

# cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

May 1994 Number 201

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## Commission Reports Students, Teachers are "Prisoners of Time"

A federal report released on May 5 declared our education system fatally flawed because students and teachers are "prisoners" of a school schedule that "should be relegated to museums as an exhibit from our education past." The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (NECTL) proposed fixing America's schools with a sweeping reform agenda based on high, measurable standards for all students, adjusting time to help individual students meet those standards, and keeping schools open longer to serve student and family needs.

The commission was created two years ago to examine the quality and adequacy of time U.S. students spend on study and learning. The nine-member commission received testimony at public hearings, site-visited schools, and analyzed research and data in preparing their 56-page report. They met with more than 150 educators, parents, students, and other education experts during their study.

"By living with the constraints of yesterday's school calendar, our nation is committing slow-motion social suicide," Commission Chairman John Hodge Jones said. "Our schools and the people involved with them — students, teachers, administrators, parents, and staff — are prisoners of time, captives of the school clock and calendar.

"In America today, our children spend an average of three hours a day learning the

academic core. At the bottom line, every school must provide at least 5.5 hours of core academic instruction each day," Jones said. Vice Chairman Carol Schwartz added, "we're also saying that, if schools want to continue offering important activities outside the academic core, as well as serving as a hub for family and community services, they should keep school doors open longer each day and longer each year.

NECTL concluded a two-year study today of how time affects learning in the United States. Throughout the text of its report, *Prisoners of Time*, NECTL deplored the negative effect a restricted time structure has on U.S. students. The Commission's recommendations reach well beyond the schoolhouse, affecting families, businesses, industry — even how higher education and training institutions structure their academic calendar.

"For over a decade, education reform advocates have been working feverishly to improve our schools," said NECTL executive director Milton Goldberg, who also directed research in the 1983 study, *A Nation at Risk*. "Much has been studied and implemented in the past decade in hopes of jump-starting our schools — student standards, teacher certification, school-based management, school choice, and many other strategies. But the issue of time has been overlooked. If reform is to truly take hold, the 6-hour, 180-day school year should be rel-

egated to museums — an exhibit from our education past."

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NECTL executive director

## Educators React

Various education groups and leaders hailed the commission's work and findings. CAPE executive director Joyce G. McCray said of the report, "This landmark study puts an entirely new perspective on the education reform debate." She noted its significance for both public and private schools by saying, "With the changing needs of families and students, as well as the huge new advances in technology, the Commission's report gives us good examples of how to better use time in the classroom. We must all look at time and



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## A School Year that Never Really Ends

At Beacon Day School (Elementary) and Beacon High School in Oakland, California, the school year never really ends. At these private schools, the school day is over ten hours long. There is no set vacation period; parents plan vacations to fit family needs; students work in teams by achievement level, not age; letter grades are unknown in the elementary school; and students spend six to eight hours a week on art, music, drama or martial arts. "There's no summer vacation, so there's extra time to learn," 10-year-old Colin Gage told the Commission.

Leslie Medine, co-director of the schools, described different approaches to the two levels of schooling. Based on students' developmental needs, she testified, day school students attend school 240 days a year, whereas high school students attend 215. Both schools are open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., 240 days a year, with teachers working on flexible schedules for 210 days. Every six weeks, at least two teachers are on leave throughout the year, their places taken by eight permanent, full-time, substitute teachers known as "Flexes."

*Taken from "Prisoners of Time", page 16.*

learning differently than we have in the past."

Gordon Ambach, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers expressed his view that the "report is on target", but also noted that "time is money." Ambach, like other educators warned that "to meet internationally competitive standards, our students will need more time, which means more revenues for schools."

At the press conference announcing the report, Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-New Mexico), who sponsored the legislation which established the commission, accepted the report on behalf of Congress, while U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley accepted it for the Administration. Bingaman

noted in his remarks that this was the first report he's read in his years in Washington that had limited itself to only one graph. However, he noted sadly that the chart displayed that U.S. high school students spend less than half of their time on "core academic" study in comparison to Germany, Japan or France.

"This landmark study puts an entirely new perspective on the education reform debate."

Joyce G. McCray  
CAPE executive director

Secretary Riley also spoke at the press conference stating, "Increasingly, we Americans live in a world of fax machines, car phones and beepers; technology that is meant to speed up our lives and make us all a little bit more productive," he said. "Yet, when it comes to how we teach our children, we seem fixed on a time schedule from another era." He applauded the report as a way to "shake us out of our lethargy..."

