

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Schools to Receive Public Alert Radios

As part of a massive effort to safeguard children across the nation, the federal government is providing private schools with free special-purpose radios that will alert officials to local weather hazards and other emergencies. Every religious and independent K-12 school and preschool in the country is slated to receive a radio before the end of September 2008.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the public alert radios provide warnings about, and offer responses to, a broad swath of emergencies, such as “an approaching tornado, ...a derailed train posing a hazardous material threat, or the urgent need to be on the lookout for an abducted child.” The expectation is that the early warnings and proposed responses will save lives.

Upon receiving the radios, private school officials will have to register them, program them, and complete a license agreement affirming that the federal government owns the radios. The agreement allows private schools to use the equipment without becoming recipients of federal financial assistance. Since the program is voluntary, school officials also have the option of rejecting the radios and returning them to the government at no charge.

Web Site and Conference Calls

NOAA has established a special Web site (<http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/>) to provide a comprehensive overview of the initiative. The site contains information about registering, programming, licensing, and returning the radios. It also includes operating instructions for the radios and a helpful section of frequently asked questions.

To provide school personnel with even

more information, officials at the U.S. Department of Education have set up a series of conference calls to review the program and respond to questions.

The dial-in number is (888) 390-0980; the pass code is 8723261. Dates and times are as follows:

- Monday, September 8, 2008, at 1:00 pm (ET)
- Thursday, September 18, 2008, at 1:00 pm (ET)
- Monday, September 29, 2008, at 11:00 am (ET).

Two years ago, the federal government distributed public alert radios to approximately 97,000 public schools as part of a program called “America is Safer When Our Schools Are Safer.” But as initially implemented by three federal departments (Education, Commerce, and Homeland Security), the initiative was actually not as inclusive as its title suggested. It overlooked the millions of students who attended the nation’s private elementary and secondary schools.

CAPE's Response

A letter from CAPE to the three agencies in September 2006 noted that “disasters do not discriminate between public and private schools.” The letter urged that all schools be provided with the early warning system. “When a crisis strikes, minutes – and sometimes seconds – can make a difference. That thinking inspired the decision to equip public schools with NOAA radios, and the same thinking should drive an extension of the program

to private schools.”

The following January, in testimony before the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee, a CAPE official said the public-school-only program ignored the safety of children who attend private schools. “We cannot allow some students to be thought of as second-class citizens when it comes to issues of health and safety. All children

should be protected by a program designed to provide schools with early warnings that allow quick and appropriate action during threatening events.”

Federal officials sought to correct the omission, but coordinating the program among three agencies and working out some of the details proved daunting and time-consuming.

182,000 Radios

The current phase of the radio distribution program involves sending over 182,000 radios to preschools, Head Start programs, post-secondary schools, and private K-12 schools. The goal is to have every school in the country equipped with the emergency alert units.

Federal officials also hope that school leaders will work with local emergency managers, human service providers, and Citizen Corps Councils to “align their efforts with local emergency plans to build overall community preparedness,” according to a NOAA press release. By coordinating with local emergency officials, school personnel “can obtain technical and other assistance to improve their school



continued on page 2

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 McTighe

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

13017 Wisteria Drive #457
Germantown, MD 20874
(tel) 301-916-8460
(fax) 301-916-8485
(email) cape@capenet.org

www.capenet.org



Students Grade Their High Schools

High school students, accustomed to getting grades from their schools, got a chance to turn the tables recently when a national survey asked them to give their schools a grade. Forty-four percent of private school students gave their schools an A, while only 16 percent of public school students did the same.

On a GPA scale of 4.0, private schools received an average score of 3.1, and public schools, 2.7.

The tenth *State of Our Nation's Youth* report, issued August 5 by the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, explores a host of perceptions and attitudes held by students in high school. The report presents results from a national survey of youngsters between the ages of 13 and 19 conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

One of the key findings in the report is that students in 2008 are more downbeat about the country than cohorts from previous years. "As recently as 2003, 75 percent of teenagers said they felt hopeful and optimistic about the future of the country"; this year only 53 percent of students share the same sentiments, "a 22-point decline in five years."

In anticipation of the upcoming presidential election, 75 percent of teens "say the election's outcome will make a large difference in the direction of the country." Still, despite the perception of the election's significance, only 12 percent of students "are following news about the campaign for this year's presidential election very closely."

continued from page 1

safety plans and other emergency preparedness efforts."

The Citizen Corps is the Federal Emergency Management Agency's "community-based program to promote citizen preparedness and participation." School officials can locate their local Citizen Corps Council by visiting http://www.citizencorps.gov/councils/find_council.shtml.

Radios Must Be Registered

After receiving the radios, schools will have to register them. According to the program's Web site, "Registration is required to ensure that each school acknowledges receipt or placement of the radio and provides a contact to receive any further information regarding the radio or the program."

NOAA public alert radios, according to a government description, "constantly monitor the

The report contains a surprising and disturbing finding about cyber bullying: "Although more than half (54 percent) of teens say bullying that happens at school, such as name calling in the hallways or people writing mean things on bathroom walls, remains a bigger problem, a

remarkable proportion (30 percent) of students now are more concerned about bullying that happens online, such as on a Facebook page or instant message. In fact, 16 percent of teenagers have personal experience with online bullying and say that someone has posted something mean or hurtful about them online."

