

# CAPE OUTLOOK



## What Americans Need to Know - Do Private Schools Teach It?

*Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* is about our failure to learn "the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world." Professor E.D. Hirsch of the English faculty at the University of Virginia attributes our low state of cultural literacy to a decline of "shared knowledge" and "background information," cultural literacy being the ability "to grasp the meaning of any piece of writing addressed to the general reader." It's "the oxygen of social intercourse" and just as "we ignore the air we breathe until it's thin and foul," it "is only when we run into cultural illiteracy are we shocked into recognizing the importance of the information that we hold unconsciously assumed."

A sizeable chunk of the heart of the book is devoted to an explanation of how children and adults become literate culturally. Making detailed use of psychological, anthropological and linguistic research Hirsch shows "the knowledge-bound character of all cognitive skills."

And what is this knowledge which we need to be culturally literate? Hirsch doesn't hesitate. He gives us his list of items, 4,500 of them—the contents of cultural literacy: "Not to have included a list would have been irresponsible given the goal of the book," he explained to a group of Washington educators a few months ago. And so the final 63 pages of this relatively slim volume are taken up with an alphabetical list: words, snatches of songs, years, abbreviations, books, nursery rhymes, churches, aphorisms, scientific terms, people, battles, court decisions, places, diseases and more. Literacy depends on the degree to which all these are understood.

They're not known now because they aren't taught in school. Education has been mesmerized and weakened by bad theory—such as emphasizing process over knowledge, and skills over content.

And here is where private schools come in. Hirsch notes "In light of what we know about literacy, an important factor must be that curricula in private

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## Hispanics and Private Schools

By the year 2020, 18% of the U.S. population will be Hispanic according to predictions (Harold L. Hodgkinson, *All One System: Demographics of Education—Kindergarten Through Graduate School*). Hispanics constitute the fastest growing sector in our country, and CAPE has begun studying the education of Hispanics, and queried its members on how our schools serve Hispanic children.

Hispanics are a widely diverse group whose one commonality is their Spanish heritage. Not all Hispanics are Spanish-speaking. The 1980 Census indicated that three-fourths of Hispanics considered themselves bilingual. One-third are foreign-born. Sixty percent are of Mexican descent, and the rest of the Hispanic community is composed of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central and South Americans and Spaniards. More than twice as many Hispanics as non-Hispanics live in poverty.

Hispanics have not fared well by American education, although this situation is improving. Forty-one percent have only an elementary education or less; 56% of 17 year-olds are functionally illiterate. Many view bilingual education as a solution to the problem, and Hispanics themselves often favor it. However bilingual education programs are laden with controversy, affect only a minority of Hispanic students, and, others feel, are hindering their education by isolating the Hispanic students. English language competency is a problem. Some schools skirt it by accepting a lower level of proficiency from their Hispanic students, and some simply hold them back a grade. The majority of Hispanic children attend "minority-majority" public schools.

The Catholic schools have been the most successful in educating Hispanic students (James S. Coleman, *Public and Private High Schools*). Since 1972 the Bishops have convened three "Encounters" with Hispanics for the purpose of learning how the Church can best meet their needs. These resulted in the Pastoral Letter on Hispanic Ministry called *The Hispanic Presence-Challenge and Commitment*. The Church committed itself to listening to Hispanics and learning their traditions: their celebrations, their values, their feelings about religion and family, and their language. In turn the Catholics made a commitment to their schools with large Hispanic populations to making them bi-cultural and bi-literal. They found that sensitivity to Hispanic cultures and dedication to the

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## Hispanics and Private Schools

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success and development of their Hispanic students were the most important factors in their education. Rather than a bilingual model, they adopted a bi-cultural model in which the students are immersed in English-speaking classes with the other students in the primary grades. The transition is eased by Spanish-speaking aides, teachers, administrators and peers. Then in grade three Hispanics and non-Hispanics begin to study Spanish together. The idea is that both cultures learn from each other and gain self-esteem and mutual respect. These schools encourage all their teachers and administrators to use Spanish in class on occasion, and in informal contexts. They celebrate feast days, sing Spanish songs, recite Spanish prayers, and integrate the study of Hispanic culture into all academic disciplines. They provide Spanish-speakers for non-English speakers, encourage parents to participate in the schools, send out their communiques and address the parents in Spanish. They also reach out to the Hispanic community outside of their schools. They train their teachers to take on this role, and encourage Hispanics to become teachers. They seek access to their schools for families who cannot afford tuition, and they assist their students in getting aid for higher education. CAPE spoke with the education leaders of the archdioceses in Chicago, California and Florida, and found that these educators were truly knowledgeable and actively committed to these principles, and that the programs described here are working.