### Findings & Recommendations:

Members of the Commission also closely examined the relationship between time and learning in Japan and Germany. The panel discovered that U.S. students spend less than half the time in core academic instruction than their international peers. On average, U.S. students can graduate if they devote only 41 percent of their school time to the academic core. According to the Commission, the nation needs to address a number of issues if current efforts to improve learning are to succeed, including:

► The fixed clock and calendar are a fundamental design flaw that must be changed. Time should serve children instead of children serving time. Academic time has been stolen to make room for a host of non-academic activities. If students are to be expected to meet high standards, schools must move non-academic activity outside the academic day.

► Today's school schedule must be modified to respond to the great changes that have re-shaped American life outside school. In modern society, many single parents and working families have child care needs — schools can be a safe learning haven for their

children.

► Despite teachers' needs for personal and professional development, they endure unrelieved time pressure and isolation; working largely alone, for hours daily.

► Mastering world class standards will require more time for almost all students. This applies not only to the traditional core academics, but also to geography, civics, fine arts, and foreign languages — subjects most American students have, until now, spent little time learning.

Based on these concerns, the commissioners made the following recommendations for U.S. schools:

1. Reinvent Schools Around Learning, Not Time. Make a commitment to bring every child in the United States up to world-class standards in core academic areas and commit the time required.

2. Fix the Design Flaw. Use Time in New and Better Ways. Make learning the constant and vary time. State and local school boards must work with schools to redesign education so that time becomes a factor supporting learning, not a boundary marking its limits.

3. Establish an Academic Day. Schools can provide additional academic time by reclaiming the school day for academic instruction. This means providing at least 5.5 hours of core academic instruction every day.

4. Keep Schools Open Longer to Meet the Needs of Children and Communities. Schools should respond to the needs of today's students by remaining open longer during the day. Some schools in every district should remain open throughout the year.

5. Give Teachers the Time They Need. Teachers must be provided with the professional time and opportunities they need to do their jobs.

6. Invest In Technology. Schools should seize the opportunity of new technology to increase productivity, enhance student achievement, and expand learning time.

7. Develop Local Action Plans to Transform Schools. Every district should convene local leaders to develop action plans that offer different school and time options and encourage parents, students,



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and teachers to choose among them.

**8. Share the Responsibility.** Learning must become a national obsession in the United States. It is up to the American people as a whole to transform our schools into the vision we know we can achieve.

For more information about the report, contact the NECTL at 1255 22nd Street, NW, Suite 502, Washington, D.C. 20202-7591 or call (202) 653-5019.

## Legislative Update:

### ESEA in Early Stage in Senate

The Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and Humanities, chaired by Senator Claiborne Pell (D-Rhode Island), has held several hearings on reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The House passed its version, **H.R. 6**, on March 24.

The Senate committee leaders expect the mark-up schedule to begin May 12 with hopes of completion before the end of the month. Besides the fight over formulating a new way of distributing Chapter 1 funds to students from low-income and disadvantaged families, there will also be a struggle over the survival of the Chapter 2 program. This program, which provides flexible funds for school improvement, was slated for extinction in the Administration's recommendation to Congress. However, the House was able to retain an improved method of sustaining the flexible use of these funds which support education reform and improvement.

CAPE, in unison with a coalition of public and private school groups, has again urged members of the education committee to retain this type of program. In an April 28 letter to Senate subcommittee members, CAPE wrote to urge Congress to "retain the flexibility allowed in the current law. It further pointed out that those funds are "a crucially important source of funds if the reform efforts to be initiated from the recently enacted 'Goals 2000' legislation are to be realized."

### School-to-Work Opportunities Act

The Congress passed and the President has signed into law legislation to assist school-to-work transition for the majority of the nation's high school graduates who enter

full-time employment rather than go on to college. **H.R. 2884** was passed by the House on April 20 by a 339 to 79 vote. It passed the Senate the following day by voice vote. President Clinton signed the bill on May 4.

The legislation would provide \$300 million in seed money to states and communities to encourage partnerships and consortia of employers, educators, labor unions and communities to build school-to-work systems to prepare students for higher skill employment. With a five-year authorization, the program is expected to encourage states and communities to change, improve and implement education and training programs for the "neglected majority" of young people immediately entering the work force after high school. Priority of grants would be given to those which provide participants with paid, work-based learning experiences.

Another aspect of the legislation is to support career awareness, exploration, and counseling programs for students in middle, and even elementary schools.

Appropriations for the 1994 fiscal year have already been set at \$100 million.

### IDEA Reauthorization

In a hearing on the reauthorization of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA), the House subcommittee on Select Education and Civil Rights heard from a CAPE member organization. This fourth hearing on the legislation was held April 28.

The National Association of Private Schools for Exceptional Children (NAPSEC) testified on behalf of "over 200 private special education schools nationally and over 600 at the state level that serve both publicly and privately placed children with disabilities who required individualized education and therapeutic services outside of the public school." Dr. Marie Ficano, Chair of the Government Affairs Committee of NAPSEC, said in her opening statement that "IDEA is a good law, but it is not being implemented effectively."

