

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Elections Bring Shift in Support for School Choice

Among the sweeping changes that the 2010 elections brought to Congress was a striking shift in the makeup of members who support school choice. The most immediate impact could be a reinstatement of opportunity scholarships for low-income children in the District of Columbia, a popular and effective program that the 111th Congress shut down for new students.

House Changes

The Republican takeover of the House signaled new hope for choice. Rep. John Boehner (R-OH), expected to become the next speaker, has been one of the chamber's staunchest supporters of school choice and has a particularly strong connection to the DC program, which he helped spearhead through the House in 2003. During a floor debate on the measure that year, Boehner, in a heartfelt intervention, asked his colleagues, "How can we continue to turn our heads and look the other way when we know that children's lives are being ruined because they are consistently put in schools that are not performing?"

That same year, Boehner served as a founding force behind an annual dinner to support inner-city Catholic schools in Washington, DC. Initially cosponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, the black-tie event has raised millions of dollars over the years to ensure the presence of effective schools in needy neighborhoods. The most recent dinner, now hosted by Boeher, Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, and former DC Mayor Anthony Williams, took place October 5, 2010.

Minnesota Congressman John Kline,

who will likely chair the House Education and Labor Committee, is also an unwavering proponent of choice. He told a CAPE gathering last spring, "We believe that parents need to have as much choice as possible, as much decision-making power as possible, when it comes to influencing their children's education."



Senate Changes

On the Senate side, several energetic supporters of school choice will be moving to Washington in January, bringing with them a fresh outlook and new enthusiasm on education policy.

Marco Rubio, senator-elect from Florida, offered voters a 12-point plan for improving education, the first point being creation of a universal education tax benefit. The idea involves converting "all existing education tax deductions and credits into a single, universal education tax deduction or credit." The deduction or credit would be available to help families with education costs at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels, including tuition at religious and independent schools.

In all, six of Rubio's 12 points involve enhancing the right of parents to choose their child's school. Point five in the plan is to "improve school choice through a federal corporate income tax credit." Modeled after similar state-level initiatives, including one in Florida, the program would allow corporations to donate part of their federal taxes to organizations that grant scholarships to help low-income students attend private schools.

Rubio's proposal also includes reinstatement of the DC Opportunity Scholarship

Program, the establishment of similar scholarship programs across the country for children in chronically failing schools, and separate voucher programs for pre-K children and students with disabilities.

Another strong new choice supporter is Senator-elect Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania. In a debate October 20 with opponent Joe Sestak, Toomey forcefully defended his support of school choice: "We've got a staggering number of kids in schools in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and in between who really don't have much of a chance in life because they're not getting the education they need. I really think that the money for funding education should follow the child, and parents should have a choice of any school, public or private, religious or nonreligious."

Republican Ron Johnson defeated incumbent Democrat Russ Feingold for the Senate seat from Wisconsin. In an interview with the *Journal Sentinel* editorial board October 13, Johnson recalled a recent visit to St. Anthony School in Milwaukee, a center of the city's Hispanic community. He described the school, which participates in the state's voucher program, as "a phenomenal learning environment," and said the state should expand the school choice program "because getting the economy growing and providing a first-class education to students is just critical."

In Indiana, Dan Coats, who served in the Senate from 1989 to 1999, was elected to a return engagement. When originally in the Senate, Coats was a reliable backer of initiatives to expand parent choice in education, including education savings accounts for K-12 expenses and vouchers for students in the District of Columbia.

Other new senators known to be supporters of school choice include: John Boozman (AR), Rand Paul (KY), Kelly Ayotte (NH), Rob Portman (OH), and Mike Lee (UT).



CAPE member organizations:

- Agudath Israel of America
- American Montessori Society
- Association Montessori International—USA
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Association of Christian Teachers and Schools
- Association of Waldorf Schools of N.A.
- Christian Schools International
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Friends Council on Education
- Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
- National Association of Episcopal Schools
- National Association of Independent Schools
- National Catholic Educational Association
- National Christian School Association
- Oral Roberts University Educational Fellowship
- Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Schools
- 33 Affiliated State Organizations

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12
Executive Director: Joe McTigue

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Many Students See School Violence as “Big Problem”

One-third of U.S. high school students report that “physical violence is a big problem” at their school, according to one of the largest private studies ever on student attitudes and conduct. The results vary significantly by type of school, with 39 percent of public school students saying such violence (defined as fighting, bullying, and intimidation) is a huge issue, compared to only 8 percent of students in religious schools and 6 percent in other private schools (see table).

true, it certainly is not so today,” Josephson said. “Insults, name calling, relentless teasing, and malicious gossip often inflict deep and enduring pain,” he added.

