

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Education Spending Bill Kills Funds for Title V

Congress last month approved a massive omnibus appropriations package for fiscal year 2008 that increases federal education spending to record levels but discontinues funding for Title V-A, a popular program serving students in public and private schools since 1965. President Bush signed the spending measure into law December 26.

A coalition of public and private school organizations fought throughout the budget process to save Title V, and the program's preservation was a focus of CAPE's "Keep 2-4-5 Alive" campaign.

Two other programs targeted by the campaign will remain in operation under the new spending package, though with less funds than they currently receive. Title IV-A (Safe and Drug-Free Schools) will be cut from \$346.5 million to \$294.8 million; Title II-D (Education Technology) will be funded at \$267.5 million, down from \$272.3 million (see table).

Title V, also known as "Grants for Innovative Programs," serves children in public and private schools by providing materials, equipment, and services to meet student needs as determined by local administrators. Resources are distributed within school districts based on a per-pupil allotment, and private school students are eligible for benefits based on their share of a district's enrollment. No program under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) reaches more religious and independent schools than Title V.

The program has been a staple of federal education assistance since its initial enactment in 1965 as Title II of ESEA. For more than 40 years it has survived various

reformulations by Congress, emerging as Chapter 2 of the *Education Consolidation and Improvement Act* of 1981, Title VI of ESEA as reauthorized under the *Improving America's Schools Act* of 1994, and finally Title V-A of ESEA as reauthorized under

students improve math and reading skills. Students in private schools participate in these and certain other federal education programs (see table). Title I will get an increase of 8.6 percent from 12.8 billion to \$13.9 billion, while state grants under the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will jump from \$10.8 billion to \$10.9 billion. By contrast, Reading First, which is designed to help youngsters become good readers by third grade, will see a dramatic downsizing from just over \$1 billion in FY 2007 to \$393 million in 2008. (Since most federal education programs are forward funded, any funds provided in the FY 2008 appropriation will not affect students until the 2008-09 school year.)

Title V's Slow Demise

For the past several years, federal spending bills have been eating away at Title V funding. In FY 2003 Congress approved \$383 million for

the program, but in FY 2004 the figure dropped to \$297 million, then to \$198 million in 2005, and \$99 million in both 2006 and 2007.

As an indication of just how prized the program is, many major national public and private education organizations formed an alliance, under the leadership of the Council of Chief State School Officers, to preserve it. The unique coalition of 11 associations, including CAPE, wrote to members of Congress urging them to restore funding. The group's most recent letter said, "Leaders throughout the education community—public, private, suburban, urban, and rural—agree that Title V is a valuable tool for helping local

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**Federal Education Spending Levels
for Key Programs Affecting Private Schools**
(in millions of dollars)

| Program | FY 2007 | FY 2008 |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Title II-D Education Technology | \$272.3 | \$267.5 |
| Title IV-A Safe and Drug Free Schools | \$346.5 | \$294.8 |
| Title V-A Innovative Programs | \$99.0 | \$0 |
| English Language Acquisition | \$669.0 | \$700.4 |
| Even Start | \$82.3 | \$66.5 |
| Math & Science Partnerships | \$182.2 | \$178.9 |
| Migrant Education | \$386.5 | \$379.8 |
| Reading First | \$1,029.2 | \$393.0 |
| Special Education (Part B) | \$10,782.9 | \$10,947.5 |
| Teacher Quality | \$2,887.4 | \$2,935.2 |
| Title I (grants to LEAs) | \$12,838.0 | \$13,898.9 |
| Vocational Education | \$1,182.4 | \$1,160.9 |

the *No Child Left Behind Act*. In June 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the program's constitutionality in the landmark decision *Mitchell v. Helms*.