Catholic educators predict that Hispanics will compose the majority of their parishioners by the year 2000, so they do have the largest interest in the community. But Hispanics are looking to non-Catholics as well to educate their children, and CAPE spoke to some of its other members on this subject. The Seventh-Day Adventists report that there is a large and rapidly increasing Hispanic population in their churches. They have set up focus groups, and are working with the Spanish-speaking church leaders. They employ Hispanics in their administration, and they are seeking means of enrolling more Hispanic students.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod reports that their Hispanic population inside and outside of their schools is growing, and that there are several bilingual parishes.

The Montessori schools do not identify their students according to ethnicity, but they acknowledge that there is a growing Hispanic population in their schools. They brought together a "Comite Hispano" to set up a communications network for Montessorians involved in bilingual education, and there are bilingual Montessori schools in existence.

Hispanic enrollment in the Independent schools has increased by 8% since 1980. Now approximately 2% of their total enrollment is Hispanic.

Finally, CAPE found one Bilingual Private Schools Association with a membership of 35 schools exists in Miami.

We are interested in what your schools are doing for Hispanic students, and welcome your input on this topic.

## ERIC Seeks Our Input

"ERIC", the Education Resources Information Center, is an information system on microfiche funded by the Department of Education to give users access to journals and documents in education. ERIC can be searched in print indexes and by computer. Documents are available on microfiche in libraries, or may be purchased in microfiche or paper copy from the Document Reproduction Service, 3900 Wheeler Ave., Alexandria, VA 22304.

ERIC seeks reports, conference papers, bibliographies, classroom materials and other written works for distribution from all segments of private education. CAPE's director, Robert Smith continues to serve on the Advisory Board for one of the ERIC Clearinghouses, on Education Management, at the University of Oregon's College of Education, which collects information on private education.

Amongst ERIC's recent acquisitions that might be of interest are: *Increasing Minority Participation in the Teaching Profession* and *Black Students and Private Schools*, issued from the Clearinghouse on Urban Education at Columbia University Teachers College. The Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse at the University of Michigan's School of Education recently acquired: *The National Survey of Private Schools, 1985-86* and *Counseling and Religion: How They Mix in a Parochial Setting*.

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**COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN PRIVATE EDUCATION/1625 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006**

A coalition of 14 national organizations serving private schools (K-12)

Robert L. Smith, *Executive Director*; Carol Ruppel, *Editor*; Jay Roudebush, *Art Editor*

**(202) 659-0016**

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## Legislative Update

Congress returned from its month long summer recess on September 9 to take action on 13 appropriations bills for the new fiscal year which begins October 1. Their first order of business is to raise the public debt limit to allow the government enough money to pay its bills.

**Education Appropriations** -The House approved a \$20.6 billion Education Department budget in August. This is an increase of \$1 billion over last year, with the greatest increase budgeted for Chapter 1 programs. The Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee will meet this month to draft its version. Other bills to be considered by the Senate:

- \*reauthorization of Chapters 1 and 2
- \*reauthorization of gifted and talented programs
- \*Bilingual Education Act amendments
- \*reauthorization of magnet schools

**Omnibus Trade Bill** -House and Senate conferees should begin meeting this month on their differing versions. Several education amendments are included in each, such as:

- \*math, science and foreign language programs
- \*secondary basic skills programs
- \*classroom technology funding
- \*drop-out prevention
- \*vocational education

**Radon Abatement** -The omnibus radon bill includes \$1.5 million for radon abatement and testing in the schools.

**Youth Service** -Several bills have been introduced to encourage young people to perform public service, and thereby earn education grants. Hearings should begin this fall.

