

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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Children Top Education and National Agenda

After the nation's Governors and President Bush agreed on six education goals for the country over two years ago, many educators observed that the goals may have been overly ambitious. However, others believe that if the first goal - "all children will start school ready to learn" - is achieved, America would come close to the mark.

Two reports issued in the past six months focus on children's issues, not so much as another special interest, but because "America's enormous strengths and distressing weaknesses are nowhere more evident than in the lives of its children." Children's issues and school readiness will no doubt be a focus of debate in the political year of 1992.

Ready to Learn Report

In an impressive 184-page report, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching released last month a strategy on reaching the goal of student preparedness. The foundation issued the report entitled, "Ready to Learn - A Mandate for the Nation" with a seven-point plan that includes parents, schools, health providers, lawmakers, and other educational, recreational and cultural institutions.

Ernest L. Boyer, president of the foundation, says in the report that "America is losing sight of its children." The study and report estimate that 35% of American children arrive at school unprepared to

learn.

The study surveyed over 7,000 kindergarten teachers nationwide on the problems they see in the children in their classrooms. The biggest problem cited by teachers is the "language richness" of the children, with over half of the teachers citing it as the chief problem area. Another area of deficiency was "emotional maturity" followed by "general knowledge", and "social confidence". Only 6% cited "physical well-being" as a problem area.

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"35% of American children arrive at school unprepared to learn."

Forty-two percent of the teachers surveyed also indicated they believe that the problem is getting worse as "children are entering school less prepared than they were five years ago." Aside from the general knowledge deficiencies of not knowing where they live, being able to identify colors, or being able to recite their full names, children are increasingly arriving at school hungry, abused, or with emotional or health problems.

Boyer, who also directed an advisory group to the National Education Goals Panel on the "readiness for school" goal, issued a seven-step strategy in the report. The steps include setting up clinics in some under-

served communities for basic health care, establishing more parent-education programs, making the Head Start program an entitlement, and promoting family oriented workplace policies such as unpaid leave for new parents and flexibility for workers to attend school functions.

Beyond the Rhetoric

A national blue ribbon commission created by Congress and the President began its work in February 1989. The National Commission on Children took a broad look at how "public and private sector policies [could] improve the opportunities of every young person ... to become a healthy, secure, educated, economically self-sufficient and productive adult." Its report, released this June, found startling, new trends.

With one in four children growing up today with only one parent - almost always the mother - too many children lack the time and attention they need. Further, one in five grow up in poverty, without proper health care, nutrition and early, positive childhood experiences. While the report said these problems "don't afflict every child in America directly ... they place every child - and every one of us - in jeopardy."

The commission's report, "Beyond the Rhetoric: A New American Agenda for Children and Families", issued several



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"packages" of recommendations for action. At the center of the income security package is the call for a \$1,000 refundable child tax credit to replace the current personal exemption for children. Senator John D. Rockefeller IV (D-West Virginia), chairman of the commission, stated that "children are the big economic losers in the last decade" and that all families will be better able to raise children with greater income security. The Commission's report also highlighted the need for tougher child support enforcement as well as transitional support for parents moving from welfare to work, such as job training, child care and health insurance benefits.

The commission, noting that "America's health care system is in shambles", was unable to reach a consensus on a health policy recommendation. However, it did support a proposal that all employers be required to provide insurance for employees who are pregnant or who have pregnant spouses.

Like the Carnegie Foundation, the commission recommended that "Head start must be available to all income-eligible children at risk of early school failure." Other education suggestions included a call for schools to adopt fundamental reforms such as a more challenging core curriculum, school-based management, participation by parents, and equitable financing across school districts.

Who's for Kids and Who's Just Kidding

A new national coalition organized in mid-December will try to focus public and political attention on the plight of the nation's 64 million children. The Coalition for America's Children is made up of over 40 various educational, health, and civic organizations. While this organization will not promote a single agenda as its member advocacy groups do, it will instead push the broader notion that government has an essential role to play in assuring the health, safety, and education of children.

In challenging politicians to put children as a high campaign priority, the coalition has adopted the slogan "who's for kids and who's just kidding." It expects to raise over \$2 million in private contributions to invest in public relations throughout the year.

A poll released by the coalition indicates both voter cynicism and enlightened responsibility. Of 1,000 adults surveyed, 76 percent believe that most of the money that goes to children through the government never gets to them. Further, 92 percent said that taxpayers will sooner or later have to pay the social costs associated with one-fifth of American children growing up in poverty.

Agreement seems to exist between traditional education researchers, a bi-partisan government panel, and the more vocal children advocacy groups on the importance of children's education prior, and in addition, to formal schooling. In reflecting on previous school reform efforts aimed at children, the Carnegie report states, "In our reach for excellence, we have ignored the fundamental fact that to improve the schools, a solid foundation must be laid ... [and] we have failed to recognize that the family may be a more imperiled institution than the school, that many of education's failures may relate to problems that precede schooling and even birth."

