public schools participate in the federal school lunch program. But because only 22 percent of private schools serve federal lunches, they face a far more daunting challenge in counting impoverished students. Some private schools ask

parents to complete questionnaires about income, but questionnaires have a way of eliciting embarrassingly low response



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Major ESEA Programs Involving Private Schools

FY 1999

Title I - Disadvantaged Students	\$8.4 billion
Title I - Capital Expenses	\$24 million
Title II - Professional Development	\$335 million
Title III - Technology	\$637 million
Title IV - Safe and Drug-Free Schools	\$441 million
Title VI - Innovative Strategies	\$375 million

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rates. (When was the last time you filled one out?) Besides, many parents are understandably reluctant to reveal family income when there is no guarantee their own children will receive any tangible benefit for doing so.

To address the problem and to keep the administrative burden to a minimum, some private school advocates have proposed that to the degree a private school draws students from the same low-income neighborhoods as students attending Title I public schools, it should be assumed the school has a proportionate level of poverty and should receive a proportionate level of services.

Consultation

Another private school concern falls under the category "consultation." Public school district administrators are supposed to consult in a timely and meaningful way with private school officials regarding the needs of students and the design and delivery of services to meet those needs. But in some instances the so-called consultation is last-minute and grudging; in others it is little more than notification of how the program will take place. Provisions in the law for a formal sign-off by private school officials to indicate that timely consultation regarding all aspects of program design and implementation has taken place would significantly improve Title I and, for that matter, other programs under ESEA.

Big-Picture Issues

In addition to the above concerns, there is a long list of other nitty-gritty Title I issues that private school representatives will be working on during the reauthorization process. A continuation of funding for capital expenses and a clear acknowledgment of the legality of on-site services in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Agostini* are but two examples. But advocates will also be on the alert for the possible emergence of big-picture issues, like parental choice, during the reauthorization process. And allies of choice will surely have plenty to say should a workable proposal present itself.

Court Watch

Wisconsin has become a hotbed of court battles involving private schools. Last month, in what columnist George Will called the autumn event with more potential for social improvement than anything done by voters or elected officials, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand the Wisconsin Supreme Court decision upholding the constitutionality of the Milwaukee school choice program. Calling the action "a remarkable victory," Clint Bolick of the Institute for Justice said the order would "provide a tremendous boost for the school choice movement across the country."

But also last month a group called the Freedom From Religion Founda-

tion filed a suit in Madison challenging the constitutionality of allowing religious schools to participate in a Wisconsin program that allows all schools in the state to access the Internet at high speeds for a discounted price. The Foundation argues the program represents a breach of the separation of church and state, but a Wisconsin assistant attorney general, Bruce Olsen, says the program has "a clear secular purpose."

Support for the program came from an unexpected quarter. Carolyn Breedlove, a lobbyist for the NEA, was quoted in *Education Week* earlier this month as offering the following comment on the initiative's constitutionality: "I don't understand why, if we're not talking about tax dollars, that there would be a problem."

NCC Considers School Statement

While maintaining that parents have the right to select private or parochial schools for their children, delegates at the general assembly of the National Council of Churches declared last month that "public monies should be used only for public schools."

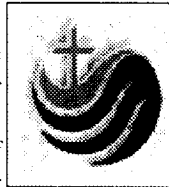
The declaration was part of a broad statement of support for public education entitled *The Churches and the Public Schools at the Close of the Twentieth Century*. The document received a first reading at the Council's national meeting November 11, is subject to revision during the coming year, and will be presented to the general assembly next November for final action.

Calling public schools the "cornerstone of our democracy," the policy statement asks member churches to provide those schools with "full and conscientious support." A companion statement outlines the theological underpinnings for such support. One section, recalling Jesus' admonition for those who would do harm to children, states that "to fail to provide a child with the best kind of education available is to put an almost insurmountable stumbling block in the path of that child."

According to a news release issued

by the NCC, delegates were "overwhelmingly supportive" of the document, "although some felt the policy statement does not go far enough."

One woman was quoted as saying: "This dances around the real issue. We have talked a good talk. In order to walk the walk, we need to ask congregants to place their children in public schools."



Complex Issue

But the news release noted that Bishop Jon Enslin of the ELCA was less than fully supportive of the document. "I am not sure that new ways are always malicious," he said. "The issues are more complex than is communicated [in the policy statement]." Bishop Enslin went on to suggest that reserving public funds only for public institutions might upset some "wonderful connections between churches and government."

A copy of the statement, its theological foundations, and the accompanying news release from the NCC are available on the Web at:

www.nccusa.org/98ga/schools.html



Q's and A's on Federal Programs

New Teacher Initiative

The half-trillion-dollar spending bill that Congress passed and the President signed last October contains many programs that affect students in public and private schools. Over the next few months, *Outlook* will highlight some of these programs in a modest attempt to help private school officials become aware of and, if they deem it appropriate, take advantage of the opportunities these programs provide. In this issue we focus on the new \$1.2 billion initiative to hire and train teachers.

What is the program's purpose and how does it work?