USDE Guidance

The same day the survey was released, the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued guidance designed to combat bullying in schools. The guidance clarifies the

Percentage of Students Who Agree with the Following Statements

Survey Statement	Public	Religious Private	Other Private
Physical violence is a big problem at my school.	39%	8%	6%
I feel very safe when I am at school.	73%	93%	94%
I took a weapon to school at least once in the past 12 months.	10%	5%	5%
I have been under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol at school at least once in the past 12 months.	17%	8%	6%

A related question found that 27 percent of public school students, 7 percent of religious school students, and 6 percent of other private school students do not “feel very safe” when they are at school.

Weapons, Drugs, Alcohol

The new study, released October 26 by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, also found that twice as many public school students as private school students (10 percent vs. 5 percent) said they had taken a weapon to school at least once in the past year. Adding drugs and alcohol to the dangerous mix, 17 percent of students in public schools, 8 percent of students in religious schools, and 6 percent of students in other private schools said they had been “under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol at school at least once in the past 12 months.” Over 43,000 students took part in the survey.

“The combination of bullying, a penchant toward violence when one is angry, the availability of weapons, and the possibility of intoxication at school increases significantly the likelihood of retaliatory violence,” said Michael Josephson, founder and president of the institute, a non-profit group based in Los Angeles.

Fifty percent of high school students admitted that they had “bullied, teased, or taunted someone” in the past year, and 47 percent said they had been bullied, teased, or taunted.

“If the saying, ‘sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never harm me’ was ever

circumstances under which several federal civil rights laws apply to acts of student harassment. The antidiscrimination laws enforced by OCR govern schools that are recipients of federal financial assistance.

“We’ve got to dispel the myth that bullying is just a normal rite of passage, or an inevitable part of growing up. It’s not,” said President Obama. “We have an obligation to ensure that our schools are safe for all of our kids. Every single young person deserves the opportunity to learn and grow and achieve their potential, without having to worry about the constant threat of harassment.”

“Bullying is a problem that shouldn’t exist. No one should ever feel harassed or unsafe in a school simply because they act or think or dress differently than others,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “To every student who feels threatened or harassed—for whatever reason—please know that you are not alone. Please know that there are people who love you. And please know that we will protect you,” Duncan continued.

The White House also announced plans to host a conference in early 2011 to raise awareness about bullying and harassment and to discuss ways in which students, parents, teachers, and community leaders can address the issue.

The Josephson Institute’s study “The Ethics of American Youth: 2010” is available online at <http://charactercounts.org/programs/report-card/2010/index.html>.

High Court Hears Arguments in Arizona Choice Case

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments November 3 in two cases relating to the constitutionality of a program in Arizona that provides state residents with tax credits for contributions they make to school tuition organizations (STOs), nonprofit entities that grant scholarships to help children attend religious or independent schools. The ruling, expected sometime next year, could affect similar programs in other states.

The court's deliberations during the one-hour session took two tracks: one dealing with standing and the other with substance.

Several justices focused on whether the parties bringing the case were legally allowed to do so. In defense of the program, Neal K. Katyal, acting solicitor general at the U.S.

Department of Justice, argued on behalf of the United States that the taxpayers challenging the program did not have standing, in part because "not a cent" of their money "goes to fund religion." He was quickly interrupted by Justice Sotomayor, who said the challengers were argu-

ing that the money going to the STOs is actually the state's money that taxpayers are then allowed, by the state's "largesse," to redirect. The discussion turned to distinctions among direct government outlays, tax credits, and tax deductions.

Later in the session the question arose as to whether STOs were independent agencies or intermediaries of the state. The state's role in regulating STOs and preventing them from violating public policy was also discussed.

Well into the allotted hour, the discussion returned to what seemed to be a pivotal issue, namely, whether money that the state does not collect in taxes is actually the government's money. Justice Kennedy didn't think it was. He offered the analogy of a restaurant giving a senior citizen

a 10 percent discount, adding, "I think it would be rather offensive for the cashier to say, 'and be careful how you spend my money.'"

A transcript of the argument is available at http://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/09-987.pdf.



Choice Governors

The 2010 elections advanced school choice in several states. Here's a rundown of some notable choice supporters who will soon be sworn in as new governors.

Florida: Rick Scott "believes in school choice, including vouchers and charter schools." (CS)

Georgia: Nathan Deal wants to explore "new models of delivering education, such as the utilization of vouchers." (CS)

Kansas: Current U.S. Senator and soon-to-be Governor Sam Brownback is a strong supporter of the DC voucher initiative. In 2009 on the Senate floor he said of the program, "I would like to see it expanded so more students could take advantage of it."

Maine: Paul LePage wants to "work for a voucher system that allows students and their parents to pick the school that works best for them." (CS)

Nevada: Brian Sandoval will "support school choice, which would allow students to attend another public school or a private school." (CS)

New Mexico: Susana Martinez supports scholarship tax credits.

