

Council for American Private Education

# CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

## State CAPEs Advocate for Pluralism and Choice in Education

Backers of school choice know that the critical work of protecting and advancing the right of parents to choose schools that match their expectations of what a school should be takes place at the state level. State governments can establish pioneering school choice initiatives that expand freedom in education, and, by the same token, they can constrain choice by regulating the diversity out of schools. The action, as they say, is with the states.

That is why the religious and independent school community has established CAPE-like organizations in a host of states across the country. Like the national CAPE, these state affiliates (32 in all) unite organizations of private schools behind common cause, and derive strength from unity.

Each March, state CAPE representatives gather in Washington to share thoughts and trends with one another and to advise the national CAPE board (the CEOs of CAPE's member organizations) about state-level developments. What follows are some highlights from the annual reports on state CAPE activities.

### Arizona

The newly established Arizona CAPE, which already represents more than 90 percent of the state's religious and independent schools, has wasted no time in

establishing solid relationships with Tom Horne, the state's superintendent of public instruction. Superintendent Horne met with CAPE leaders last fall and pledged more meetings to address issues of concern to the private school community. The next

will never take a position contrary to the principles of any one of its members.

With the united agreement of its members, CAPSO supported legislation last year to provide private schools "greater flexibility in matching curricular and

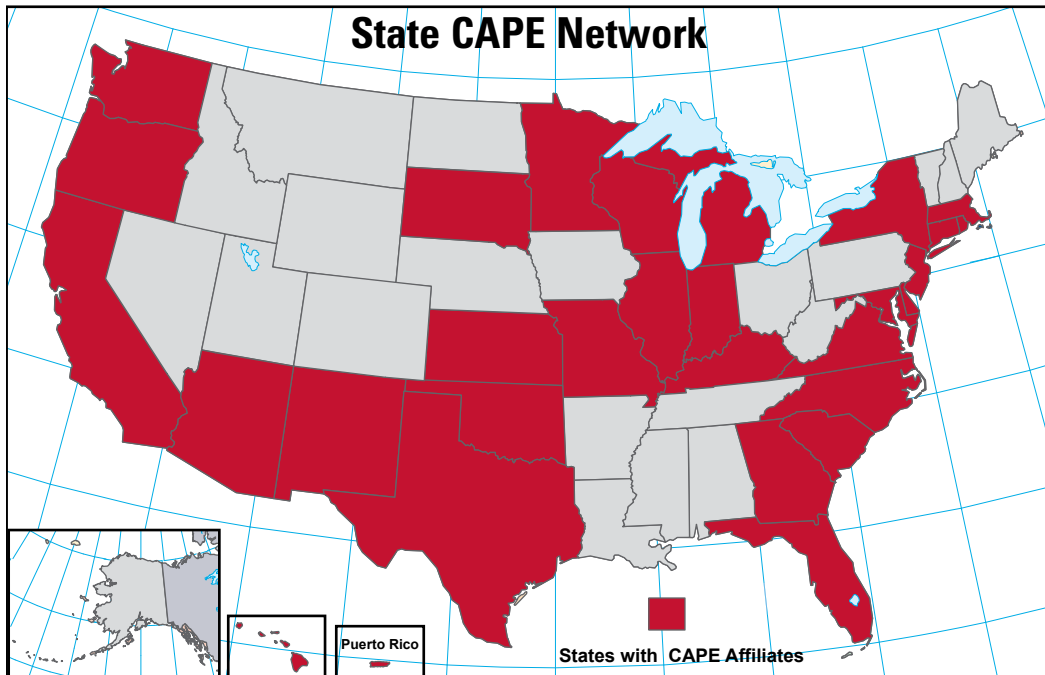
instructional materials to students with special needs." The bill ultimately became law. Another legislative success involved amending a civil rights bill (also signed into law) with a clause to protect the religious liberty of schools.

### Carolinas

In South Carolina, state CAPE leaders report that the families in the state are taking

advantage of a rich array of educational options. Charter schools "are enjoying strong support and much success;" home schooling "continues to be a popular alternative," and "well established, well administered, properly accredited, fully accountable private schools continue to prosper and, in many cases, increase enrollments."

