

CAPE OUTLOOK



The At Risk Student: A Role for Private Schools

Representatives of major elementary, secondary and higher education organizations, at a rare joint meeting in Washington recently, concluded that "at risk" students should be the focus of a joint project. Growing numbers of such students, grim demographic projections for a sizable increase through the 90's and the realization that we must start now if we are to have a good chance to ameliorate serious societal impacts, prompted the education community leadership to make the almost unprecedented decision to work together. CAPE and its member organization, the National Catholic Educational Association, were represented at the meeting.

Some of the realities this work will face:

1. Forty percent of the poor in America are children.
2. Twenty-four percent of children live below the poverty line
3. Nearly sixty percent of children born in 1983 will live with only one parent before age eighteen; ninety percent of these children will live in female-headed families; and a majority will be families with incomes under \$10,000.
4. The teen birth rate in the U.S. is twice that of any other Western nation.
5. Today's children come to school speaking over one hundred different languages and dialects.
6. Nearly forty percent of all public school students are minorities.
7. Since 1960, delinquency rates of youngsters age ten to seventeen increased by one hundred and thirty percent.
8. This nation has the highest rate of teenage drug use of any industrialized nation with over sixty-one percent of all high schools seniors having used drugs.

Private schools have been widely considered to be irrelevant to organized efforts to address "at risk" student problems. Even though 9.2% of their students come from families with incomes below \$15,000 a year (the poverty level is \$13,010 for a family of 5), private schools are perceived to enroll only carefully selected

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School Reform: Improvement For All?

The national school improvement effort poses a dilemma and some dangers for private schools. That was the conclusion of a recent one-day meeting in Washington sponsored by the Department of Education and hosted by Chuck O'Malley, Executive Assistant to the Secretary for Private Education. The dilemma: public school improvement is indisputably in the public good. But various aspects of it such as increasing public child care facilities, improving the quality of teachers by a national teaching certificate and raising their salaries, all important, pose a variety of problems for private school educators.

Increasing public child care facilities has resulted in a reduction in some locations in the number of private facilities for which tuition must be charged. The existence of private day care facilities increases the options for families who look for opportunities to begin the "formal" education of their young children within a congenial context.

Enhancing teacher quality through a process of national teacher certification can have the unintended effect of loading new requirements on the teachers of those thousands of private schools which use only certified teachers. Of equal concern, it can put additional pressure on other private schools to hire certified teachers.

Finally the improvement of public school teacher salaries to make them more closely comparable to those of professionals in other fields is widening the already serious gap between public and private school salaries. Despite private school efforts to keep teacher salaries as high as possible, salary differentials between the sectors is growing. With only their own resources to go on, private schools seem to face their biggest challenge on the salary front.

The meeting proved to the private school people in attendance (major public school organization representatives were also present) that it is vital to keep up to date with school improvement efforts. It could make all schools better and that is its clear purpose. It could also have serious unintended consequences for some, perhaps many, private schools.

As private schools are inevitably drawn into the national school improvement effort by its various initiatives and their effects, some at the meeting expressed the view that we must continue, with higher stakes, the on-going, difficult, often trying job of meeting our dual responsibility to the well-being of our own schools as well as to all schools.

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students and to throw out those who create serious disciplinary or academic problems.

A recent study, "Public and Private High Schools" by James S. Coleman and Thomas Hoffer (Basic Books, New York, 1987), the best yet for comparing public and private schools, dispels these myths as well as the major one - that private schools can not be active participants in the "at risk" student problem.

In its briefest form an important conclusion of the book is that the parent(s) with the most desperate need for outside community resources to help in the bringing up and education of their children - those "with little education, few organizational skills, little self-confidence and little money" can be effectively supported by a "functional community" like that of a Catholic school and some other kinds of religious schools. The authors depict a "functional community" as one in which the social structure is transmitted from one generation to the next with an implicit value structure to go with it.

This research shows that the drop-out rate is lower for all high risk groups in Catholic than in public schools and that Catholic schools are more effective in increasing achievement on standardized tests by these same high risk groups.

These functional communities provide the "...support, norms and constraints that lead high school students to complete their schooling rather than to drop out. Religious groups are, of course, only one of the bases for a functional community that cuts across generations but, with the waning of other bases, it is one of the most important, perhaps the most important, that remains."

