

# cape Council for American Private Education outlook

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## Big Boost in Fed Ed Spending Likely This Year

You're in the hot seat on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. Having nimbly navigated some nerve-racking queries from Regis, on topics ranging from nursery rhymes to national rulers, your grand-prize question is this: Why is it that Americans may soon see the biggest boost ever in federal education spending? Is it because 2000 is (a) a presidential election year, (b) a budget surplus year, (c) a year when both parties are vying for the title "The Education Party," or (d) all of the above? Chances are you won't need to use a lifeline on this one.

The final answer, of course, is that all the elements are aligned this year for record-setting aid to education. In his State of the Union address last month, President Clinton set the stage by



President Clinton delivering the State of the Union address.

presenting a cornucopia of high-cost initiatives covering preschool to college. The Republican response included not only a commitment to increase funds for education this year, but also a boast that last year Congress had out-spent the president's education funding request by \$500 million. How things have changed from those bygone belt-tightening times.

### Recruiting New Teachers

The president's prodigious spending proposals included hefty increases for Head Start, after-school programs, and his class-size reduction initiative. He also called on Congress to pass a public school modernization program and a billion-dollar

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## New Report: Public / Private School Digital Divide

At a time when policymakers are deploring the digital divide between economically advantaged and disadvantaged schools and households, a report just released by the National Center for Education Statistics depicts a divide of a different sort—the one between private school students and public school students. The former are significantly less likely than the latter to have access to instructional technology and the Internet.

Sixty-seven percent of the nation's private schools had at least one connection to the Internet in the 1998-99 school year, compared to 89 percent of public schools, according to the new NCES issue brief. The figures suggest that the Clinton Administration's goal of having all schools hooked to the Internet by the end of this year may require an extra measure of assistance for students in private schools.

When matched against comparable statistics from a separate report for public schools, the new data demonstrate additional digital differences between the public and private sectors. For instance, in the 1998-99 school year, the percent of

public school instructional rooms with Internet access (51) was double the percent for private schools (25). In schools that enrolled 50 percent or more minority students, the percent of Net-connected public school instructional rooms (37) was nearly four times that of private schools (10). On another indicator of technology, private schools had a student to instructional computer ratio of 8 to 1, while the ratio for public schools was 6 to 1. In schools with a high minority enrollment, the public school ratio stayed at 6 to 1, but the private school proportion dropped to 8 to 1. The data on the number of students per instructional computer with Internet access were even more discouraging (see chart on page 3).

### Bridging the Gap

Some national leaders have focused lately on the need to bridge the gap between the digital "haves and have nots."

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lar "Teaching to High Standards" program, designed to recruit, train, and reward teachers.

Certain elements of the teacher initiative—those that would enhance existing professional development programs for current teachers—would extend to private schools, but other elements—those relating to attracting new teachers—would not, according to a White House spokesperson. (The bill itself is not yet available.) One component not applicable to private schools would provide financial assistance for students to go to college if they agree to teach in schools serving high-need communities. There are plenty of private schools serving high-need communities, but service in such schools would apparently be excluded under this program.

Another non-applicable component is aimed at encouraging mid-career professionals to become teachers.

With private schools and public schools facing the same teacher shortage, government programs that encourage potential teachers to work only in one sector would surely put the other at a distinct disadvantage. A teacher shortage task force established last year by CAPE has called for the equitable inclusion of private schools in government programs designed to attract new teachers through scholarships, loan forgiveness, tax credits, and similar incentives.

**Voucher Lite?**

Another program proposed by the president would cover—for needy public school students—the costs connected with taking college test prep courses, such as those offered by various for-profit tutoring centers. Mr. Clinton made no mention of a comparable program for needy students in private schools, nor did he talk about covering tuition costs for poor families who send their children to not-for-profit schools. Still, depending on how it is designed, his proposal could come curiously close to looking like a voucher—albeit a limited one for supplemental services.

**Republican Plan**

In the Republican response to the

president's speech, Maine Senator Susan Collins outlined a four-point plan for education that would:

- provide more money for K-12 education,
- shift control of that money to the state and local level,
- help states and communities to prepare, recruit, and retain good teachers, and
- help families pay for higher education.

**Tax Incentives**

The ambitious education agendas outlined by the president and Congressional leaders are not limited to the spending side of the budget. Both parties have injected education into the revenue side as well.