Statewide school choice initiatives can't seem to gain ground in the legislature despite strong backing by Governor Mark Sanford. The South Carolina School Boards Association last fall enlisted the aid of Ernest A. Finney, Jr., the former chief justice of the state Supreme Court, and Richard Riley, former South Carolina



meeting is already being planned for sometime this spring.

### California

Further west, the California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO) considers its primary mission "to preserve the independence of California's private schools and to uphold parental choice in education." As is the case with the national CAPE as well as many other state CAPEs, the 22 member organizations of CAPSO only agree on public policy positions "when there is unanimity among the designated representatives of member organizations." The unanimous-consent requirement ensures that the CAPE group

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# CAPE

## 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

**Outlook is published monthly (September to June) by CAPE. An annual subscription is \$25. ISSN 0271-1451**

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governor and U.S. education secretary, to oppose school choice through an alliance called “Voices for Public Education.” In a news release, Riley and Finney called vouchers a “distraction from the real work of ensuring all students have access to quality public schools.”

By way of response, Pastor Richard Davis, who heads the state-based Clergy for Educational Options, said in a statement that the new alliance was an attempt to “defend the indefensible.” He went on to say that “black families won’t stand still year after year while thousands upon thousands of black students are denied opportunities their white peers are afforded.”

Across the border, North Carolina, the other half of the Carolinas CAPE, saw little by way of legislative developments relating to private schools this past year. Private school enrollment in the state grew by 1,900 students last year, and 25 new private schools registered with the state. A total of 685 religious and independent schools now serve nearly 95,000 students.

## Florida

The Florida Association of Academic Non-public Schools (FAANS), which is made up of 23 state organizations that collectively represent over 1,200 schools, has had a busy and productive year dealing with a range of issues from high school athletics to pre-K program accreditation.

At the encouragement of FAANS, the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA), the governing body for inter-school athletics in the state, agreed to recognize, for purposes of FHSAA membership, the private schools accredited by FAANS’s accrediting associations. (Thirteen of the 23 members of FAANS are accrediting members.) FAANS was also successful in working with FHSAA leaders to broaden the membership of sectional appeals committees to include an additional private school administrator.

At the pre-K level, FAANS officials have worked with state officials to “implement the state’s Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program (VPK) in private schools, which account for 80 percent of all schools participating in the program. Under VPK, parents, regardless of income, may select a pre-K program of their choice for their child, with the state reimbursing pro-

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touted the president’s proposed Pell Grants for Kids program, which would provide \$300 million in scholarships to allow low-income students in persistently underperforming public schools to attend a better school, including a religious or independent school. Spellings said the program “begins to answer one of parents’ most vexing questions: If I’ve given my public school every

viders for costs up to a fixed amount. Schools accredited by associations with membership in FAANS are eligible to participate in the program as providers.

## Georgia

The Georgia Private Education Council (GPEC) reports that most member associations are posting growth in student enrollment. To help find teachers for the expanding schools, GPEC and the Georgia Independent Schools Association sponsored two job fairs in February 2008, one in Atlanta and one in Macon, that attracted approximately 600 people seeking to teach in private schools.

The new Georgia Special Needs Scholarship program, which provides state funds to allow students with disabilities to enroll in religious and independent schools, is a topic of keen interest within the state’s private school community. One challenge involves balancing the accountability provisions of the program with the need for private schools to retain the freedom they require to remain distinctive.

Another state scholarship program provides full tuition in a state college, or partial tuition in a private college within the state, for students who graduate from a public or private high school with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. The state’s standardized grade requirements and methods for calculating grade point averages are causing some concern among private schools.

## Illinois

The Illinois Coalition of Nonpublic Schools has stacked up several successes in the past year on behalf of students and teachers in religious and independent schools. For one, it worked with the Illinois State Highway Patrol to help implement the fingerprint identification system for new employees at schools. The coalition has also cooperated with the Illinois State Board of Education to improve the state’s nonpublic school recognition program.

