

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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Students and Teachers Respond to September 11 Prayers, Tears, Discussions, and Good Works Abound

After the terrorists blew to bits the buildings, the families, and the country's sense of safety on September 11, Americans, united as never before, began the slow and painful process of healing and restoration. Shocked and grief-stricken, citizens from coast to coast were of one heart and knew at once they were connected with the horror wrought by the hijackers. True to form, the resilient people of this great nation, like Tom Burnett, one of the heroes aboard the Boeing 757 that crashed in the fields of Pennsylvania, decided they were "going to do something about it."

Schoolchildren were no exception. They were wounded, to be sure. Like the adults who hugged them with new urgency, they too breathed the dark, choking air of despair, and they too were buried in the debris of shattered safety. But following the lead of their grown-up guides, they struggled to climb to fresh air and light by praying, loving, and acting – in short, by doing something about it.

Prayer was in abundance in schools across the country. As the clouds of smoke and ash from the twin towers billowed like incense toward heaven, the fervent prayers of students, teachers, and parents rose up as well. But prayer was not the only response; sacrifice and good works accompanied it. Immediately, reflexively, people everywhere wanted to help.

At Thayer Academy in Massachusetts, faculty and staff decided to con-



tribute funds for the relief effort through a yearlong payroll deduction program. Anticipated collections allowed the school to make an immediate contribution of about \$10,000.

In Houston, the Broadway Baptist School, close to Hobby Airport, opened its doors to stranded travelers.

Students at Miami Country Day School in Florida sold red, white, and blue ribbons to raise money for the Red Cross, and the FIRE (Feminist Issues Rights and Education) Club in the upper school conducted a "bucket brigade" to collect money to assist families of the firefighters who were killed.

Of course, schools in New York City experienced an even more immedi-

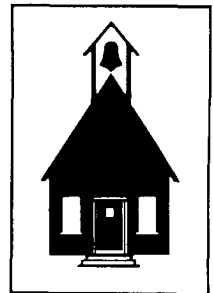
ate sense of involvement and an all-the-more pressing call to action. Upon learning that nine firefighters from the neighborhood station had lost their lives in the disaster, parents at the Chapin School, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, set out to provide meals for the firehouse. Almost instantaneously, they collected checks totaling nearly \$5,000 to fund the effort.

At the Manhattan Christian Academy, where about ten parents lost their jobs, though not their lives, at the World Trade Center, T-shirts were distributed to dozens of students to promote the "Fallen But Not Forgotten" Web site (www.911recovery.com), which helps visitors respond to and reflect on the tragedy from a Christian perspective.

Students at Brooklyn Friends School, where two parents were lost in the tragedy, sold brownies and cookies on the Brooklyn Heights Promenade and donated the proceeds to the Red Cross. They also gathered rescue supplies and coordinated a flower drive for victims in area hospitals.

The Bronx-Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist School, like countless other schools, held a prayer service. Students and faculty then signed an enormous "thank you" poster for dis-

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play at the Javits Convention Center, headquarters for New York City's recovery effort.

And at another school in the city, the Collegiate School, students, parents, and staff delivered food and supplies to relief workers and hailed as heroes the motorcade of rescue men and women headed into "ground zero." As John Beall, an administrator at the school, put it, "Our participation in this relief effort helped us past the shock and the numbness and the helplessness.... We helped, and that helped us rebuild." But Beall cautioned, "Our rebuilding will be a marathon. Let us pace ourselves for the long haul."

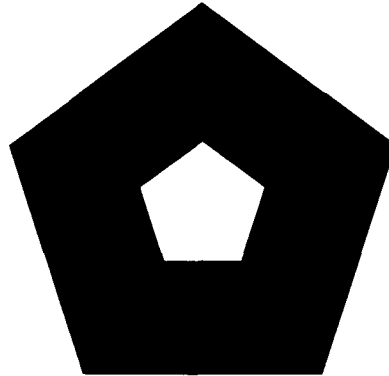
Schools even played a role in helping to heal the nation as a whole. Students at the National Cathedral School and St. Albans School were among the boy and girl choristers at the nationally televised prayer service on September 14. Their pure and innocent singing of Psalm 23 against the haunting images of the reverent and rained-on rescue efforts helped bind the hearts and souls of citizens across the country.