For information on how to obtain copies of the Carnegie Foundation or National Commission on Children reports, call or write the CAPE office.

NAIS Board Speaks on Choice

The board of directors of the National Association of Independent Schools has voted unanimously to endorse the "Low Income School Choice Demonstration Act of 1991" and approved a new statement on choice in education. NAIS, a CAPE member organization, has a membership of over 1,000 independent schools and associations.

The board's decision reflects the longstanding commitment of the independent school community to extend educational opportunities to all Americans and to be a strong voice in the education reform debate. While NAIS has refrained from supporting choice or tuition tax credit proposals in the past out of concern for public education, it stated its firm belief that the legislation by Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) would not adversely affect the nation's public schools.

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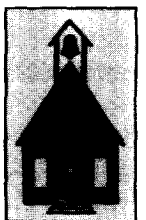
The choice statement, adopted November 16, gave NAIS support to "choice initiatives that provide viable educational options as long as those choice promote effective public school programs and guarantee the independence of independent schools." The position paper further stated that parental choice is "fundamental to our existent and to the issue of equity and access in education" and NAIS supports "policy initiatives that increase educational opportunities for those children who otherwise would not have them."

Asbestos Applications for 1992 Awards

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced the availability of applications for the 1992 award cycle as authorized under the Asbestos School Hazard Abatement Reauthorization Act of 1990. While EPA often views a conscientious in-place management program as the best method for dealing with the hazard, it also recognizes that more aggressive action, such as removal, may be necessary.

Congress enacted the Asbestos School Hazard Abatement Act (ASHAA) in 1984 to provide funds for financially needy schools to abate serious asbestos hazards. ASHAA funding is awarded in the form of loans and grants to abate asbestos materials which pose the most serious health threat to public and private school children and employees. That legislation was reauthorized by Congress in 1990.

The criteria for assessing financial need promotes



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fairness and equity among public and private school applicants. The evaluation uses budget per pupil and enrollment information to determine financial need for both public and private schools. Additionally, in determining financial eligibility, the criteria consider the burden of abatement costs relative to a school's operating budget. The EPA encourages all financially needy schools with serious asbestos problems to apply.

Over the past seven years, the ASHAA program has offered schools approximately \$291.5 million in loan and grant funding for 2,672 school abatement projects. Congress has appropriated approximately \$52 million for the 1992 program.

To apply for these funds, a school or public school district must submit a 1992 ASHAA application by January 24. Applications can be obtained by calling the ASHAA Coordination Center at (800) 462-6706 or by writing the Center c/o ATLAS Federal Services, Inc. 6011 Executive Blvd., Rockville, MD 20852.

The EPA will announce the 1992 ASHAA awards on April 30.

Legislative Update:

ACTION ALERT - Choice Amendment Vote

When the Senate reconvenes on January 21, it will begin debate on **S. 2**, a bill authorizing \$850 million for state and local education reform efforts. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) is expected to offer an amendment to allow \$30 million for support of "low income school choice demonstration" projects. That legislation would target low-income school districts to test and research the effects of education choice among public and private schools.

CAPE strongly supports this revised and narrowly focused choice initiative as a key component to basic reform. In a recent letter to Senators supporting the amendment, CAPE wrote that it would "provide needed incentives to bring educational opportunity to those who have been failed by the system ... [and] make lasting improvements to our educational system."

CAPE strongly urges all private school patrons to contact their U.S. Senators in support of the low-income school choice amendment to be offered by Senator

Hatch to S. 2 by January 21. Telephone calls to support the legislation can be made through the U.S. Capitol switchboard at **(202) 224-3121**. Letters to your Senators should be addressed to: The Honorable (name); United States Senate; Washington, DC 20510.

Any questions about the legislation can be directed to CAPE by calling (202) 659-0016.

Education for the Disabled

Funding figures for fiscal year 1992 showed an overall increase in dollars for special education and rehabilitative services. The appropriations were approved in **H.R. 3839**. Although the Chapter 1 disabled program will receive \$5 million less than in the 1991 appropriations bill, the overall total for education for the disabled has increased from \$2.61 billion to \$2.85 billion.

Chapter 1 Capital Expenses

The appropriation for capital expenses for private schools for Chapter 1 students also saw an increase in funding over 1991. The final allocation was over \$40 million - almost \$4 million more than the 1991 figure. Overall, the Chapter 1 program, designed over 25 years ago to target resources to children of low-income or disadvantaged families, received an increase of nearly \$700 million at \$6.7 billion.