Ohio: John Kasich believes the state's limited voucher program should be expanded.

Oklahoma: Current Congresswoman and Governor-elect Mary Fallin cosponsored HR 2072, the *School Choice for Foster Kids Act* in the 111th Congress.

Pennsylvania: Tom Corbett wants to grow the state's Educational Improvement Tax Credit program, and also supports opportunity scholarships.

South Carolina: Nikki Haley "has been a strong advocate of private school tax credits and scholarships." (Associated Press 8/19/10)

Wisconsin: Scott Walker says, "Parents should have control over their child's education, not the government....I will remove the enrollment and eligibility caps on school choice." (CS)

[CS=campaign Web site]

In Memory of Joyce G. McCray, 1932-2010

Joyce G. McCray, 78, who served as CAPE's executive director from 1989 to 1996 and became one of the private school community's most recognized and respected leaders, died November 1 in Falmouth, ME.

McCray guided CAPE's course during the terms of two presidents (Bush and Clinton) and three secretaries of education (Lauro Cavazos, Lamar Alexander, and Richard Riley), dealing with a complex range of public policy issues such as educational choice, student safety, and the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. During her tenure, the CAPE board issued a breakthrough paper calling for "national and state legislation which will provide all parents the opportunity to exercise fully their right to choose their child's school—religious, private, or public."



Before joining CAPE, McCray served for 12 years as principal of Friends Seminary in New York. She received a B.A. from Wellesley College and an M.A. from Yale University.

Characteristically jovial, gregarious, and warmhearted, McCray was known for having a remarkably extensive maze of friends in education—a pre-Internet social network built on phone calls, gatherings, and face-to-face conversations. Humor, insight, enthusiasm, and fondness for the company of others were just a few of her many endearing traits.

She is survived by three children, Jennifer, Wilson, and Susan, and by several grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held November 12 from 4:00 to 5:30 PM in the Meetinghouse at Friends Seminary, 222 East 16th St., NY, NY.

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ **Fast Fact About Private Schools:** If you graduated from a private high school in 2010, chances are your SAT scores were higher than the national average. According to the College Board, which publishes and scores the tests, private school students significantly outscored public school students on the writing, verbal, and math sections of the SAT. The average SAT writing score for public school students was 488, compared to 530 for students in religious schools and 560 for those in independent schools. On the critical reading section of the test, public school students had an average score of 498, religious school students 533, and independent school students 557. Math scores were 511 public, 534 religious, 583 independent. Private school students accounted for 16 percent of SAT test takers from the class of 2010. The report on the performance of 2010 college-bound seniors is available at <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/2010-total-group-profile-report-cbs.pdf>.

★ Private school eighth graders tend to take more rigorous math courses than their public school peers, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). “A larger percentage of private school students were enrolled in algebra or a course more advanced than algebra (52 percent) than were public school students (38 percent),” states a new NCES report. Another finding: “A larger percentage of students attending a private school were

in a school with a high level of eighth-grade algebra enrollment than were public school students (24 vs. 9 percent).” Issued October 2010, the report, “Eighth-Grade Algebra: Findings From the Eighth-Grade Round of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–99,” is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010016.pdf>.

★ It seems that school choice in Pennsylvania is getting more popular by the minute. Both gubernatorial candidates (Tom Corbett won) supported Senate Bill 1405, which would provide opportunity scholarships to allow low-income students in poor-performing public schools the chance to attend a religious or independent school, and in recent weeks two major Philadelphia-based labor groups (Local 98 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Laborers’ District Council of the Metropolitan Area of Philadelphia and Vicinity) announced support for the measure.

“Opportunity Scholarships will rescue students trapped in failing schools,” said IBEW Local 98 Business Manager John J. Dougherty. “Children from all economic backgrounds deserve the chance at a bright future and opportunity scholarships and other school choice measures will give them that chance.”

“We have no more important responsibility than to provide our children with a good education,” added Laborers’ District Council Business Manager Ryan Boyer.

★ Sixty-two outstanding elementary and middle school administrators were honored October 15 at an awards banquet in Washington, DC, as 2010 National Distinguished Principals. The NDP program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, was established in 1984 to recognize public and private school principals who make superior contributions to their schools and communities. Private school honorees are selected by a special committee that CAPE helps organize. CAPE salutes all award recipients, including those from private schools: Phyllis J. Konchar, St. Joseph Catholic School, Des Moines, IA; Sr. Rosemaron Rynn, IHM, Little Flower School, Bethesda, MD; Charles A. Schiller, St. Paul Lutheran School, New Orleans, LA; Sr. Joan Sorge, OP, St. Agnes School, Springfield, IL; Vicki L. Vaughn, Bethesda Christian School, Fort Worth, TX.

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