

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

President's Budget Includes School Choice Initiatives Savings Accounts, Loan Forgiveness, and Mentoring Also Proposed

President Bush's fiscal 2004 budget bolsters the cause of school choice by including several initiatives that would provide parents expanded opportunities to direct the education of their children.

The president proposed \$75 million for a Choice Incentive Fund to be distributed through competitive grants to willing states, school districts, and nonprofit organizations that want to establish school choice programs. A focus of the fund would be to help public school districts meet the demand of low-income families who want to transfer children to better public schools, private schools, or charter schools. Some of the money would be earmarked for the District of Columbia.

The budget also includes \$226 million for refundable tax credits for parents who transfer their children from a poor-performing public school to another public school or a private school. Under the Bush proposal, parents would receive a refundable credit for 50 percent of up to \$5,000 in tuition, fees, and transportation costs. Refundable credits provide benefits that can exceed a family's actual tax liability and equate to dollar-for-dollar savings for program participants. A \$2,500 refundable tax credit means taxpayers would actually receive \$2,500, whether they owe less tax than that or no tax at all in a given year.

Other choice-related measures in the budget include \$25 million in grants to expand public school choice, \$220 million for charter school grants, \$100 million to help charter schools finance their facilities, and \$110 million to assist certain school districts in establishing and running magnet schools. All told, about \$756 million is slated for school choice in the president's budget.

"School choice is an essential part of authentic school reform," said U.S. Edu-

cation Secretary Rod Paige in announcing the budget measures. "When I was a superintendent, I saw firsthand the power of choice—empowered parents making decisions about their children's education. And I believe choices must be part of the



President George W. Bush delivers the State of the Union address at the U.S. Capitol, Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2002. Also pictured are Vice President Dick Cheney, left, and Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert. White House photo.

education landscape if we're committed to leaving no child behind. President Bush's budget for next year will help empower even more parents and help us achieve our bold goals."

Reaction from Congress

Reaction to the president's proposals was swift and positive from various members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. "The simple act of giving parents the power to do what they think is best for their children can be a powerful tool in closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers," said Rep. John Boehner (R-OH), chairman of the committee.

Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), chairman of the Select Education Subcommittee, said, "In too many communities, low-income children are being forced to attend

under-performing, dangerous, and crumbling schools. I am pleased that the president's FY 04 budget recognizes the importance of competition in education, which drives all schools to improve, and in the short term, rescues children from schools that are failing to educate them."

"Giving parents the ability to choose the best schools for their children should be a major goal of education reform," said Rep. Jim DeMint (R-SC). "I applaud President Bush and Secretary Paige for their commitment to making this goal a reality."

Tax-Free Savings Accounts

In a step also, albeit less directly, related to school choice, the president's budget includes a proposal to establish an expanded tax-free savings account similar to, though much more versatile and favorable than, Coverdell Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). The new Lifetime Savings Accounts (LSAs) would allow citizens, regardless of age or income, to contribute up to \$7,500 a year in tax-favored accounts that could be used for any purpose, including a child's education. Contributions would not be tax deductible, but interest would accumulate tax free. Under current ESAs, which are limited to taxpayers who meet certain income requirements, the annual contribution cap is \$2,500 and withdrawals can only be used for education.

If Congress approves the LSA proposal, taxpayers would still be able to contribute to existing ESAs, but many would probably choose to put their money in LSAs because of the increased flexibility and simplified rules. Individuals would have until the end of 2003 to convert ESAs to LSAs, with no tax imposed on the amount converted.

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CAPE member organizations:

- American Montessori Society
- Association Montessori International—USA
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Association of Waldorf Schools of N.A.
- 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 Christian School Association
- Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education
- Solomon Schechter Day School Association
- Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools
- Toussaint Institute for Historically Black Independent Schools
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- 28 Affiliated State Organizations

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12
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Loan Forgiveness for Teachers

The White House budget includes other new measures that would affect private schools. One is an expansion of the loan forgiveness program for elementary and secondary school teachers serving low-income neighborhoods in designated public or private schools. The proposal would increase loan forgiveness amounts more than threefold from the current \$5,000 maximum to a new cap of \$17,500 for teachers of math, science, or special education who agree to work for five consecutive years in schools with a high percentage of students in poverty.

“As we aim to ensure that all children in our nation are taught by highly qualified teachers,” Secretary Paige said in announcing the program, “we need to find new and better ways to attract our brightest students to careers in teaching. And, we need incentives to encourage teachers to make a commitment to work in low-income communities.”

Student Mentoring Program

The budget also includes funds for a new program to match disadvantaged students with

mentors to help them succeed. The program would cost \$300 million over three years.

