

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

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Paige Establishes High-Profile Office of Innovation

Deputy Undersecretary to Focus on Choice and School Improvement

In a move giving added prominence to parent choice in education, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige last month established a high-profile Office of Innovation and Improvement. Described in a news release as the "nimble, entrepreneurial arm of the Education Department," the new top-level office will bring together programs related to charter schools, magnet schools, school choice, and private education, perhaps providing a boost in prestige to the Office of Non-Public Education.

Rees to Head Office

Paige appointed Nina Shokraii Rees to head the new office as deputy undersecretary. Known as a staunch supporter of the right of parents to choose their children's schools, Rees most recently served as deputy assistant for domestic policy to Vice President Dick Cheney. Before that she was an education advisor to the Bush presidential campaign, a senior education analyst at the Heritage Foundation, and director of outreach at the Institute for Justice, the nonprofit agency at the center of school choice litigation. While at Heritage, Rees was a prolific writer, producing books and backgrounders on school reform. Her works included the annual reference book *School Choice: What's Happening in the States* and an issue

paper on the success of Catholic inner-city schools.

The high level of the new office and Rees' background and reputation have fueled speculation that the department may be planning to push its school choice agenda more aggressively.



Nina Shokraii Rees

Secretary Paige called Rees a "valuable player" in promoting education reform and ensuring that no child is left behind. He said her new office will administer competitive grant programs to guarantee "maximum learning and maximum impact" and will publicize research findings about what works in education. "Like today's best entrepreneurial foundations, this office will support promising programs and...rigorously evaluate their results."

Choice and Grants

The new office will coordinate the public school choice components of the No Child Left Behind Act, including the supplemental services provision, through which children in failing public schools can receive after-school tutoring from public or private providers, including private schools. But the office will also be responsible for numerous discretionary grant programs, such as the Women's Educational Equity program, which is designed to promote gender equity in education, and the Transition to Teach-

ing program, which provides incentives for individuals to switch careers and teach in public schools

Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Secretary Paige also announced last month the establishment of a new Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. The new office will coordinate activities related to student safety and health, crisis response, the school component of homeland security, and alcohol and drug prevention. The office will also focus on character education and programs that promote good citizenship. "Folding all programs that deal with safety, health, and citizenship into one office will enable us to better respond to the critical needs of schools in these areas and also help us to develop a broad-based comprehensive strategy," Paige said.

Eric G. Andell, a former Texas appeals court justice and current senior advisor to Paige, will head the new office as deputy undersecretary.

According to the department, a primary goal of the safe and drug-free schools office will be "to assist schools in developing plans to deal with the variety of threats they face"—threats ranging from natural disasters to shootings and terrorist attacks.



House Leaders Postpone Vote on Tax Relief Act

School choice supporters face an uphill battle to secure passage in the current Congress of legislation that would provide an education tax deduction for low-income parents. Last month the House of Representatives narrowly approved a procedural resolution relating to H.R. 5193, the Back to School Tax Relief Act, but House Republican leaders postponed action on the bill itself, fearing they lacked the votes to pass it.

The bill provides a tax cut for the poor, allowing low-income parents to deduct up to \$3,000 in expenses related to elementary and secondary education in public or private schools. The measure builds on the existing tax deduction for higher education expenses, extending it to K-12 costs such as tuition, books, fees, computers, supplies, equipment, transportation, tutoring, and special needs services. The deduction would be available to persons with adjusted gross incomes not exceeding \$20,000 for individual filers or \$40,000 for joint filers. A married couple earning \$35,000 annually and incurring \$3,000 in K-12 expenses for tutoring or tuition would realize a tax savings of about \$450. Because the deduction is “above the line” it would be available to persons who do not itemize.

Head Count Prompts Delay

The 208-201 procedural vote on how the House should handle the tax deduction bill was largely along party lines, with 208 Republicans voting for the resolution and 198 Democrats, 2 Republicans, and 1 Independent voting against it. The closeness of the vote, combined with a 23-member absentee count, forced leaders to postpone the scheduled vote on the underlying bill, H.R. 5193. Rescheduling will depend on the degree of support the bill can

summon and could be delayed until after the November elections in order to insulate the vote from pre-election politics.