On another front, thanks to legislation that passed in January, religious and independent schools in Illinois can now participate in the state’s School Safety Block Grant program, which provides schools with \$32 per student per year to

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chance to meet my child’s needs, but it hasn’t, what options do I now have?”

With respect to the budget process, Representative Obey made clear that Democrats on the committee would work with the administration to seek a compromise but would also retain the option of securing a final FY 2009 budget deal with a new administration if an agreement were not reached with the current administration.

# President Proposes Final Federal Budget

On the first Monday in February, President Bush presented Congress with his budget proposal for fiscal year 2009, setting the stage for a political and legislative process that is supposed to produce an enacted budget by October 1. But based on reaction from Democrats on Capitol Hill, the Bush budget—the last of his administration—will have to undergo significant changes if it is ever to win Congressional approval, let alone approval by October 1.

The education section of the budget includes funding increases for Title I, Reading First, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It also calls for \$300 million for Pell Grants

for Kids, an initiative the president proposed in his State of the Union address to help students in poor-performing public schools attend alternative schools.

## 2-4-5 Barely Alive

But the budget brings bad news for the three programs targeted by CAPE's "Keep 2-4-5 Alive" campaign. There are no funds for either Title V-A (Innovative Programs) or Title II-D (Education Technology), and funding for Title IV-A (Safe and Drug-Free Schools) would be reduced by two-thirds from \$295 million to \$100 million (see table).

Overall, the president's budget seeks \$59.2 billion in discretionary spending for education in 2009, the same amount funded in 2008, and calls for the elimination of dozens of federal education programs.

That prospect did not sit well with Democratic leaders in Congress. House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) predicted Congress would reject the president's program cuts. His statement on the president's proposal specifically cited various deficiencies in the budget, including the elimination of the education technology program and

the significant decrease in Safe and Drug-Free Schools funds. On the Senate side, Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, denounced what he called the "short-changing of critical domestic priorities" and the "slashing" of "programs which benefit the education, health and safety of American citizens."

On February 26, U.S. Secretary of Education

Margaret Spellings defended the president's budget in testimony before the House Appropriations subcommittee that deals with education. She said the budget reflected some "tough choices" that involved redirecting funds "away from pro-

grams that are ineffective, duplicative, and small in scale." Because there are limited resources, Spellings said the federal government's primary role in education must be "to serve our neediest students, such as those from low-income families, those with disabilities, and those learning English as a second language." Indeed, the administration's budget calls for increases in Title I (which serves low-income students who do not do well in reading or math), the English Language Acquisition program, IDEA, and Migrant Education (see table). Title I funding would go up by \$400 million from \$13.9 billion to \$14.3 billion; IDEA would grow from \$10.9 billion to \$11.3 billion, and funds for English Language Acquisition would increase \$30 million from \$700 million to \$730 million.

## Reading First and Pell Grants

Spellings also pushed for a restoration of funds for Reading First, which Congress slashed last year by 60 percent from \$1 billion to just under \$400 million. "Reading opens the door to every other subject, and is a critical foundation for all other learning," she said.

On the school choice front, the secretary

# Some Children Left Behind

A new study has concluded that Catholic school students are not receiving their fair share of benefits under the No Child Left Behind Act. If the findings are applicable to private and religious schools across the country, then millions of dollars in educational services and materials are not being delivered to children and teachers each year.

The Mid-Atlantic Catholic Schools Consortium, which fosters collaboration among Catholic schools in Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, examined the extent of participation in various federal education programs. The study included a survey of the 360 schools in the consortium, with a response rate of 95 percent. The results, released last month, include the following findings:

- "Catholic schools are not taking full advantage of federal education program services available to their students, teachers, and parents."

- "Public school districts are not ensuring that Catholic schools are fully informed of program availability and eligibility of Catholic school students."

- "[M]ost Catholic schools do not know the funding generated by their students or how it was determined.

- "Public school districts are not providing funding information and how it was determined during the consultation process as required by law."

- "Consultation is not consistently providing an opportunity for two-way discussion and therefore cannot ensure that Catholic schools have a genuine opportunity to express their views."

- "Many federal education program services are not beginning on time or not being received at all."