“President Bush is committed to engaging all Americans in service to their neighbors and their nation,” Secretary Paige said. “One of his priorities is to make sure our children—especially disadvantaged ones—have positive, adult role models in their lives, people to whom they can count on for compassion, guidance, advice and support. This \$300 million investment will help us to connect even more of our children to strong adult mentors.”

The new money would be awarded as grants to organizations, including faith-based organizations, and would expand on an existing mentoring program in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA). The hope is to match one million students with mentors.

The current mentoring program, authorized under Sec. 4130 of the NCLBA, provides competitive grants to school districts and community-based organizations for the purpose of linking high-need children with mentors who can provide support and guidance. Districts that receive the grants must consult with private school officials in order to ensure the equitable participation of eligible private school students.

NAIS Launches Teacher Ad Campaign

As the broadcast of last month’s Super Bowl demonstrated, Americans love ad campaigns. The National Association of Independent Schools has just launched an ad campaign. But this one is designed to sell something much deeper than cars or beer: the satisfaction that comes with making a difference in the lives of students. NAIS wants creative, bright, committed, people to teach in independent schools.

“Rediscover why you wanted to become a teacher” is the headline in one of the ads currently running in Education Week and on the New York Times Online Job Market. The ad

points out that at independent schools, teachers “play a critical role in helping young people develop, not only as students, but also as well-rounded individuals.”

The piece goes on to tout the high quality, commitment, and diverse preparation of independent school teachers. “It’s an atmosphere that promotes success for both you and your students.”

If the ads capture their interest, readers are invited to visit NAIS’s online career center (www.nais.org/careers) to get more information about independent schools and job opportunities. A brochure they can download outlines the advantages of teaching in independent schools—advantages that extend to private schools in general:

- Students come to school prepared to learn
- Close-knit school communities actively support achievement

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Creative. Inspired. Independent.

Today's independent school teachers

Making a difference in the lives of students is what teaching is all about. At an independent school, you play a critical role in helping young people develop, not only as students but also as well-rounded individuals.

At an independent school, you're part of a team of high quality and committed teachers—people who have traveled many paths to become educators. It's an atmosphere that promotes success for both you and your students.

Enjoy a career that is truly rewarding. Visit the online Career Center at www.nais.org/careers to discover the opportunities to make a difference—in your students' lives and your own.



America's Independent Schools
learning. leading. achieving

Students Educate Lawmakers About Catholic Schools

Nearly 200 Catholic school students dispersed across Capitol Hill on January 29 to visit the offices of every member of the House and Senate, reminding lawmakers of the value of Catholic schools and their contributions to the country. The visits were part of the annual Catholic Schools Week celebration sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Before their visits, the students gathered in the Hart Senate Office Building to hear comments by Senator John Breaux (D-LA), Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-NJ), and Deputy Undersecretary Nina Shokraii Rees of the U.S. Department of Education.

In his comments to students, Rep. Ferguson, who attended and taught in Catholic schools, said that what sets such schools apart is that they don't just educate the mind. "Catholic schools also are interested in educating your heart and your conscience," he said. He went on to encourage students to "find a way to make somebody else's life a little better."

Senator Breaux, who attended Catholic

schools and also sent his children to them, told the group that if all students in Catholic schools attended public schools, the cost to taxpayers would be enormous. He spoke of the example set by Catholic schools. "So many schools are trying to be like the Catholic schools," he said.

Deputy Undersecretary Rees sounded a similar theme. "The competition that Catholic schools offer raises the expectations of all schools," she said. Referring to a White House proposal to expand school choice, Ms. Rees said, "The president is a firm believer in making Catholic schools available to students in failing public schools."

As part of Catholic Schools Week, the House of Representatives passed a resolution noting that Catholic schools provide "an intellectually stimulating environment rich in spiritual, character, and moral development." The House went on to congratulate Catholic schools,

students, parents, and teachers "for their ongoing contributions to education, and the key role they play in promoting and ensuring a brighter, stronger future for this nation."



Catholic school students and officials gather outside the Capitol on National Appreciation Day for Catholic Schools—January 29, 2003.

A Special Visit to a Special School

Officials from the U.S. Department of Education, including Deputy Secretary William Hansen and Deputy Undersecretary Nina Rees visited Paul VI Catholic High School in Fairfax, Virginia, last month. The school enrolls about 1,140 students, including more than 150 with special needs.