The study points out that "the proximate reason for the Catholic schools' success with less-advantaged students and students from deficient families appears to be the greater academic demands that Catholic schools place on these students. But the ability to make these demands appears to follow in large part from the greater control that the school based on a functional community is able to exercise."

In a word, an all-out educational assault on the at risk student problem would appear to call for the serious involvement of Catholic and other private schools whose functional communities give academic education the kind of continuing, tangible and intangible human support which those most at risk most need.

Legislative Update

While disputes over defense spending and revenue levels have stalled negotiations in the House/Senate budget conference which began last month to iron out the differences in the fiscal 1988 budget resolutions, members of the appropriations subcommittees are preparing bills specifying how much money each federal education program will receive. CAPE, along with the education community, is working for all education programs to be increased 4.9% to cover inflation; Chapter 1 to be increased \$500 million beyond inflation; funding for special education be increased \$500 million beyond inflation; increases in Pell Grants \$600 million beyond inflation; \$100 million for drop-out prevention; \$20 million for Congressional Teacher Scholarships; and \$3 million for the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Program for teachers.

Although the final version of the budget resolution sets ceilings for funding levels and will likely provide increases for education programs, the Appropriations Committees will decide how funds are allocated when subcommittees begin mark-ups this month.

Recent Action...

School Improvement Act, H.R. 5 - On May 21, the House passed legislation revising and extending through 1993 every federal education program for elementary, secondary and adult education. The bill expands the Chapter 1 remedial education program and includes a separate funding component (\$30 million) to help Chapter 1 students in private schools receive services in response to the problems created by the 1985 Supreme Court decision in *Aguilar v. Felton*. That ruling prohibits public school Chapter 1 teachers from teaching on private school premises.

Fiscal 1987 Supplemental Appropriations (School Lunch Provision) The House and Senate are expected soon to begin meeting on different versions of H.R. 1827, a \$9.4 billion supplemental appropriations bill. Both bills include a provision that eliminates the tuition limitation affecting private school eligibility for participation in child nutrition programs. Currently any private school which charges tuition of \$2,000 or less per year can participate in the National School Lunch Program. The removal of the cap will allow all private schools to participate in the child nutrition programs regardless of tuition levels. CAPE and, most notably its member association, the U.S. Catholic Conference, have been fighting to remove this discriminatory provision since its adoption as part of the 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act.

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A coalition of 15 national organizations serving private schools (K-12)

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American Montessori Schools: Three Decades of Growth

Italian educator and physician Maria Montessori probably never imagined that her work in the area of early childhood education would later become the foundation of a system of schools in the United States. Dr. Montessori's basic educational principle — that adults should help children learn how to learn— was developed over her lifetime from 1870-1952.

The first American Montessori school was opened in 1958 by Dr. Nancy Rambusch, an American who had traveled to Europe to be trained in the Montessori method. The success of this school (The Whitby School in Greenwich, Connecticut) led a group of parents to establish the American Montessori Society (AMS) in 1960. Today, with 760 member schools, AMS is the largest education association representing Montessori schools. These schools are located nationwide with a concentration in six states — California, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, New York and Texas. The majority, 75%, enroll students between the ages of three and six although an additional 20% provide a full elementary program. In keeping with the Dr. Montessori's emphasis on pre-school education, less than 5% of Montessori schools in the U.S. have secondary school components.

In addition to providing services to its member schools, the American Montessori Society also sponsors special programs. According to AMS National Director, Bretta Weiss, her organization has been active recently in efforts to train teachers in Montessori schools in methods of conducting research in the classroom. This program's purpose is twofold: it gives teachers an opportunity for professional growth and it is expected to provide AMS with information about practices in Montessori classrooms.

Another major issue which concerns the American Montessori Society is recognition of its accreditation agency for Montessori teacher training programs by the U.S. Department of Education.

The number of Montessori schools in the U.S. has more than doubled in the past five years. The Montessori method is also gaining a foothold in some publicly-funded programs for young children (Head Start is one example).

Bretta Weiss was just elected Vice President of the CAPE Board of Directors at its recent spring Board Meeting. She has been National Director of AMS since 1978. Prior to her present position she served as an administrator of Montessori schools in Westchester County, New York for ten years.

-Reported by Cynthia Lindstrom-

This article is the fourth in a series of reports on CAPE member associations.

1987 Exemplary Secondary Schools Announced by DE

In late May fifty-four private secondary schools were identified as exemplary by the Department of Education in this year's Secondary School Recognition Program. In announcing the outcome of the program on May 27, Secretary William Bennett named 271 "outstanding public and private schools selected for recognition..."

