

**The Private Elementary
and Secondary Education**

OUTLOOK

A report from the Council for American Private Education, Washington, D.C.

December, 1974

SCHOOL VOUCHER PROJECT
HAS PERMANENT IMPACT
ON ALUM ROCK DISTRICT

America's one experiment with educational vouchers, to provide wider choices for parents, teachers, and pupils, has brought some successes and some lasting changes in Alum Rock, Calif. Vouchers represent the educational dollars allotted for each child; the dollars go to the school that parents select for their child. To test the concept, the National Institute of Education (NIE) has given Alum Rock almost \$8 million since 1972-73. At the project's peak, Alum Rock officials now report enthusiasm from participating parents, teachers, and students.

In 14 of Alum Rock's 26 schools, voucher students are enrolled in 44 "mini-schools." Mini-schools in the kindergarten through eighth grade system are designed by teachers, often with parents' help. Mini-schools live or die according to their ability to draw pupils; a student may change from one to another at any time. Mini-school sizes vary from one teacher with 25 students to 20 teachers with 600 students. Their approaches range: traditional, individualized, bilingual, multicultural, activity-centered open classrooms, and subject-matter oriented (fine arts, music, science-math, and vocational education). Levels of parental involvement also vary.

Families in fast-growing Alum Rock are predominately low and middle-income; some are upper-income. More than half are Spanish-speaking. The economic diversity has not hampered success of the voucher experiment, reports Alum Rock Superintendent William J. Jefferds. Parents and teachers have voted on whether to participate in the experiment. Fourteen schools met the level—much higher than a simple majority—required to convert to vouchers; of the others, all but four have at least simple majorities in favor.

Such parent-teacher involvement, carried further in their choice and governance of mini-schools, has changed the once highly centralized system irreversibly, Dr. Jefferds says. Increased parent-teacher-student choice and involvement are here to stay, he says.

Though students are free to change schools, few switch more than once, Dr. Jefferds says. "We have very few educational hypochondriacs," he adds. In Alum Rock's third year with vouchers, Dr. Jefferds reports higher attendance, less vandalism, and leveling off of once-dropping test scores. Alum Rock successfully tracks funds for each pupil each day.

Alum Rock has no private school in its voucher project, despite enabling legislation in California. However, two other proposals for NIE voucher projects include private schools and high school students, as well as less regulation of per-student charges and admissions criteria. In New Hampshire, seven Manchester-area districts seek \$212,000 to design a voucher system operating on a "free market" basis. East Hartford, Conn., seeks \$300,000 from NIE to plan and start a voucher project. Continued voucher experiments have support from scholars in school finance, the Council for American Private Education (CAPE), and Citizens for Educational Freedom (CEF), a national parents' rights group. CEF says voucher programs might give "all parents—whether their children attend a government or non-government school—the financial ability to exercise their rights in education."

ACCESS TO STUDENT FILES
UNDER BUCKLEY AMENDMENT
CONCERNS ALL EDUCATORS

The questions of inspection and release of student records are of national concern to private as well as public schools. The Education Amendments of 1974 made effective on Nov. 19 a section on "Protection of the Rights and Privacy of Parents and Students," commonly called the Buckley Amendment for its sponsor, Senator James Buckley of New York.

In general, the amendment denies federal funds to schools which do not permit access to school records for parents and students 18 years of age or older. Parents or adult students also have the right to challenge the contents of the student's school record file. The provision allows parental inspection of "official records, files, and data directly related to their children." It requires schools receiving funds to limit release of such information without parental consent.

For private elementary and secondary schools, the amendment's impact is limited under two OE opinions that interpret this language: "No funds shall be available under any applicable program. . .to any school. . .which has a policy of denying. . . ." OE says, first, that the law applies only to programs under the U.S. Commissioner of Education, not those run, for instance, by the Department of Agriculture. Secondly, OE says the law does not apply in most cases to private schools, because they usually receive services through public agencies (as in Titles I, II, and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965), rather than receiving direct funds.

By contrast, private schools must provide for parental inspection and limitations on release of student records if the schools receive actual funds. These cases of direct funding include grants and contracts for environmental, drug abuse, and ethnic heritage education. Right to Read and Special Projects Act programs also provide direct funding to private schools. Still pending is further clarification about whether private schools must assure parents the right to challenge the contents of student records. OE has advised that the section may apply; since it is not tied to direct funding, it has "a broader scope," according to an initial opinion.

CAPE Executive Director Robert Lamborn says the Buckley Amendment reflects widespread public support on these issues. Twenty states now have statutes providing for parental access or protecting school records from misuse. In the long run, Dr. Lamborn says, private schools must reckon with this sentiment, whether or not the Buckley Amendment applies to them. In the short run, he says, the impact on administrative procedures in private schools is unclear. CAPE has joined major national organizations in seeking Congressional hearings to clarify the law's intent and help develop regulations.

SCHOLARS TO GATHER, ADD TO
PRIVATE EDUCATION RESEARCH

The Council for American Private Education (CAPE) is working with 35 scholars who have interests in private education. The goal is to promote new research, to identify and consolidate existing research, and to locate significant repositories of research and descriptive documents about private elementary and secondary schools. CAPE hopes to cooperate with the scholars in encouraging "a greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of private education as a source of data having significant implications for researchers and practitioners in public as well as private education."

The preliminary list of scholars includes experts from many types of institutions across the country. The scholar's disciplines range widely: economics, education, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, and theology among others. Their specialized competencies include interests in the history of private academies and church-related schools, "free" schools, educational vouchers, educational pluralism, and the effects of voluntarism on parental and student commitment.

