

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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The Privatization Movement

Contributed by Pearl Rock Kane

Editor's note: Pearl Rock Kane is professor of educational administration at Teacher's College, Columbia University. The following is excerpted from the keynote address she delivered at the annual meeting of the Educational Records Bureau in New York City.

We are in the midst of an explosion of private sector interest in education in this country. Almost daily, we read about another government function that is being contracted out to private enterprise or we hear about the way recipients of social services are now being treated as consumers.

CONTRACTING

In the quest for school improvement, cost savings, and more efficient administration, school districts are increasingly looking for ways to tap private resources for services previously reserved for full-time, licensed employees.

The cities of Baltimore and Memphis have contracted with Sylvan Learning Systems for remedial education for low-income students, using Chapter I funds. Some schools are contracting with companies such as Berlitz, Inc., to provide foreign language instruction if there is limited demand that does not require the services of a full-time teacher.

Last November, the Minneapolis school board hired Public Strategies Group, Inc., a consulting firm, to manage the schools, and Peter Hutchinson, a management consult-

ant with none of the usual credentials, was given the role of superintendent. Even more unusual are the terms: Instead of receiving a salary, Hutchinson's pay is based on achievement results and success in meeting specified benchmarks. Although Hutchinson's pay will be tied to merit, any savings will be kept within the Minneapolis district.

FOR PROFIT ENTERPRISE

The debate heats up when profit is involved. Educational Alternatives, Inc. (EAI), a private, for-profit management firm, recently secured a contract to run the public schools in Hartford, Connecticut. EAI is also in nine schools in Baltimore and in Dade County, Florida. EAI received the average per-pupil cost of the district to operate the schools. EAI subcontracts with other companies or back to the school system itself for other services. EAI offers a specialized curriculum that includes technology and personalization, and aims to improve self esteem. The company trains teachers in its pedagogical approach and provides a well-equipped classroom and an environment conducive to learning. In exchange for its per-pupil charge, EAI promises accountability and offers a contract that may be terminated on short notice.

Another for-profit corporation currently in the limelight, Chris Whittle's Edison Schools are supposed to debut in the fall of 1995. Edison currently holds one signed contract and letters of intent from 12 districts for 1995, and the company may be in

two Hartford schools as EAI's subcontractor.

The Edison curriculum offers the same academic preparation in the liberal arts and sciences for all students. Every student will be required to meet Edison's minimum standards, which include a second language from earliest years, as well as fine arts and social sciences, and fitness-oriented physi-

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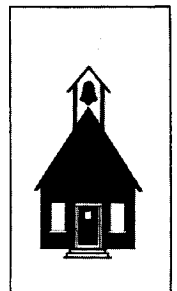
Department Responds to Outcry

'94-'95 Blue Ribbon Schools Eligibility Criteria Revised

The outcry from private and public schools has caused the Department of Education to revise its eligibility criteria for the 1994-95 Blue Ribbon Schools program, allowing more schools to apply for recognition. CAPE Executive Director Joyce McCray called the Department's decision "an example of democracy in action."

Public and private schools alike responded in force to the Department's announcement of new eligibility criteria for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program. While CAPE supports the

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Privatization

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cal education, in order to graduate from each of five sequential "academies," blocks of two or three grades across 13 years of education. The last block will be operated at a level now expected of students at competitive colleges. Teams of teachers will work with the same group of students over several years. In a departure from current practice, the school day is two hours longer than the standard, and the school year 20 to 30 days longer than usual.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are given public money, autonomy, opportunity for self-governance, and freedom from state and local regulation. They are public in that they are non-discriminatory in admissions. To earn their freedom, schools agree to produce specified results within a given time or their charters will be revoked. The schools may be built from scratch, or existing schools may vote to become charter schools. Almost any group, public or private, and even including parents and teachers, can apply for a charter to start a school.

Ten states now have provisions for charter schools and many more are considering it. The success of charter schools will depend on how receptive the charter-granting groups are to innovation and on how capable the grantees are in meeting the difficult task of running schools.

CORPORATE SCHOOLS

The most pervasive infiltration of the corporate world in schools is through commercial television. Schools have been receptive to corporate sponsors that offer resources in exchange for advertising. The best known example is Channel One, the news program recently sold by its founder Chris Whittle, which gives schools audiovisual equipment in exchange for viewing a 12-minute news program with two minutes of commercials.

If the figures released are correct, 40 percent of America's high schools have Channel One. It is likely that no recent reform in education has reached as many schools and students. The use of videos with advertising appear to be on the increase. For example, Reebok is getting into the act with

PETV, which will avoid direct commercials in exchange for flashing Reebok's name before captive classroom audiences.

RECEPTIVITY TO PRIVATIZATION

Why is privatization advancing into public schools at this time in this country? There are three major reasons: chronic education problems in public schools, the high cost of education, and the attractiveness of education as an investment opportunity.