Opponents of H.R. 5193 successfully employed the previously tried and proven tactic of pitting the education tax



relief measure against a public school construction proposal, which enjoys substantial support from labor unions. The tactic forces legislators to vote for one proposal or the other and effectively stops the tax relief

piece by drawing off members, including some Northeast Republicans, who count on the support of organized labor and the public education establishment.

Absolutely Nothing

House floor debate on the resolution reflected sentiments about the underlying bill. Those opposing the measure said it shifted funds away from public schools and into private schools, despite the fact that the general revenue loss projected from the bill (\$5 billion through 2006) is unrelated to any specific expenditure item. They also charged the bill would provide “absolutely nothing” to the intended beneficiaries (families with annual incomes under \$40,000), because such families do not make enough money to take advantage of the deduction. But at the same time, opponents made repeated references to the \$5 billion revenue loss the bill would generate, acknowledging, it would seem, that at least some intended beneficiaries would receive at least some (that is, \$5 billion worth of) benefits.

Invalidate Social Security

Indeed, the bill’s opponents took turns talking about how the \$5 billion tax benefit would come at the expense of other Americans. They said senior citizens and persons with disabilities would

be harmed because the money would “invade the Social Security trust fund.” Families would have to pay higher real estate taxes because the revenue loss would mean “no additional money for states and localities.” Children would have to forgo additional funds for school modernization, technology, Title I, and after-school programs. Perhaps the same objections were raised when Congress considered and approved legislation providing tax breaks for higher education expenses—breaks available to parents at significantly higher income levels than those covered in this bill—but it would seem doubtful.

Opponents also contended the revenue loss would worsen the deficit, a charge that did not seem to square with calls to use the money to increase expenditures for school construction, which presumably would have the same effect on the deficit.

Flat-Screen TVs

For some reason, flat-screen televisions seemed to work their way into the debate. Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA) said recipients of the “voucher,” as he described the tax deduction, could use the money to “buy a TV, one of those nice flat-screen ones.” Sounding the same theme, Rep. Robert Matsui (D-CA) told his colleagues, “A flat-screen TV costs about \$4,000,” and the bill’s beneficiaries, by saying the TV is for their children’s education, could take \$3,000 of that amount and use it as a deduction. “We know they are going to do that,” he said. “We know this is not really going to go for education.”

Supporters Respond

Answering the charge that the bill would take money from public education, supporters said 90 percent of the families slated to benefit have children

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USDE Delivers Clear Message on Title 1 Services

The U. S. Department of Education is hosting four regional conferences this month on student achievement and school accountability. A session at each conference will focus on Title I services for eligible private school children. USDE staff recently provided representatives of private school associations an instructive preview of what they plan to say at the session.

Title I requires public school districts to provide services to eligible private school children, families, and teachers that are equitable to those provided to public school children, families, and teachers. But although most officials from public schools and private schools

Continued from page 2

in public schools and \$3 out of every \$4 of benefits would be spent on public school education. They also said the legislation would merely extend to elementary and secondary education the tax incentives that Congress already approved to help people with the costs of higher education. Referring to the \$3,000 tax deduction for higher education, Rep. Dave Weldon (R-FL) said, "What this debate is really about is are we going to allow the same thing for K through 12 and why not? Why not?" Talking about families who struggle to make ends meet, Weldon asked, "Why should they send 30 cents to Washington for every 70 cents they spend on their kids' education? Give them the whole dollar to spend on their kids' education."

The measure's sponsor, Rep. Bob Schaffer (R-CO), said his bill is about helping poor families invest more money in their children's education. "Those who say that \$5 billion is too much to spend on the poor children of America, I say shame on you," he said.

Rep. Thomas Tancredo (R-CO) said the real opposition to the bill is from people who believe the only way to educate a child is in government schools. They oppose the bill, he said, because "a tiny little trickle may end up going to a private school, and God knows we cannot have that."

know the general requirement for equitable services, they are often in the dark about specifics. What children are eligible for services? For what kinds of services are they eligible? How is the allocation for private school services determined?

Using the No Child Left Behind Act and the draft regulations on Title I as their authority, USDE staffers plan to advise conference attendees that low-income private school children residing in a school district's Title I attendance areas generate the funds for instructional services to eligible private school students. Those funds are then used to serve private school students who reside in Title I areas and are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet academic standards. Thus, as is the case with public schools, the students who generate the funds (students in poverty) are not necessarily the students who receive the services (students doing poorly in school).