Education R & D Programs

Three other programs under the "Education Research, Statistics, and Improvement" section of the Department of Education's funding bill were dealt with by Congress late last year as well.

The National Diffusion Network, a body of exemplary school programs for use by teachers, was given a \$549,000 increase over last year's funding for a \$14.7 million total in 1992. The Private School Facilitator Project, directed by CAPE under contract with the Department, is a part of that program. CAPE was granted another four year contract to facilitate dissemination of exemplary programs to private schools.

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, an independent group whose aim is to enhance and improve the teaching profession, also received funding in the legislation at \$4,880,000. The funds

are to be used for research and development only.

Finally, the "Blue-Ribbon Schools" program was zero-funded for 1992. That program, which recognizes and highlights exemplary schools, is another in which CAPE serves as the facilitator of private school involvement on behalf of the Department.

Despite last year's \$885,000 funding level and the White House's budget request and Senate legislation which sought level funding of the program for 1992, the House of Representatives did not agree and kept funding out of their bill. After a conference committee, neither the Administration officials nor the Senate were able or willing to convince the House conferees to again fund the program.

The Department of Education has yet to announce how it will proceed so as not to disrupt this ongoing program.

Tax Bill Hearings

After extending for six months tax code provisions which encourage gifts of appreciated property to charitable organizations, the House Ways and Means Committee has announced it will hold hearings on the permanent extension of that and other provisions.

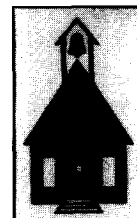
Set for January 28 and 29, the committee will hear from several organizations interested in tax policy as an incentive for charitable giving, as well as the other activities encouraged through those tax provisions.

H.R. 3909, the bill giving the six-month reprieve, was signed into law by President Bush on December 11.

Capenotes:

From the December 9, 1991 edition of *U.S. News & World Report* in an education article entitled, "The Exodus": "The archdiocese of Washington, D.C., for instance, runs its 50,000-student school system with a central administration of just 17 people; by contrast, the District of Columbia public schools support their 81,000-student enrollment with a headquarters bureaucracy of 1,500."

After an earlier vote of approval from the **Pennsylvania Senate**, the state House



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voted down a sweeping educational "choice" bill to allow parents to use state funded stipends to send their children to any school - public, private or religious.

The choice movement has achieved high visibility this year in that state due to a coalition of the state Catholic Conference, Christian school educators and business leaders. The organization known as REACH, Road to Educational Achievement through Choice, has activated an energetic campaign to promote school choice to the legislature.

The measure would have authorized the state to pay \$900 stipends to parents to use in defraying the costs of private schools or public schools outside their districts as well as a state office to coordinate the program. However, support in the House began to diminish when the state budget secretary announced the \$300 million pricetag on the bill would mean budget cuts or tax increases.

Despite the defeat by a 114-89 vote, proponents were not dismayed. One activist told a reporter for *Daily Report Card*, "I firmly believe we have the people on our side. The issue is who's going to set educational policy in this state, the teachers unions or the parents, and the answer to that has to be the parents."

Public school teachers' salaries have nearly doubled in the last ten years according to a survey by the **American Federation of Teachers**. In the 1980-81 school year, the average teacher salary was \$17,544. Ten years later, that figure grew to \$32,860 - an 87.3% increase.

That compares to the consumer price index which rose over the same period by 58.2%, according to the Congressional Research Service.

POPS Multimedia is a teacher-tested, classroom proven year-long video program designed to help K through grade 5 children build positive attitudes and self-esteem. The program, developed by the Power of Positive Students International Foundation, is based on principles of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, author of *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

In dealing with the areas of self-awareness, goals and expectations, and enthusiasm and coping, the videos incorporate the talent from "Sesame Street", "3-2-1 Contact", and other state of the art television productions. The program has been successfully used in over 4,000 schools.

For more information or free (60-day) examination copies of the program, call toll free, (800) 462-0322.

Recent **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)** statistics reveal that "40% of juniors in high school could not convert 9/100 into a percentage" and that 1/3 of all high school juniors and seniors think that Christopher Columbus landed in America 'sometime after 1750'. Further, 43% of juniors could not answer that World War I occurred between 1900-1950.

The data was related in a recent speech by Brookings Institute scholar John Chubb.

The **Smithsonian Institution's** National Museum of American History has enjoyed great success with its "Information Age" exhibit.

The exhibit gives the history of information technologies from the telegraph to the computer and explores how interactions of people, information and technology have moved us into the Information Age.

The interactive computer stations in the exhibit can give individualized 1890 Census information, Nazi Germany's ENIGMA secret war code messages, and computerized fingerprints as utilized by the FBI.

The exhibit, open for special school tours, is sponsored and managed by **EDS**, one of the world's largest information technology corporations.

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