"Excellent schools like these renew our faith in American education," Bennett said. "They have worked extraordinarily hard and, as a result, they have much to show for it."

The 271 schools are located in 46 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. They were selected from 670 middle, junior and senior high schools nominated by CAPE and state departments of education in all fifty states, D.C., Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Only private schools which included grades 9-12 participated. Private schools with middle school grades are eligible for next year's elementary school program.

The program, in its fourth year for private schools and fifth for public schools, involves a rigorous selection process based on criteria developed by the Department of Education in coordination with CAPE. In the fall CAPE announced the program to over 7,000 private secondary school through a mailing to school principals. Nearly 1,000 interested schools meeting the criteria requested a nomination form from CAPE and 205 elected to participate in the Program.

For private schools, the initial screening of nominations was done by the Private School Steering Committee and its subcommittees of private school educators familiar with the tradition of the applicant school. The Steering Committee and CAPE then made recommendations to the Department of Education on schools to be considered for site visits.

Following the private school peer review, the Department convened a National Review Panel of 71 members to review the public and private schools and identify schools to be site visited. (The 13 member Private School Steering Committee is part of the Review Panel.) The site visits are conducted for two days by a two-member team, and in the case of private schools, one person has a background in the type of school being visited. This year, from March through May, 370 schools were site visited and of those 72 were private.

Following the completion of site visits, the National Review Panel made its final selections of schools to be recognized in a meeting on May 13-15.

Representatives from the recognized schools will be invited to a ceremony in the fall in Washington, D.C. where each school will receive a flag of excellence from Secretary Bennett.

The following is a list by state of the private secondary schools recognized in the 1986-87 School Recognition Program.

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Exemplary Schools (continued from page 3)

ALABAMA

Mars Hill Bible School, Florence

CALIFORNIA

Cate School, Carpinteria

CONNECTICUT

Fairfield College Preparatory School, Fairfield

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, Washington

FLORIDA

Cardinal Gibbons High School, Fort Lauderdale

Jesuit High School, Tampa

Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, Miami

GEORGIA

Marist School, Atlanta

ILLINOIS

Boylan Central Catholic High School, Rockford

Marist High School, Chicago

Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School, Chicago

Saint Louise de Marillac High School, Northfield

Saint Rita High School, Chicago

University of Chicago Laboratory High School, Chicago

INDIANA

Marian Heights Academy, Ferdinand

KENTUCKY

Maryhurst School, Louisville

LOUISIANA

Archbishop Chapelle High School, Metairie

Brother Martin High School, New Orleans

Episcopal High School, Baton Rouge

Episcopal School of Acadiana, Cade

Jesuit High School New Orleans, New Orleans

Metairie Park Country Day School, Metairie

Saint Thomas More Catholic High School, Lafayette

Xavier Preparatory School, New Orleans

MARYLAND

Archbishop Keough High School, Baltimore

Loyola High School of Baltimore, Towson

Stone Ridge Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Bethesda

MASSACHUSETTS

Northfield Mount Hermon School, Northfield

MICHIGAN

Cranbrook Kingswood, Bloomfield Hills

Lansing Catholic Central High School, Lansing

Lutheran High School North, Mount Clemens

Lutheran High School West, Detroit

NEBRASKA

Creighton Preparatory School, Omaha

NEW JERSEY

Dwight-Englewood School, Englewood

NEW YORK

Academy of Our Lady of Good Counsel, White Plains

Academy of Mount Saint Ursula, Bronx

Archbishop Molloy High School, Briarwood

Holy Trinity Diocesan High School, Hicksville

LaSalle Institute, Troy

McQuaid Jesuit High School, Rochester

Mother Cabrini High School, New York

Shulamith High School for Girls, Brooklyn

NORTH CAROLINA

Charlotte Latin High School, Charlotte

Providence Day School, Charlotte

OHIO

Mount Notre Dame High School, Cincinnati

Villa Angela Academy, Cleveland

PENNSYLVANIA

Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, Villanova

Central Catholic High School, Pittsburgh

Scranton Preparatory School, Scranton

PUERTO RICO

Saint John's School, Santurce

TEXAS

Saint Mark's School of Texas, Dallas

VIRGINIA

Dooley School, Richmond

The Madeira School, Greenway

WISCONSIN

Edgewood High School of the Sacred Heart, Madison

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