Last month, House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) announced that education savings accounts (ESAs) would be one of the Republican's top two priorities for tax-relief legislation during the current session. A tax bill that passed the House and Senate last year would have expanded existing college-level tax-free savings accounts by increasing the maximum allowable annual contribution from \$500 to \$2,000 and by allowing the accounts to be used for expenses associated with K-12 education in public, private, religious, or home schools.

The president, meanwhile, unveiled his own education tax package: an enormous \$30-billion, ten-year program of tuition tax credits and deductions—though only for expenses connected with post-secondary education. The "College Opportunity Tax Cut" would provide families the chance to count up to \$10,000 of college tuition costs towards a credit or deduction worth up to \$2,800 in real tax relief. Families with annual incomes below \$120,000 would benefit.

When the president vetoed an education savings accounts bill in 1998—a bill that would have provided families with tax relief worth less than \$100 a year and would have cost an estimated \$2.6 billion over five years—he said the program would siphon federal resources away from public schools. Although his college tuition tax credit proposal represents the same type of general revenue

loss to the Treasury, though on a significantly larger scale, odds are this new initiative will never be saddled with the same sound bite. In fact, in his State of the Union speech, the president described the college tax cut, not as a drain of funds from public schools, but as a landmark initiative that would "make college affordable for all."

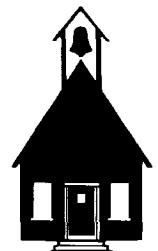
**Compromise Possible**

Although a huge increase in federal aid to education is a virtual certainty this year, the way the money gets spent is entirely up for grabs. In an election year especially, neither party is likely to support the other's pet projects without getting something in return. Thus, many of the initiatives on the long list the president rolled out last month will probably not survive. Still, some deals could be struck so that the Administration and Congress avoid the unattractive prospect of having to face voters in the fall empty-handed. Currently, a few areas ripe for potential compromise include the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, programs relating to teachers, targeted education tax cuts, and more spending for special education. How it will all play out is anyone's guess at the moment.

**Court Watch**

**Briefs filed in Ohio Choice Case**

Briefs were filed last month by the Institute for Justice and the State of Ohio in a case that could eventually bring the voucher issue front and center before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals will be reviewing last year's ruling by U.S. District Judge Solomon Oliver that the Cleveland scholarship program is unconstitutional. Should the Sixth Circuit panel affirm the district judge's ruling, defendants could petition the U.S. Supreme Court for review.



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In his State of the Union address last month, President Clinton outlined measures to "close the digital divide" between those who have access to technology and those who don't. "Today, opportunity for all requires something new: having access to a computer and know-

address as progress toward the goal of connecting "all our classrooms to the Internet."

**Sector Differences**

The new NCES report reveals that different sectors within the private school community make use of technology at different rates. Nonsectarian schools led the way in the 1998-99 school year with 41 percent of instructional rooms hooked to the Internet and a student to instructional computer ratio of 6 to 1. For Catholic schools, the comparable figures were 27 percent and 8 to 1, and for NCES's catchall category of "other religious" schools, the same figures were 18 percent and 9 to 1. Of course, if such measures vary from sector to sector, they do so even more from school to school.

The paper issued last month by NCES is actually a snippet, or issue brief as the Center calls it, of a more compre-

**Percentage of Schools and Instructional Rooms with Internet Access: 1998-99**

|                     | Public | Private | Minority Public <sup>1</sup> | Minority Private <sup>1</sup> |
|---------------------|--------|---------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Schools             | 89     | 67      | 82                           | 52                            |
| Instructional Rooms | 51     | 25      | 37                           | 10                            |

1. Schools with 50% or more minority students.

SOURCE: NCES Issue Briefs *Computer and Internet Access in Private Schools and Classrooms: 1995 and 1998 (2000)* and *Internet Access in Public Schools and Classrooms: 1994-98 (1999)*.

ing how to use it," he said.

Earlier in January, College Board President Gaston Caperton promised to form a coalition of educators, elected officials, civil rights advocates, and corporate executives to eliminate technological inequalities between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils and to ensure Internet access to all high school students by 2005. "The single most un-American aspect of our great society is the lack of truly equal educational opportunity," said Caperton in a speech to school superintendents in New York State.