The program provides \$1.2 billion in federal funds to school districts primarily for the purpose of hiring approximately 30,000 additional public school teachers for school year 1999-00. Funds will be allocated to states in amounts ranging from \$129 million in California to no less than \$5.6 million in a number of smaller states. States then allocate funds to districts using a formula based on 80 percent child poverty and 20 percent student population. Districts can then use the funds for three purposes: (1) to recruit, hire, and train regular and special education teachers; (2) to test new teachers for "academic content knowledge" and state certification requirements, and (3) to provide professional development to teachers. Up to 15 percent of the funds can be used for purposes 2 and 3.

How can private schools participate?

Although private schools cannot use the funds to hire teachers, the new law specifically provides that to the extent a

district uses funds for professional development, it must provide for "the equitable participation of private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools in such activities." Again, up to 15 percent of the funds can be used by districts for the professional development of teachers.

Is it likely a school district will use any of the funds for professional development?

We believe it is for two reasons. First, the program's objective is to help ensure the presence of qualified teachers in schools. There's little point in reducing class size if children in smaller classes are assigned to ill-prepared teachers. Second, because there is no guarantee that federal funds for hiring teachers will be available beyond this year, the cost of newly-hired teachers under this program may become a local responsibility after 1999-00. Programs of professional development, on the other hand, involve onetime costs. Thus, by using the maximum 15 percent for professional develop, districts can help improve teacher quality while containing future financial obligations.

Does the school district set up the program for public school teachers and then invite private school teachers to participate?

No. The program for private school

teachers must meet the particular needs of those teachers and must be designed only after timely and meaningful consultation with private school officials. However, if after consultation, the needs of public school teachers and private school teachers are determined to be the same, then the programs that address those needs may be the same.

How do I get involved with this program?

Step one is to stay informed about how the public school district plans to use the new federal funds. If monies are to be used for professional development, private school officials should declare their interest in having teachers participate equitably in the program. They should also work with district officials to make sure the provisions for timely and meaningful consultation are met and to design a program that meets the needs of private school teachers.

Where can I find more information?

For general information about the program, point your Web browser to www.ed.gov/inits/FY99/1-csize.html. For information about the participation of private school students and teachers in federal education programs, see *Serving Private School Students With Federal Education Programs—A Handbook for Public and Private School Educators*. It, too, is available on the Web from USDE's Office of Nonpublic Education at www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/NonPublic/publications.html.

E-Rate update

With the first batch of funding commitments finally in the hands of E-Rate applicants, the Schools and Libraries Corporation has provided a breakdown of the 30,000-plus requests it received for telecommunications discounts in 1998. The chart on the right indicates how those \$2 billion in requests fall within various discount bands. A discount a school receives is based on the percent of students eligible for the national school lunch program.

E-Rate Requests by Discount Band		
Discount Band	Total \$ Requested	% of \$ Requested
20-29%	\$5 million	0.2%
30-39%	\$8 million	0.4%
40-49%	\$227 million	11%
50-59%	\$216 million	11%
60-69%	\$273 million	13%
70-79%	\$235 million	12%
80-89%	\$591 million	29%
90%	\$478 million	24%
Total:	\$2.03 billion	100%



capenotes

• Of all voters in last month's election, a full 20 percent told exit pollsters education was the issue they cared about most. Of that 20 percent, 32 percent voted Republican and 66 percent voted Democratic. But in Georgia, the voters who said education mattered most split their vote 49-51 between Republican **Senator Paul Coverdell** and his Democratic opponent. Coverdell, you will recall, is a conspicuous supporter of school choice and the primary author of the A+ education savings accounts proposal. Among all Georgian voters, he won reelection to the U.S. Senate by a 52-45 margin.

• They may think they're ready to govern a school, but too many board members can't tell a policy from a procedure or a mission statement from a strategic plan. If your board is ready for a thorough orientation to the world of trusteeship, the all-new *Trustee Handbook* from the National Association of Independent Schools is just the right resource. With details and examples of

board structures, responsibilities, and principles of good practice, the 200-page book is a must-have reference for any administrator or board member of a private school — independent, religious, elementary, or secondary. Copies are available for non-NAIS members for \$30 from the NAIS publications office at 202-973-9700.

• Just when you thought you were up to date on school choice developments across the nation, The Heritage Foundation churns out yet another version of its acclaimed *School Choice Programs: What's Happening in the States*. **Nina Shokraii Rees** and **Sarah E. Youssef** have packed the latest edition of this definitive reference work on school choice with post-election developments and positions of governors-elect. It's free on the Web, and a site you'll want to bookmark: www.heritage.org/schools.



Nina S. Rees

• The world of federal education assistance is daunting indeed. With the thicket of programs, titles, chapters, and formulas, it's hard for an administrator to keep up with all the opportunities for federal aid to students and teachers. Well the U.S. Catholic Conference has produced a report to help its school officials become aware of "the surprisingly vast amounts of federal programs and services which are available to Catholic school students and teachers." Of course, these federal programs were not just created for Catholics, so much of the information in the report is of value to the entire private school community. Copies of *Making Federal Dollars Work for Catholic School Students and Staff* are available for \$10 prepaid from:

**Federal Programs Project
Department of Education
U. S. Catholic Conference
3211 4th Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017-1194**

For quantities of 25 or more, the unit price drops to \$7.50. Checks should be made payable to the USCC Department of Education.