Ficano went on to point out that in the 15th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the (IDEA), sixty percent of states which submitted state plans had inadequate policies and procedure to "ensure that the State had a goal of providing full educational opportunity to all children with disabilities." She concluded that "it is difficult to evaluate a law that has not

been properly implemented ...".

In the closing of her testimony, Ficano stressed that "individual services give children the foundation necessary to establish and cultivate the skills required to allow them to realize their maximum potential and independence as children and adults." Stating this "cannot be accomplished through a 'one size fits all' approach", she concluded that Congress should "keep the INDIVIDUAL in IDEA."

### OSHA Bill

The House is currently considering **H.R. 1280** — a bill to reauthorize the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). The legislation would establish and maintain health and safety programs to reduce or eliminate hazards and to prevent injuries and illness to employees.

Among the bill's effects would be the requirement to employers of 11 or more full-time employees to establish safety and health committees with employee representatives to review and advise on work site programs. This and other sections of the bill could serve as an additional requirements on private schools.

### Health Care Reform

The issue of health care reform remains active with the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees continuing their consideration of various comprehensive approaches to reform of the American health care system. Recent action in Congress indicates that House leaders may threaten to delay the August Congressional recess as an incentive to get action this year.

Three comprehensive plans have been discussion in recent months: White House proposal, **H.R. 3600 (S. 1757)**; the Cooper/Breaux proposal, **H.R. 3222/ S. 1579**; and the Chafee/Thomas proposal **S. 1770/H.R. 3704**. While options vary greatly, few on Capital Hill take issue with the six primary principles for reform as outlined by President Clinton in his Health Security Act of 1993: security, simplicity, savings, quality, choice and responsibility.

The White House provided a briefing to participants of the CAPE 4th annual legislative conference in March. That information was provided by Chris-



tine Heenan, a senior policy analyst with the Office of Policy Development in the White House. CAPE will continue to monitor reform legislation and its impact on schools.

## CapeNotes:

► **ISED-L**, a mailing list for independent school educators, is now available over Internet.

ISED-L is a forum for the distinctive needs and interests of the independent school community around the world. The service, which was launched February 17, is available to private schools at no cost. Managers are Marti Weston, at the Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C. (703-241-0704) and Ellen Berne, at the Winsor School in Boston, Massachusetts (617-735-9510).

New Subscribers are welcome. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to ISED-L-REQUEST@adler.mec.mass.edu. In the body of the message type: SUBSCRIBE ISED-L YourFirstName YourLastName (e.g. SUBSCRIBE ISED-L John Doe).

► The U.S. Department of Energy will fund **Summer Teacher Enhancement** institutes in mathematics, science and technology for middle and high school teachers through 17 laboratories and facilities this



summer. Institute topics include earth and environmental science, manufacturing opportunities through science and math, hands-on aerospace education for teachers, and teaching basic concepts and forensics through modern physics.

It is estimated that 510 teachers will be able to take advantage of the enhancement program and its \$3 million to support study and stipends for teachers. For more information, contact Cindy Musick, Department of Energy, Science Education and Technical Information Office, 1000 Independence Ave., SW, MS ST-512, Washington, D.C. 20585 or call (202) 586-8949.

► **Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC)** is a program to create an atmosphere among children and adults which is warm, affirming and supportive. Only in such an atmosphere is it possible for children to deal with each other and conflict in a humane and constructive way. It was begun in New York public schools in 1972 and is now in use internationally in 21 cities. The Friendly Classroom for a small Planet has been used by thousands of teachers as an introduction to the CCRC process and as a textbook.

The CCRC program, geared to children grades K-8, focuses on four main themes of Affirmation, Cooperation, Communication, and Conflict Resolution. While the theme

areas are pyramidal and build upon each other, the areas are not 'set in stone', but rather flow naturally into each other.

Since violence is a continuing and growing concern in all schools, this program may serve as a useful tool for teachers and school administrators. For more information on CCRC, contact the Fellowship of Reconciliation at Box 271, 523 North Broadway, Nyack, New York 10960; or call (914) 358-4601 or fax (914) 358-4924.

► The **Council on International Educational Exchange** is offering opportunities to high school teachers to accompany students participating in its School Partners Abroad program, which promotes international secondary school-to-school exchanges.

The program organizes exchanges between schools in the United States and those in Costa Rica, France, Germany, Japan, Russia and Spain. The value of the awards which cover all expenses of the trip range from \$750 to \$2,000, depending on the country. Any secondary school teacher is eligible to apply.

For more information, contact Rosana Hirsch, Marketing Coordinator, Department of Secondary Education Programs, School Partners Abroad, Council on International Educational Exchange, 205 E. 42nd Street, New York, New York, 10017 or call (212) 661-1414, ext. 1356.

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