National associations also responded to the need. The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) called on Catholic schools to observe a national day of solidarity on Tuesday, September 18. NCEA prepared prayer services and curriculum suggestions to help students understand and express their unity with the victims and their families, and to recommit themselves to peace and justice. A suggested activity for composition class had students send e-mail messages of love and support to schools where other students were experiencing the loss of a parent or loved one. A line from one of the suggested prayers simply implored God's help in the crosscurrent of fear, pain, and confusion: "God, creator of all good things, ... be with us all in this time of uncertainty."

Educators in the Montessori community took to heart an observation of the movement's founder: "Averting war is the work of politicians; establishing peace is the work of education." The American Montessori Society estab-

lished an online bulletin board "for dialogue and guidance in uncertain times" and discussions on how to "teach peace in a world on the brink of war."

The Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools developed materi-



als to assist schools in observing days of prayer and fasting every Thursday for the duration of the crisis.

Schools within the Jewish Community Day School Network launched a program to purchase an ambulance to replace one of the emergency medical vehicles destroyed when the twin towers collapsed.

The Department for Schools for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America established on its Web site "pages of prayers and stories of hope" for the children and staffs affected by the September 11 attack. The pages include resources for talking to children about the tragedy, suggestions for helping the families immediately affected, and a moving collection of prayers and sentiments offered from children around the world to the children most desperately needing solace and healing. An example:

*Dear Children of NYC,
My name is Rik. I have been keeping you in my prayers. I feel very sorry for you. I live in Australia in Brisbane. I really don't want world war 3 to happen. Just remember to keep on smiling.... I'm a big fan of American football and the New York Yankees. This is a short memory verse that I have found in the bible: "You are like a light for the whole world. A*

city built on a hill cannot be hidden." Goodbye for now, and God bless the whole of America.

P.S. I have a little prayer for you: Dear God, please help all the people in America that were injured not only literally but in their HEARTS. I hope this terrible tragedy does not happen again....

The ELCA also established the Make a Difference Fund to receive donations to help children in Lutheran schools in the New York metropolitan area. And the Lutheran Schools Association in New York City collected stuffed animals and messages of comfort for students whose hearts were injured.

Anticipating the immediate and long-term psychological effects that the monstrous events will have on students, educators have responded with crisis counseling plans. The day after the attacks, LSA convened a team to assess needs and to make counselors available to all the schools affected. Like other private school educators, Lutheran school officials hope to tap into federal emergency counseling resources provided under Project SERV. Education Secretary Rod Paige announced \$7 million in grants to school districts in various states directly impacted by the disaster. Trauma and grief counseling services through Project SERV are available to students in public and private schools.

Providing children the emotional and psychological support they need to help quell fear and anxiety was a recurrent theme in the nation's Friends schools. The Friends Council on Education quickly compiled a resource booklet called "Coping Strategies and Positive Actions," which offered creative, prayerful, and peaceful ways to help children deal with the horror of the terrorist attacks. The



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SUPREME COURT TO HEAR VOUCHER CASE

Taking the first step toward what will likely be a landmark school choice and church-state ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed last month to decide whether the Ohio school voucher program is constitutional. The court is expected to hear oral arguments sometime after the first of next year and to

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booklet includes letters from school administrators to families and sharings of school-based responses.

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) established Web pages with compilations of responses from schools, resources for counseling students, and practical ways schools could help the disaster victims. NAIS President Patrick Bassett urged schools to "teach understanding and peaceable solutions to conflicts" and to encourage children "to support their Arab-American and Islamic friends who may be unfairly vilified."

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, parent organization of the Solomon Schechter Day School Association, developed prayers and meditations in response to terrorism, and its president, Stephen S. Wolnek, wrote an open letter to President Bush. "We pray that God will give you strength at this difficult time and that, in the near future, the people of the United States — and of all nations — may once again live in peace and security," wrote Wolnek.

In sum, the response from school communities was immediate, selfless, and positive. A collective, spontaneous desire to help and to connect seemed to take hold in these communities and served as an uplifting and reassuring counterbalance to the evil acts that had cursed the country. And if there was a pervasive, sickening sense that life after September 11 would never be the same, there was buried within that sense a glimmer of hope that eventually the change brought about by this fellowship of grief just might be for the good.

Links to the resources referenced in this article can be found on CAPE's Web site at www.capanet.org/new.html.

issue a decision by the middle of next year.