Even though recent studies such as the Bracey report show that educational performance has not declined in recent years, there continues to be widespread dissatisfaction with public schools and a perception that despite expensive interventions, the school system is largely resistant to change. Attacks, often led by the media, portray a bleak picture. Everything from buildings to curriculum, particularly in urban and rural schools, is seen as near collapse. Education is seen as needing another approach.

Further, the cost of instructional services is rising, and demographers tell us that school enrollment will surge in the next decade, requiring 19 percent more teachers. One way to meet the need at a lower cost is through private sector contracting. EAI, smaller educational firms such as Berlitz, and educators in private practice can fill niches without requiring schools to provide full-time employment benefits.

Another force for privatism is the investment side of business. Education represents eight percent of America's gross national product and is being viewed by some investors as capitalism's new frontier.

What are the implications of the move to privatism? Unions and other groups and individuals oppose privatization on philosophical and practical grounds. Last year, the NEA established the Center for the Preservation of Public Education to counteract movements to privatize management of schools and offers of publicly funded vouchers for private schools.

Many agree with the union that the crux of the privatization debate is whether profit seekers should assume control of the tasks associated with teaching children. The reengineering concepts that have shaped contemporary business thinking focus on the core task of the organization, outsourcing or contracting out only tangential functions.

This would apply to contracting out busing or food services in schools. Outsourcing the school's central task of teaching is contrary to the usual outsourcing approach.

Organized groups such as Unplug, the anti-Channel One group based in Berkeley, California, call advertising in the classroom "the auctioning of lesson plans to corporate America." What's next? asks the organization's coordinators, "environmental science by Exxon?" In Baltimore, the teachers union issuing the city for delegating school management to private enterprise which, the union claims, denies local citizens the right to decide how district schools should be run.

But the potential gains from going private should not be overlooked. Perhaps the greatest lesson schools can learn from private investment is the application of business principles to school management, particularly investment in research and training, and long-term investment in plant improvement.

Benno Schmidt has called private schools cottage industries that fail to test the educational approaches that work and those that do not, and fail to spend money improving teachers' skills. He is right. Private schools have not accepted responsibility for systematic research and training. Few schools have taken a role driving the educational or teacher training agenda in universities. In contrast, the Edison project has invested three years and \$40 million in research and development, an amount that few schools could afford.

CONCLUSION

The hoped for improvement in both public and private schools may occur if new entrepreneurial ventures achieve breakthroughs and provide benchmarks and examples of practice that educators can observe firsthand. Educators need to see alternative ways of doing things. Successful models can change educators' thinking about what is possible in schooling.

There is skepticism from many who have watched reforms come and go. Skeptics think that none of the privatization efforts will influence public schools significantly.

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cantly. Privatization attempts, they say, are more likely to be transformed by the system than to transform it. Despite the skepticism, many see private enterprise as a way to unfreeze a resistant system

What distinguishes privatization from other reforms is that it is an approach, not a single reform. Privatization differs from what educator Harold Howe has called millennialist thinking, the hope that a single social reform might bring the millennium.

Joel Barker, in his book *Paradigms*, explains why new trends in education are resisted. Those who initiate new paradigms are usually outsiders or novices to a field. Experienced experts resist new paradigms because they are good at playing by established rules and practices. They don't relish having the rules changed. Only visionaries, says Barker, recognize that a new paradigm has the potential to solve previously unsolved problems.

But visionaries may also anticipate a future with privatization that is worse than the past. In subsequent months, educational decision makers will be faced with tough choices -- to embrace privatization or reject it. The ways in which decision makers will respond to the myriad options available to them may influence the course of educational history.

From the Executive Director...

I am very pleased to announce that David Early has been appointed Government Liaison and editor of *Outlook*. David assumed his responsibilities on November 15.

David most recently has served as press secretary for Congresswoman Jill Long and previously held the same position with Congressman Terry Bruce. His knowledge of the Hill and his writing and press experience will serve us well.

I know you will join me in welcoming David to CAPE.

Legislative Update:

Earthquake, tsunami, tidal wave: however you describe the 1994 Congressional elections, things are going to be different in Washington starting in January. Not a single Republican incumbent lost as the GOP captured the U.S. House for the first time since Dwight Eisenhower occupied the White House. With a change in the majority party in the Senate as well, key players and

agendas will have a different look beginning in January.

In the House, retiring Education and Labor Committee Chairman William Ford will now be succeeded by Rep. William Goodling (R-PA), who has outlined two themes he hopes to define his tenure: empowering Americans through local decisions, and providing quality solutions.

"If my chairmanship is truly going to be about local decisions and quality solutions, old habits will have to be dramatically changed" Goodling said. "That is why I suggest a comprehensive, systematic review of all programs and laws."