**Some Progress**

NCES data show that while private schools on the whole have made progress in the past few years when it comes to classrooms connected to the Internet, they have not been able to match the spry pace of public schools. Between 1995 and 1998, the share of private school instructional rooms with Internet access rose from 5 percent to 25 percent, a gain of 20 points. But from 1994 to 1998, the same measure for public schools jumped 48 points from 3 percent to 51 percent, a jump the President noted in his State of the Union

**Ratio of Students to Instructional Computers and to Instructional Computers with Internet Access: 1998-99**

|  | Public | Private | Minority Public <sup>1</sup> | Minority Private <sup>1</sup> |
|--|--------|---------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Instructional Computers                      | 6:1    | 8:1     | 6:1                          | 10:1                          |
| Instructional Computers with Internet Access | 12:1   | 15:1    | 17:1                         | 33:1                          |

1. Schools with 50% or more minority students.

SOURCE: NCES Issue Briefs *Computer and Internet Access in Private Schools and Classrooms: 1995 and 1998 (2000)* and *Internet Access in Public Schools and Classrooms: 1994-98 (1999)*.

hensive report on telecommunications use in private schools that is scheduled for release sometime this spring. The upcoming report includes chapters on computer and Internet availability, the E-rate, and how private schools compare with public schools on various measures of technology.

*Computer and Internet Access in Private Schools and Classrooms: 1995 and 1998* is available on the NCES Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov>.

**Choice in News**

Much about American social and political life can be learned just by reading the headlines of the country's important newspapers. On January 31, a particularly instructive headline announced the day's lead story in *The New York Times*: PARENTS LEAD WAY AS STATES DEBATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS.

Michael Janofsky, a *Times* reporter, recounted how low-income parents across the country, desperate for a sound and safe education for their children, are pleading with lawmakers for help with tuition costs in religious and independent schools. As an example of the passion parents are bringing to the debate, Janofsky reported on a school choice hearing in Albuquerque, in which "two dozen parents from low-income neighborhoods...explained how fear and anguish had led them to remove their children from public schools and enroll them in private schools costing as much as \$2,000 a year." For one parent, the switch was because of drug dealing; for another, violence; and for one mother it was the "smoking, hugging and kissing in the schoolyard."

The article noted that school choice legislation is being considered in more than 25 states. Although the odds for most of the legislative proposals are against passage this year, "forces on both sides—and experts who have studied the public and private financing of education—say support for school vouchers is growing so rapidly, especially in poor neighborhoods, that more cities and states will eventually implement programs through legislation or statewide ballot initiatives."

Janofsky said school choice proposals are moving slowly, despite the rise in popular support among the poor, largely because of the "efforts of politically active and well-organized opponents, including unions like the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers...."





Return Service Requested

## capenotes

• Students in Catholic schools across the country participated in ceremonies on February 2 that included prayer, the lighting of candles, and the signing of cards to indicate the number of hours of community service they intend to complete by the close of the current school year. The ceremonies were part of the annual Catholic Schools Week, for which the theme this year is "Catholic Schools: Lighting the Way to a New Century."

"Catholic schools have had a rich and long tradition of providing community service," said **Dr. Leonard DeFiore**, president of the National Catholic Educational Association. "These commitment ceremonies underscore that tradition and are a fitting start to a new century."

**Sr. Lourdes Sheehan, RSM**, secretary for education at the U.S. Catholic Conference, said, "Catholic schools are

known for providing a values-added education. Giving the gifts of time and talent to others helps develop character and instills strong values in students."

This year's campaign for Catholic Schools Week features promotional materials aimed at recruiting teachers. One poster reads, "Touch the Future. Become a Catholic School Teacher."

• The National Center for Education Statistics has published *Snapshots of Private Schools in the United States*, a booklet that draws on data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) to provide some select sketches of the country's private schools. For instance: "Less than 5 percent of private school teachers reported that any of five problems were serious (students' unpreparedness, lack of parent involvement, student apathy, poverty, and student disrespect for teachers), compared with 19 to 29 percent of public school teachers. In both sectors, teachers were generally more likely than principals to rate problems in their schools as serious."

Copies of the booklet (NCES # 1999-340) are available for free by calling 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

• With the Web continuing to grow

rapidly as a resource for instruction, one problem teachers face is how to cut through the clutter to find the right site to support a particular lesson. Well, the Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM) is, as the name suggests, a gem of a Web site designed to help teachers and parents locate the perfect tool to help teach a specific skill or concept.

Are your students having trouble understanding what it means to multiply by negative numbers? GEM can direct them to Dr. Math, a site that explains the concept crisply and clearly. Just enter the topic and grade level, and GEM searches the Web pages of more than 140 federal, state, university, non-profit, and commercial organizations to find a site that supports your lesson.

Coordinated by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology, with support from the National Library of Education and the U.S. Department of Education, GEM is available at [www.thegateway.org](http://www.thegateway.org).

Lighting the Way  
to a New Century



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
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