Saying the court's decision to take the case "offers renewed hope for lower-income parents who long for the right to choose the best education possible for their children," House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Boehner (R-OH) called the voucher program "an important step toward equal educational opportunity in America."

Last year three judges of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 that the Ohio program had the "impermissible effect" of promoting religion. Established in 1995 as the country's first government-funded voucher initiative to include religious schools, the Ohio program provides nearly 4,000 low-income children in Cleveland with scholarships of up to \$2,250.

"We will demonstrate to the Court that this program is not about religion,

it's about providing educational opportunities to children who desperately need them," said Clint Bolick, vice president of the Institute for Justice. He added, "This is the most important educational opportunity case since *Brown v. Board of Education*."

Predictably, reaction to the court's announcement was not all positive. "We should not be taking scarce public money and spending it on a system that will Balkanize us rather than [on] the public school system that unites us," said Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, according to a report in *The Washington Post*.

In its announcement, the court said it would consolidate three Ohio voucher cases. The cases and docket numbers are *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 00-1751; *Hanna Perkins School v. Simmons-Harris*, 00-1777; and *Taylor v. Simmons-Harris*, 00-1779.

ACSI Launches Tuition Fund

Attempting to expand access to Christian schools for low-income students, the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) has established the Children's Tuition Fund to provide scholarships to needy children and resources to the schools that serve them.

ACSI launched the program last month at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Among those on hand for the announcement were Senator Tim Hutchinson of Arkansas, ACSI President Ken Smitherman, and Kaleem Caire, president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options.

Noting the performance gaps between minority students and majority students on national achievement tests and the success of parochial schools in narrowing the gaps, Dr. Vernard Gant,



Kaleem Caire, CEO of BAEO, at ACSI's announcement at the National Press Club.

director of ACSI's Urban Schools Services Department, talked of the need to expand the supply of private schools serving the poor. He said his department plans to establish urban education resource centers in major metropolitan areas to "facilitate the start-up of urban Christian schools and resource existing ones."

Of the approximately 5,400 ACSI member

schools worldwide, over 450 urban schools in the United States serve nearly 77,000 students.

For more information about the Urban School Services program, visit ACSI's Web site at the following URL: www.acsi.org.





Return Service Requested

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• Christian Schools International (CSI) got some good news last month – 4.4 million dollars worth of good news. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced a grant to CSI in that amount to boost educational excellence in 14 Christian schools in Chicago and three Christian schools serving Native Americans in New Mexico. The grant will also help CSI enhance its Web site (www.CSIonline.org) and develop a technology-based delivery system for its unique curriculum.

“With the advent of technology and the Internet, computers have become vital learning tools,” said Cheryl Nielsen, CSI director of business and development. “So we want to incorporate technology into our mission of advancing Christian education and supporting schools in their task of preparing students to serve God.”

Teachers in the affected schools will receive help with instruction, and students will receive help with research and class work. CSI will also facilitate the development of networks within the two clusters of schools, and expects those

clusters to become models of excellence for similarly situated schools.

“CSI is committed to ensuring that all students have access to the fundamental tools of learning—including technology,” said Carol Rava, spokesperson for the Gates Foundation. “We welcome this partnership and the opportunity to improve educational opportunities for students in Chicago and New Mexico.”

• Since 1998, taxpayers in Arizona have been able to take a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for donations of up to \$500 toward private school scholarship organizations. The organizations then distribute the money to help families pay tuition at private schools. It turns out that the tax credit and scholarships have not only been good for direct participants, but also for taxpayers in general.

Last month the Cato Institute released a comprehensive

Arizona program, which found that from 1998 through 2000 the tax credit produced more than \$32 million in donations to scholarship organizations and funded almost 19,000 scholarships. What’s more, the program was a fiscal wash for Arizona taxpayers, once the loss on the revenue side was offset by the savings on the expenditure side from students who transferred out of public schools.

According to Carrie Lips and Jennifer Jacoby, co-authors of the study, by 2015 the tax credit should even be a “net winner for Arizona taxpayers. It will extend school choice to thousands of families and save taxpayers millions of dollars.” The authors estimate that by 2015 taxpayers will contribute about \$58 million annually to the program and fund between 35,000 and 61,000 scholarships.



Carrie Lips at the CATO policy forum on the Arizona scholarship tax credit.

The report *The Arizona Scholarship Tax Credit: Giving Parents Choices, Saving Taxpayers Money* is available on the Web at www.cato.org.