Information about the Mid-Atlantic Consortium is available at [www.midatlanticcsc.org](http://www.midatlanticcsc.org).

## Actual and Proposed Federal Spending Levels for Key Programs Affecting Private Schools

(in millions of dollars)

| Program                               | FY 2008 (Actual) | FY 2009 (Proposed) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Title II-D Education Technology       | \$267.5          | \$0                |
| Title IV-A Safe and Drug Free Schools | \$294.8          | \$100.0            |
| Title V-A Innovative Programs         | \$0              | \$0                |
| English Language Acquisition          | \$700.4          | \$730.0            |
| Even Start                            | \$66.5           | \$0                |
| Math & Science Partnerships           | \$178.9          | \$178.9            |
| Migrant Education                     | \$379.8          | \$399.8            |
| Reading First                         | \$393.0          | \$1,000.0          |
| Special Education (Part B of IDEA)    | \$10,947.5       | \$11,284.5         |
| Teacher Quality                       | \$2,935.2        | \$2,835.2          |
| Title I (grants to LEAs)              | \$13,898.9       | \$14,304.9         |
| Vocational Education                  | \$1,160.9        | \$0                |

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carry out health and safety measures.

## Indiana

The Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA) enjoyed a successful legislative session in 2007, seeing funding increases in a number of programs affecting students in religious and independent schools, including Advanced Placement testing, professional development, and textbook reimbursement. The state also improved the 21st Century Scholars program, which provides college funds to low-income high school students, by expanding the pool of eligible students to include not only those attending state-accredited private schools but also those in private schools accredited by other accrediting agencies.

## Kansas

The Kansas Association of Independent and Religious Schools (KAIRS) is giving serious consideration to establishing an overarching accrediting agency for private schools in the state. Right now many private schools in Kansas are accredited not only by the state but also by another agency, a two-fold process that involves a lot of time and considerable redundancy. According to KAIRS, "An umbrella organization would allow those schools who are interested, to gain accreditation from a body that would be recognized by the state, while allowing KAIRS members to remain true to their individual mis-

sions." Dr. Nick Compagnone, president of KAIRS, said that although the process of establishing an alternative to the state system is "lengthy and time-consuming," it is "worth the effort in the long run." A resolution on the issue, to be presented to members during the 2008 KAIRS annual meeting, affirms the "autonomy of private and religious schools" but also recognizes "the merits of the accreditation process as a way of monitoring the quality of education." It goes on to state, "A unified accreditation process would not only protect the integrity of the school's mission but also validate the levels of quality in academics and teacher preparation."

## Massachusetts

CAPE in Massachusetts reports that private school students in the state enjoy several services that may not be available to their counterparts in some other states. If students require special education services, for instance, they are entitled to receive them at public expense, and all students in grades K-6 are eligible to be transported to and from school, just like their public school peers. Further, religious and independent school students receive on-site nursing services provided by either the public health department or the local school district.

A new venue of state assistance in Massachusetts is early childhood education. The state's FY 2008 budget included \$7.1 million in funds for grants to enhance and expand pre-kindergarten programs spon-

sored by either public or private providers.

## Minnesota

Working to promote the "vital role of private schools" in the state, to "ensure the rights of parents to educate their children at the school they choose," and to "encourage excellence and pluralism in education," the Minnesota CAPE seeks to bring together "public and private schools to improve education" across the state.

With the support and leadership of the Minnesota Independent School Forum (MISF), MNCAPE has formed a 15-member advocacy group called the Coalition for Kids, whose aim is to establish an education tax credit. The main purpose of the Equity and Opportunity in Education Tax Credit bill is to "provide all parents with the opportunity to send their children to the school that best meets each child's needs regardless of their family's income."

Tax credits aside, MISF is doing its own job of providing school choice to low-income students by raising a substantial amount of money for a need-based scholarship initiative. Last school year, MISF was able to distribute \$480,000 to over 275 needy students through scholarships averaging \$1,800. One of the core goals of MISF is to increase student access to quality education.

*Reports on additional state CAPE activities will continue in the April issue of Outlook. The CAPEnotes section, which normally appears on this page, will also resume in April.*