The in-coming chairman has called for a review of all government programs, laws and regulations within the committee's jurisdiction. "If they aren't working, either reform them, replace them, or throw them out entirely," Goodling said.

In the Senate, Nancy Kassebaum (R-KS) will take over the Labor and Human Resources Committee from Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA).

While it is expected that reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will still be the top educational issue on the legislative agenda in the 104th Congress, there has been speculation that Goals 2000 and the Improving America's Schools Act could also be revisited.

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objectives of the Americans with Disabilities Act, CAPE and others believed that the new Blue Ribbon Schools criteria went beyond the law. On November 17, the Department announced that those ADA and Section 504 eligibility criteria would be eliminated for the 1994-95 Secondary Program.

Schools that have already submitted applications do not need to revise them at this time. Schools that had requested an applicationj befopre the criteria were revised need to request a revised application by writing or faxing CAPE

Schools must, of course, continue to meet any applicable requirements of the ADA or Section 504. Many schools had complained that the Blue Ribbon Schools eligibility criteria went beyond the requirements established by the law, imposing cost

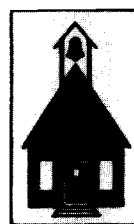
prohibitive mandates that would result in the recognition of buildings rather than successful school programs.

In making its modifications, the Department added one new criterion which addresses the nominated school's commitment to providing access to individuals with disabilities to its facilities and programs. In assessing the school's commitment, the review panel will consider efforts that have been made to provide access not only to students with mobility impairments, but also to students with other disabilities.

Because of this change to the eligibility and review criteria, the Department is extending the deadline for submission of nomination packages to March 3, 1995. The timeline for the 1994-95 program has been revised accordingly. The new deadline should allow ample time for additional schools to prepare applications.

Private school applications sent to CAPE for review should be postmarked no later than February 1, 1995, to allow CAPE to meet the Department's March 3 deadline. Progress reports for individual applications should be available from the Department between late September and early November, 1995.

CAPENOTES:



Violence in schools is a growing and serious problem in our nation. A new text developed by the Center for Civic Education, **Violence in the Schools: Developing Prevention Plans**, is designed to teach students to combat the problem.

The text involves students in cooperative learning and critical-thinking activities and helps them develop participatory skills. Educational graphics and cartoons are used to capture student interest and promote learning. As the number of students in all schools engaged in at-risk behaviors continues to increase, the need for prevention strategies becomes paramount. Additionally, it is quite evident that in order for violence prevention activities to be effective, they must be incorporated no later than the middle grades, according to a middle school principal familiar with the text.

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Violence in the Schools: Developing Prevention Plans can be incorporated into a social studies or middle school core curriculum. A sixty-four page Teacher's Guide and a Staff Development Training Manual are also available. Classroom sets, containing 30 students books (102 pages) and one teacher's guide (64 pages), are available for \$150 through the Center for Civic Education, 5146 Douglas Fir Road, Calabasa, CA 91302.

▶ Students from around the GLOBE will soon have the opportunity to gain hands-on environmental experience while participating in on-going scientific experiments. The **Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment** program is a science and education program that links students, educators and scientists from around the world in studying the global environment.

The GLOBE network will consist of K-12 students worldwide, each making environmental observations at or near their schools and reporting their data to infor-

mation centers. Students will make measurements in the areas of atmosphere and climate, hydrology/water chemistry, and biology/geology. In return, they will receive global images crated from worldwide GLOBE school data for use in their classrooms.

The organizers of the GLOBE program hope to have over 200 schools worldwide involved by April 22, 1995, the 25th anniversary of the first Earth Day. For more information, contact the GLOBE Program at 744 Jackson Place, Washington, DC 20503, or call (703) 395-7600.

▶ **Never Talk to Strangers** is a wonderful new video designed to help school children handle potentially dangerous situations with strangers. Rather than simply telling rules of safety, the video demonstrates circumstances which allow children to think critically and assertively in dealing with a confrontation by unknown adults, getting lost, or violent circumstances.

For more information, contact Douglas Amidon with Stepping Stone Productions at 14618 Darbydale Ave., Dale City, VA 22193 or call (703) 680-1663.

▶ The National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts sponsors an "**Arts Recognition and Talent Search**" (ARTS) each year. The program makes up to \$3,000 available in cash awards to talented high school senior-aged artists. The recognition program is open to high school seniors or 17-18 year old artists in dance, music, theater, visual arts and writing.

Even artists who do not earn cash awards through the program have an opportunity to share in \$3 million dollars in scholarship money through NFAA's 120 member national Scholarship List Service.

For more information on the Arts Recognition and Talent Search (ARTS), please write NFAA/ARTS, 800 Brickell Avenue, Suite 500, Miami, FL 33131, or call (305) 377-1144 or toll free, (800) 970-ARTS.

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