CAPE FINISHES OE HANDBOOK
FOR PRIVATE SCHOOL HEADS

prepared by CAPE, concentrates on more than 30 wide-ranging OE programs that are open to private school students and teachers. It emphasizes changes authorized by the Education Amendments of 1974, including several mandates for increasing participation of the private school sector in OE programs.

In a perspective written for the handbook, Dr. Edward R. D'Alessio of the U.S. Catholic Conference said: "The amount of aid children receive is, in general, dependent on the [private school] administrator's knowledge of the program and his aggressiveness in using that knowledge." Dr. D'Alessio, chairman of CAPE's Committee on Governmental Relations, said: "When it comes to federal programs, knowledge is power. This handbook goes a long way toward furnishing the private school administrator with that power."

The 50-page manual is entitled "Handbook for Private School Administrators: For Effective Participation in Federal Education Programs Administered by the U.S. Office of Education." It is designed for administrators of private elementary and secondary schools which comply with race and sex discrimination regulations of the federal government. These include schools operated by religious groups, independent schools, and community or "free" schools. Pending additional printing, copies will be distributed free on a limited basis, said Dwight R. Crum, Director of Nonpublic Educational Services at OE. Requests for copies of the handbook should be addressed to him at 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202.

MANS WORKSHOPS ROTATE
5 SPEAKERS ACROSS STATE
TO ADDRESS 350 MEMBERS

In the style of frontier circuit riders, five state and federal education leaders criss-crossed Michigan in mid-November to speak at four workshops. The Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools (MANS) sponsored the rotating workshops to familiarize 350 private school administrators with federal and state programs. Speakers who circulated through the state on separate schedules for two days were Dwight Crum, OE's Director of Nonpublic Educational Services; Dr. Phillip Kearney, state Deputy Superintendent of Education; Richard Cole, legislative director of Michigan's education department; Frank Monahan of the U.S. Catholic Conference, and Edward Farhat, public information director for Michigan's Catholic Conference.

MANS, an eight-year-old coalition of Christian, Catholic, and Lutheran schools, drew 4,000 private school administrators and teachers to its state conference early this fall. MANS President is Dr. Ivan Zylstra of the National Union of Christian Schools.

FOUR D.C. HIGH SCHOOLS
HAVE COMPUTERS FROM NSF

In Washington, D.C., 650 students in four high schools, three public and one Catholic, use costly computers to solve problems in math, science and languages. A goal is to study the problems of introducing computer education at the high school level; problems under study include scheduling, teacher attitudes, and operating costs. A two-year grant of \$531,000 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to the Human Resources Research Organization of Alexandria, Va., started this year. It covers costs of equipment and training of thirteen teachers—five at the Catholic St. Anselms Abbey School.

At St. Anselms, 150 students from seventh grade up use four of eight terminals on the NSF-funded computer. Father Edmund Henkels says public and private schools nearby may tie in later for their own computer education courses. Such cost-sharing will help St. Anselms bear computer operating costs after the NSF grant ends, he says.

51 STATE REPRESENTATIVES,
STATE GROUPS AUGMENTING
EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

CAPE now has 51 state representatives who form a nationwide communications network for about 12,000 private elementary and secondary schools. In each state and the District of Columbia, a CAPE representative works to improve communications both in the private educational sector and among public and private educators. Establishing the CAPE Network has been an early objective of the Council, which is 16 months old.

Working to improve communications within states, CAPE has established ties with existing broad-based state groups and encouraged the formation of others. Fourteen states have CAPE-type groups, composed either of state-wide independent and church-related school organizations or of numerous individual schools. Maryland may become the fifteenth, because of impetus from the private school sector and the state department of education. Cooperating to encourage the formation of a Maryland CAPE-type group are Dr. W. Byron Forbush II, headmaster of Friends School in Baltimore, and Dr. Adolphus L. Spain, state Coordinator of Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary Schools.

On a related front, OE has urged chief state school officers to set up advisory groups to ease communications between state education agencies and private education. Such groups are active in Kentucky, Minnesota, and other states. CAPE cooperates in proposing members to reflect the full spectrum of private schools on state advisory groups.

NAIS, OTHER EDUCATORS
USING GUIDE TO ASSESS
PLURALISTIC OFFERINGS

"Evaluation Guidelines for Multicultural-Multiracial Education" are used in many private as well as public schools. The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) encourages voluntary evaluations by its 800 member schools by distributing the 56-page guide designed by the National Study of School Evaluation in Arlington, Va. The National Study offers the guidelines for schools that wish to assess their efforts in fostering pluralistic education. Scattered Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, and Seventh-day Adventist schools also use the guidelines.

PRIVATE SCHOOL EXPERTS
IN HANDICAPPED EDUCATION
JOIN FEDERAL INPUT TEAMS

Two private school experts in education of the handicapped have served on national "input" teams to update procedures for states in two federal programs. They are Marshall R. Nelson, a Missouri Lutheran expert in services for the mentally retarded, and William Adams, specialist in dyslexia at the independent Carroll School in Massachusetts. Nelson helped devise directions for states to follow in funneling grants to local schools "to initiate, expand, and improve" their handicapped programs. Adams worked on directions for states for providing direct services to children who are state charges. An OE spokesman said the new input approach drawing on diverse talent from public and private schools proved "very effective."

OUTLOOK is published monthly (September through June) by the Council for American Private Education.
Council members: The American Lutheran Church • Friends Council on Education • Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Board of Parish Education • National Association of Episcopal Schools • National Association of Independent Schools • National Catholic Educational Association • National Society for Hebrew Day Schools • National Union of Christian Schools • U.S. Catholic Conference.

COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN PRIVATE EDUCATION
1625 Eye Street, N.W. (Suite 1010)
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 659-3236

Robert L. Lamborn, *Executive Director*