**Act for Better Child Care Services** -will be introduced on September 23. The bill increases the availability of quality child care and early childhood development programs and includes provisions for private providers.

## Opportunities

*\*Study of the Constitution:* The Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution will fund the development of instructional materials and programs for use by elementary and secondary teachers. Contact Anne Fickling, Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, 736 Jackson Pl., N.W., Washington, DC 20503; (202) 653-5110. Deadline: October 15.

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schools impart more literate information than those of public schools." Citing the research of Coleman, Hirsch writes "in private schools both middle-class and disadvantaged students spend more time in content classes and are exposed to more of the information that belongs to literate culture." There may be other factors. Teachers in private schools are far more apt to have academic degrees and to spend more time with fewer students according to a recent study by Pearl Kane of public and private school teachers (cf July/August issue of *CAPE Outlook*).

Finally, there may be a connection between the culture of a private school—its mix of traditions, goals, ethos, style, human interaction are all heavily dependent on the strong linkage of common ideas and communal discourse and the developing literacy of its students. Many private schools have a long way to go to reach the nirvana of knowledge outlined on the Hirsch list. But the setting seems to be favorable for making steady gains.



## Opportunities

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*\*Elementary school reading incentive program:* Pizza Hut continues to sponsor BOOK IT! This is a five month program for children in grades one through six. They will earn free pizzas for meeting their reading goals set monthly with their teacher. The program gets underway on October 1. Call 1-(800)-4-BOOK IT.

*\*Young Scholars Awards:* The National Endowment for the Humanities invites high school students to apply for a full-time summer long research and writing grant for 1988. The student will study under the supervision of a scholar, who will receive a \$400 stipend. The student will receive \$1800. Write: Young Scholars Guidelines, room 316, Division of Fellowships and Seminars, NEH, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20506. Deadline for completed application: November 2, 1987.

*\*Humanities study:* National Endowment for the Humanities offers school teachers and administrators a variety of humanities study opportunities with generous stipends. These generally fall into three categories:

(1)The Division of Education offers institutes for the summer focusing on texts, topics and issues in the humanities, and on the most effective way to teach them. Participants study during the summer with distinguished scholars. Follow-up activities during the school year ensure that the summer study is applied to teaching. Contact Linda Spoerl, Division of Education Programs, room 302, NEH,; (202) 786-0377.

(2)The Division of Fellowships and Seminars offers summer seminars for teachers and administrators on texts in the humanities. These take place on college campuses across the country. Contact Michael L. Hall, NEH, Summer Seminars for School Teachers, room 316, NEH; (202) 786-0463.

(3)*Fellowships for Independent Study* of \$3000 are awarded to 150 outstanding humanities teachers for six weeks of study during the summer of 1988. These are to increase their understanding in an area of their choice. Full-time 9 through 12 grade teachers with five years experience, a Master's degree or equivalent evidence of continued professional growth may apply. Write the Council for Basic Education, c/o Independent Study in the Humanities, Dept. 33, CN6331, Princeton, NJ 08541-6331. Deadline: December 1, 1987.

*\*Travel to Collections grants:* NEH also awards grants of \$750 for expenses incurred during travel to collections such as libraries, archives or museums for humanities scholars, for research which is not degree-related. Contact Kathleen Mitchell, NEH, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20506; (202) 786-0463. For projects starting June 1, 1988, deadline is January 15; for projects starting December 1, 1988, deadline is July 15.

*\*Fulbright Summer Seminars Abroad:* High school teachers of the humanities and social sciences may apply for summer fellowships for study abroad. Other education personnel may also apply. Contact Lungching Chiao, Center for International Education, International Studies Branch, Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20202; (202) 732-3292. Deadline: December 1.

\*A retired Kentucky industrialist has created a multi-million dollar fund to provide awards in education and political science. Charles Grawemeyer's Awards will honor innovative ideas or achievements in the past five years, including books, articles, presentations, policy proposals, research reports and program initiatives. Candidates may not be nominated. The winners will be awarded \$30,000 a year for five years, and must accept their prize and deliver a lecture at the University of Louisville. Contact the University, School of Education, Dean's Office. Louisville. KY 40292.

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