Yet despite the program's long and distinguished history of offering equitable services to students in public, religious, and independent schools, the Bush administration's budget proposal for 2008 called for its defunding, and Congress ultimately agreed even as it increased overall funds for education to unprecedented levels. The new spending bill appropriates \$59.2 billion for discretionary education spending, an increase of 2.9 percent over FY 2007. The bill will bolster spending for the education of students with disabilities and for Title I grants, which help disadvantaged



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
- 31 Affiliated State Organizations

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

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New Report Examines Private School Enrollment Patterns

One of the defining characteristics of private school enrollment patterns in the United States has been the drop-off in students between elementary school and high school. An estimated 12.3 percent of students in grades PreK-8 attend private schools, while only about 8.2 percent of secondary school students do so. A study published December 11 by the Brookings Institution addresses the disparity and offers a few tentative explanations for the inter-level enrollment dip.

But before turning to the study, some overall context is in order. Despite some well-publicized shifts in enrollment within certain segments of the private school community, the nation's religious and independent schools, taken as a whole, have educated

a remarkably steady share of students over the past several decades. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, private schools accounted for 10.8 percent of PreK-12 students in the fall of 1969, and 35 years later, in the fall of 2004, they enrolled a very close 11.2 percent of students (table 3, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2006*). From 1969 to 2004, the average annual enrollment share for private schools was 11.3 percent with a range of 9.9 to 12.7 percent, a relatively narrow band of variance.

The Brookings piece, one of three studies contained in the annual *Brown Center Report on American Education*, wonders why more students do not attend private schools, especially in grades 9-12, which are, after all, the years "when academic achievement means so much for college admission and later prospects in life." Private high schools were the focus of much-publicized and favorable research in the 1980s and '90s that helped form the public's perception of them as quality institutions. The fact that researchers and the public believe that such schools are doing a good job only adds to the intrigue surrounding the drop in secondary enrollment.

Written by Tom Loveless, the Brown Center's director, the study reminds readers of the positive findings about private secondary schools that shook the world of education research. In the early 1980s, James Coleman, "[o]ne of the most

prominent social scientists of his era," examined national achievement and background data for high school sophomores and seniors and discovered, as Loveless puts it, that "private schools are better than public schools." Specifically, Coleman found that private school students "gained about one grade level more on achievement tests than students attending public schools."

Continuing to trace the favorable private school research, Loveless reports that in 1993, Anthony Byrk, Valerie Lee, and Peter Holland "found that Catholic schools not only produce higher achievement scores, but they also serve 'the common good' by boosting the education of poor and minority children." The research trio "estimated that minority students in Catholic high schools learn twice as much mathematics as their public school counterparts."

Given these and other findings, Loveless suggests that parents seeking a quality education would normally want to enroll their children in schools that provide it. But the drop-off in enrollment at the secondary level seems to defy reason and even appears downright "mysterious," prompting the title of the study: "Mysteries of Private School Enrollment."

Enrollment Patterns

Loveless tracks public and private school enrollment patterns to reveal that "high schools are where private sector enrollment declines the most." More precisely, trends "pinpoint that the drop off is occurring at the beginning of high school."

Looking at cohorts of eighth-grade students from 1990 and every two years thereafter until 2000, Loveless follows their progress across three grade spans: eighth to tenth grade, tenth to twelfth, and the encompassing arc from eighth to twelfth. For each cohort, he reports (see table) the percentage of students that the sector retained from the beginning of the span to the end. Thus, for the group of students who were eighth graders in 2000, the number of private

| Cohort Base Year | 8th-10th | | 10th-12th | | 8th-12th | |
|------------------|----------|--------|-----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | Private | Public | Private | Public | Private | Public |
| 1990 | 86.7 | 102.2 | 86.3 | 83.1 | 74.8 | 85.0 |
| 1992 | 82.2 | 101.0 | 90.0 | 81.5 | 74.0 | 82.4 |
| 1994 | 87.0 | 99.6 | 87.4 | 82.6 | 76.0 | 82.3 |
| 1996 | 85.2 | 100.6 | 91.6 | 82.4 | 78.1 | 82.9 |
| 1998 | 86.8 | 100.0 | 93.6 | 83.8 | 81.3 | 83.8 |
| 2000 | 90.2 | 100.9 | 91.1 | 86.4 | 82.2 | 87.1 |

Source: Table 2-3 in "Mysteries of Private School Enrollment," which draws on data from the National Center for Education Statistics.