A highlight of the Paul VI tour was the school's Options Program, which currently serves 12



Deputy Secretary William Hansen at Paul VI School. Photo by Mary Frances McCarthy, staff writer for the Arlington Catholic Herald.

students with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. The program covers six domains of development: spiritual, academic, communication, personal, interpersonal, and career. The goal, according to a school brochure, is to "maximize students' potential while enabling their independence." A "Learn to Earn" component prepares students for the work force and other post-secondary opportunities. Other students at Paul VI serve as mentors and friends to the Options students.

For students with specific learning disabilities, the school has the DeSales Learning Center. Fifty-four students in the program are preparing for college and will receive the regular Paul VI diploma. About 70 students at the school participate in the Academic Support Program, which also helps them meet the challenges of the academic curriculum and secure a diploma.

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- Teachers have the flexibility and autonomy they need
- Teachers are supported and respected by colleagues and school heads
- Parents are actively engaged.

According to NAIS, the ad campaign is part of a larger Independent School Advocacy Initiative launched last year by 36 independent school associations to begin closing the public knowledge gap about independent schools with policymakers, media, future parents, and prospective teachers. A 2002 survey of NAIS members indicated the issue of greatest concern to heads of schools was recruiting and retaining quality teachers, especially in the areas of math, science, and foreign languages.

For more information about the advocacy initiative, visit www.isadvocacy.org.

Private Schools and the No Child Left Behind Act



CAPE's comprehensive guide is available at www.capenet.org/pubs.html

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA), chairman of the Committee on Finance, has reintroduced legislation establishing a series of tax breaks to encourage Americans to donate to charities. Grassley is expected to schedule committee consideration of the legislation soon.

“Charities have a lot of needs, and many Americans have a lot to give,” Grassley said. “It makes perfect sense to make sure the tax code eases the flow of generosity from taxpayers to worthy causes. Those causes are infinite. Tax policy should reflect that.”

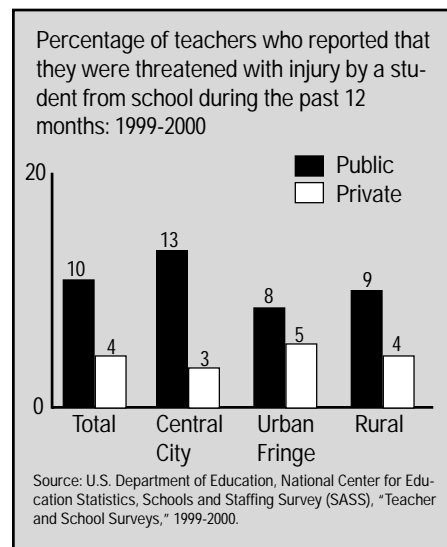
Grassley introduced the tax section of the CARE Act—the broad bill that helps the President establish his faith-based initiative—as an independent bill. Co-sponsoring the bill are Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), ranking member of the Finance Committee, and Senators Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Joe Lieberman (D-CT), the sponsors of the CARE Act.

This bill includes charitable giving incentives, such as a deduction for a portion of charitable contributions for individuals who do not itemize deductions. For single filers, aggregate contributions in excess of \$250 and under \$500 would be deductible, and for joint filers both amounts are doubled. Other incentives include tax-free distributions from IRAs for charitable purposes, and the exclusion from gross income of mileage reimbursements to charitable volunteers.

The legislation also includes provisions

to promote greater accountability by charities to their donors.

★ Which teachers are more likely to be threatened by students with injury or physical attack? A recent report on school crime and safety by the Bureau of Justice



Statistics (BJS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reveals that teachers in central city schools are more likely to be threatened than teachers in urban fringe or rural schools; black teachers are more likely to be threatened than white teachers; secondary school teachers are more likely than elementary school teachers, and public school teachers are more likely than private school teach-

ers. According to the report, during the 12-month period covered by the survey, “Ten percent of public school teachers had been threatened with injury by students, compared with 4 percent of private school teachers.” When it comes to actual attacks on teachers, as opposed to threats, the report reveals that 4 percent of public school teachers and 2 percent of private school teachers had been physically attacked by students. Another finding: “Teachers in public central city schools were four times more likely to be targets of threats of injury and about three times more likely to be targets of attacks than their colleagues in private central city schools in 1999-2000.”

The data on teacher safety in schools from the report titled *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/schoolcrime/10.asp?nav=3>.

★ New York City parents should be pleased with President Bush’s budget proposal for a refundable tax credit to expand choice in education. According to a survey released by the Foundation for Education Reform and Accountability, a statewide education organization based in Albany, New York, 72 percent of NYC parents of school-age children favor education tax credits to help parents transfer their children from failing public schools to “attend the public or private school of their choice.”