Services may include special instruction outside the classroom, tutoring during non-school hours, computer-assisted instruction, and a variety of other services, such as family literacy, home tutoring, and take-home computers.

Timely Consultation

A thread uniting various components of the program is consultation. Public school officials must engage in timely and meaningful consultation with private school officials concerning a host of issues, including how the needs of students will be identified, what services will be offered, how services will be offered, and how they will be assessed.

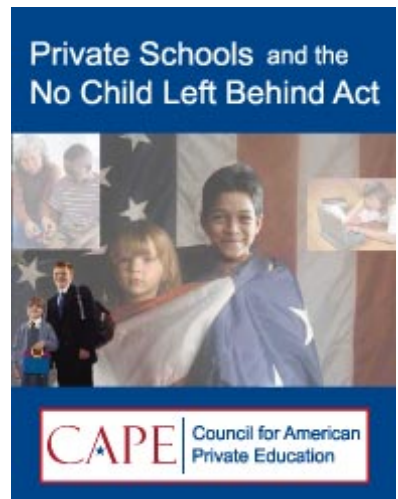
Parents and Teachers Too

During their conference preview, Department officials reminded private school representatives that Title I stipulates that teachers and families of participating private school children are entitled to participate on an equitable basis in parent involvement and professional development activities. Section

200.64 of the draft regulations requires school districts to set aside from funds reserved for parent involvement and professional development a share for private school families and teachers based on "the proportion of private school children from low-income families residing in the public school attendance areas." As with services for students, services for families and teachers must be provided only after the school district consults with private school officials and parents (in the case of parental involvement activities) or teachers (in the case of professional development activities). Activities would be designed to assist the parents and regular classroom teachers of Title I students.

For more information, about Title I services for private schools, contact Maureen Dowling at the Office of Non-Public Education (maureen.dowling@ed.gov) or Virginia Berg in the Title I Program Office (virginia.berg@ed.gov).

CAPE's New Guide to the No Child Left Behind Act Is Available at capenet.org/pubs.html



- comprehensive
- user-friendly format
- hyperlinked index
- links to USDE Web pages
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• On October 1, the U.S. House of Representatives passed by voice vote the Canceling Loans to Allow School Systems to Attract Classroom Teachers Act (CLASS ACT), a bill that significantly increases (from \$5,000 to \$17,500) the maximum student loan amount the federal government can forgive for certain teachers in public or private schools that serve low-income students. The bill has to pass the Senate and be signed by President Bush before it becomes law.

Authored by Rep. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), the bill amends the Federal Family Education Loan program and the Federal Direct Student Loan program by giving the Secretary of Education discretion to repay up to \$17,500 in student loans on a first-come first-served basis as long as he gives priority to certain types of teachers, including special education, mathematics, and science teachers. Under current law the secretary is required to pay up to \$5,000 in loan forgiveness to eligible teachers. To be eligible for either loan amount, teachers must teach for five consecutive

years in schools that are located in Title 1-eligible districts and that serve 30 percent or more low-income students.

• Schools looking for a step-by-step guide to taking advantage of the E-Rate discounts for basic and long-distance telephone service should check out a new online tool developed by CAPE's affiliate in California, the California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO). Schools can learn how to save a minimum of 20 percent off current phone bills by visiting <http://www.capsso.org/resources/erate.html>.

• Sixty-three outstanding elementary and middle school administrators were named last month as 2002 National Distinguished Principals by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. They will be honored Oct. 11 at an awards banquet in Washington, D.C.

"With the nation's focus squarely on student achievement and accountability for results under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, principals are front and center in the effort to raise student achievement," said U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige in announcing the winners.

The USDE and NAESP began the program in 1984 to recognize public and private school principals who make superior contributions to their schools and communities. The following are the award recipients from private schools:

Mrs. Kathleen Genovese Haworth
Principal
Laurel Hall
North Hollywood, CA

Sr. Marion Cypser
Principal
St. Catherine of Siena-
St. Lucy School
Oak Park, IL

Mr. Stuart D. Tietz
Principal
Faith Lutheran School
Lincoln, NE

Sr. Josephine Cioffi
Principal
St. Ann School
New York, NY

Mrs. Agnes C. Jacobson
Principal
St. John the Evangelist School
Seattle, WA

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