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school students enrolled in tenth grade was 90.2 percent of the number of private school students enrolled in eighth grade two years earlier. By contrast, the number of public school students in tenth grade was 100.9 percent of the eighth grade number. Thus, between eighth grade and tenth grade, the number of private school students declined and the number of public school student grew. Loveless sums up the trend succinctly, “In the transition to high school, students leave private schools and go to public schools.”

But between tenth grade and twelfth grade, the trend reverses with private schools holding on to more of their students than public schools. In the 2000 cohort, private schools retained 91.1 percent of their enrollment between sophomore and senior years, while public schools retained 86.4 percent. “Indeed for all six cohorts analyzed in the table, tenth-grade private school students are more likely than public school students to persist until twelfth grade.”

Looking at the overall arc of eighth grade to twelfth grade, “public schools maintain a larger share of students than private schools.” Again examining the 2000 group, by twelfth grade, public school enrollment was 87.1 percent of eight grade enrollment four years earlier, while private school enrollment was 82.2 percent of its matching cohort. Loveless notes, however, that the ability of public schools to retain a larger share of enrollment between eight grade and twelfth grade may be eroding. “The gap favored public schools by 10.2 percent in 1990 (74.8 percent versus 85.0 percent) and shrank to only 4.9 percent in 2000 (82.2 percent versus 87.1 percent). The latest data for the cohort analysis ends with the 2000 base group, however, so whether the public school advantage has continued to slip will be borne out by later data.”

Loveless offers several explanations for the transfer after eighth grade of private school stu-

dents to public schools. He believes the overall decline in Catholic school enrollment in recent decades is partly to blame, although he offers no evidence that the decline has been proportionately higher for high schools than for elementary schools. A second culprit is tuition. Loveless reports that the average tuition at private secondary schools in 2004 was \$8,412, compared to \$5,049 for elementary schools. “As children transition from elementary to secondary schools, families that cannot afford such hefty increases in tuition are forced to re-evaluate the relative advantages of private and public schooling.” Child-rearing practices also figure in the mix for Loveless. He speculates that parents “offer their children more choices today and more say in schooling. Once children enter adolescence, they may prefer to go to school where kids in their own neighborhood go, not to a school across town.” Other explanations proposed by Loveless include societal shifts in religious tolerance (lessening the need for oppressed religious groups to find safe educational enclaves) and parents deciding that the academic advantages of private schools are “attractive but not decisive in selecting schools.”

Loveless elaborates on this last point in the closing paragraph of the report: “Despite evidence that private high schools excel academically, overwhelmingly parents choose to send high-school-age children to public schools. Although that choice appears somewhat irrational, it could be that American parents do not consider academic quality the prime criterion for selecting schools, especially if the academic advantage incurs significant costs in tuition. This suggests it will take more than higher test scores to stem the decline of private schooling in the United States.”

“Mysteries Of Private School Enrollment,” in *The 2007 Brown Center Report on American Education*, is available on the Web site of the Brookings Institution at http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/1211_education_loveless.aspx.

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school systems adopt new and emerging reforms designed to improve student achievement.” The letter went on to describe the program as “the only source of flexible funds that allows public and private school systems to address unique local priorities within the framework of NCLB. This flexibility is particularly important in light of the national interest around competitiveness and innovation.”

The coalition’s letter included examples from 20 states on the effectiveness of Title V in improving education. A program in Urbana, Illinois, employs “research-based principles and strategies in reading and comprehension to help

students become independent learners.” In Iowa, the Creston Community School District used its allocation for professional development activities such as “after-school professional development, collaboration among teaching staff, and district/building leadership team meetings.” The district says that “reading achievement can be directly tied to this professional development effort.”

Despite being a sad setback, the decision to defund Title V in 2008 does not necessarily mean that the program is gone forever. The program still remains an authorized component of ESEA and can be funded again if Congress comes to see it as a significant tool for educational improvement.

International Reading Report

How does the reading literacy of fourth-graders in the United States match up with that of their counterparts in other countries? That’s a question that the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) set out to answer through a massive worldwide assessment administered in 2006 in 45 jurisdictions, including 38 nations.

Conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), the project relied on national agencies to carry out the assessment in each country. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) sponsored the U.S. component, which alone involved 5,190 students from 255 classrooms and 183 public and private schools.

PIRLS reading scores fall on a scale from 0–1000 with the average set at 500 and a standard deviation of 100. According to the NCES report on the survey, “The average score for U.S. fourth-grade students on the combined reading literacy scale (540) was higher than the PIRLS scale average (500) and also higher than the average scores for students in 22 of the 45 participating PIRLS jurisdictions.”

The U.S. sample was large enough to allow for a breakout of scores by type of school. As the report put it, “Among U.S. students in 2006, the average score for students in private schools (561) was higher than the average score for students in public schools (538) for the combined reading literacy scale.” Had the private school scores been the average for the nation, the U.S. would have been in the top tier of international performance on the test, surpassed only by the Russian Federation (565) and Hong Kong (564).

The NCES report on the study is available in PDF format at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008017.pdf>.

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ Fast Fact About Private Schools: “Enrollment in private elementary and secondary schools increased 8 percent between 1991 and 2004, and is projected to increase an additional 6 percent between 2004 and 2016,” according to a new report from the National Center for Education Statistics. *Projections of Education Statistics to 2016*, which was released December 18, estimates that private schools enrolled 6.15 million students in grades PreK-12 in 2007, 11 percent of the total national enrollment of 55.76 million students. The NCES document projects private schools will have 6.48 million students in 2016, or 10.8 percent of the estimated 59.78 million students.

Looked at by level of schooling, private school enrollment at the PreK-8 level is expected to grow from 4.77 million students in 2004 to 5.18 million students in 2016, an increase of 6 percent. At the secondary level, private school enrollment is expected to decline from 1.36 million students in 2004 to 1.30 million students in 2016, a decrease of 4 percent.

Projections of Education Statistics to 2016 is available online at <<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/projections/projections2016/index.asp>>.

★ Georgetown University’s School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) released results from its third study of how parents and students in the District of Columbia are experiencing the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) that Congress

enacted in 2004. The program provides children from low-income families with vouchers to attend religious and independent schools.

“With their children now in safer schools, OSP parents report becoming increasingly more focused on the academic development of their children, which they often measure by their informal observations of their children’s attitudes and behaviors versus more formal criteria like grades or test scores,” said co-principal investigator Patrick Wolf about the report.

Key findings, as presented in the executive summary, include the following:

“1. In retrospect, most families found the conversation with school-based personnel to be the most reliable and helpful source of information about schools....

“2. The vast majority of [families that joined the program in 2004] have shifted their focus from an emphasis on school safety to matters concerning their children’s academic development. These parents feel that their basic concerns about safety have been assuaged, and they can now turn their attention to monitoring their children’s grades, test scores, and other aspects of their academic development.

“3. At this stage of their experiences with the OSP, most parents measure their children’s progress almost exclusively by the level of enthusiasm the students express about school and their improved attitudes towards earning....”

The report is available at <<http://www.georgetown.edu/research/scdp>>.

★ It was probably only a matter of time before someone applied the principles of the best-selling book *Good to Great* to private schools. But it’s hard to imagine a better attempt at that assignment than Dr. Gene Frost’s new book *Learning from the Best: Growing Greatness in the Christian School*. With a solid background in the business world (e.g., a corporate trainer and the CEO of an educational mentoring company) and education (e.g., head of Wheaton Academy in West Chicago), Frost takes the message of good-to-great guru Jim Collins and offers practical examples of how it can help schools become centers of excellence. Readable and engaging, the book is enormously useful for anyone determined to turn a good school into a great school.

Frost looks at seven schools in depth, collecting data from parents, students, teachers, administrators, and board members to see whether the schools match up with the good-to-great principles. Do leaders blend “personal humility and unrelenting determination”? Does the administration focus on finding the right people before executing the right plans?

Frost also presents case studies from an additional five “best practice” schools, extending the book’s examples to an array of Christian denominations.

Copublished by **Christian Schools International** and by the **Association of Christian Schools International**, *Learning from the Best* is available on the Web sites of both organizations.