Other findings from the report include:

- "Eighty-eight percent (88 percent) of students surveyed attend a public school, while 12

percent attend a private school, charter school, are home schooled, or attend another type of school."

- "Private school students (66 percent) are more likely than public school students (52 percent) to say they are religious."

The survey also found that teens in general "are overwhelmingly confident in themselves and their futures." Eighty-eight percent describe themselves as "confident," and 93 percent "say they are very or fairly confident that they will reach their career goals."

The *State of Our Nation's Youth 2008-2009* is available online at <http://www.horatioalger.org/pdfs/0708SONY.pdf>.

National Weather Service's warnings, watches, and forecasts, as well as send alerts about hazards in the community from other agencies, such as DHS [Department of Homeland Security] or the local emergency management agency." In addition to warning about national emergencies, radios can be programmed to zero in on emergencies affecting a particular location, so schools in Detroit, for example, would not be warned of a tornado in Denver.

For help with programming the radios, school officials can contact the local Citizens Corps Council or the local National Weather Service office. Other help in operating, programming, or registering the radios is available at NOAA's special Web site for the program, located at <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/>. The site also includes information on what school officials should do if they do not receive a radio by the end of September.



Parent Satisfaction Higher in Private Schools

A new report from the federal government shows that parents with children in K-12 private schools are much more satisfied with their schools than are parents with children in public schools. Specifically, 81 percent of students in religiously affiliated schools and 82 percent of students in other private schools have parents who report being “very satisfied” with their schools, compared to 55 percent of students in assigned public schools and 63 percent of students in chosen public schools.

High levels of satisfaction among private school parents also extend to opinions about their children’s teachers, academic standards

of the school, order and discipline at the school, the amount of homework assigned, and interactions with school personnel.

Released in August 2008 by the National Center for Education Statistics, the report presents information on parent and family involvement in education and is based on data collected during the 2006-07 school year.

Just over 78 percent of children in religious or independent schools had parents who said they were very satisfied with the teachers their students had, compared to 61 percent of children in assigned public schools. (Of the roughly 45 million public school students in grades K-12 in 2006-07, 37 million (82 percent) attended assigned public schools.)

The parents of 84 percent of private school students were very satisfied with the academic standards of the school, and those of 83 percent were very satisfied with how the school maintained order and discipline. Among children in assigned public schools, the two attributes (academic standards and discipline) each found only a 58 percent cohort with very satisfied parents.

When asked about the interactions between parents and school staff, the parents of slightly more than 76 percent of private school students were very satisfied, compared to the parents of 51 percent of students in assigned public schools. And when it came to homework, 80 percent of religious school students, 88 percent of other private school students, and 74 percent of assigned public school students had parents who thought the amount of homework assigned by the school was “about right.”

Above-average percentages of private school parents said the school provided information

about various school-related topics. Ninety-four percent of students in religious schools and 95 percent of students in other private schools had parents who said the school provided information about their child’s performance. Parents of 87 percent of religious school students and 89 percent of other private school students said the school provided information about how to help with homework. Other topics about which the

school informed parents (followed first by the percentage of students in religious schools and then by the percentage of students in other private schools whose parents reported school-initiated communication) are:

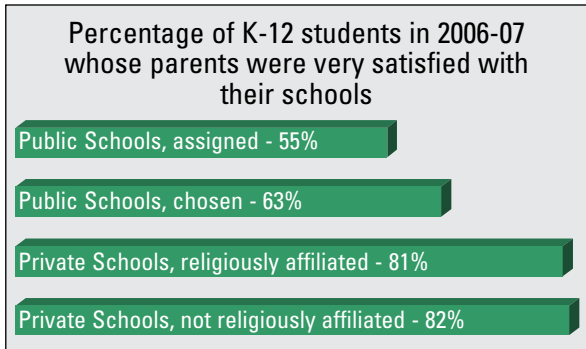
why the student is

placed in particular groups or classes (76/83); how to help the student plan for college or vocational school (78/79); the expected role of parents at the school (93/96).

Higher percentages of students in private schools than public schools had parents who participated in school activities. Parents of over 96 percent of students in private schools said they attended a general school or parent association meeting; parents of more than 86 percent of students said they attended regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, and parents of more than 68 percent of students said they volunteered or served on a school committee.

The report also found that private school parents had relatively high educational expectations for their children, reflected in above-average percentages of students in grades 6 through 12 whose parents said they expected their children to earn a graduate or professional degree.

Officially titled *Parent and Family Involvement in Education, 2006–07 School Year, from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2007*, the report is available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008050>.



NAGB Meeting

Members of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), hosted an unprecedented meeting and dinner July 30 for leaders of K-12 private education. Held at the historic Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School in Washington, DC, the gathering turned out to be affable, instructive, and fruitful.

NAGB Executive Director Charles E. Smith offered an informative overview of NAGB, a Congressionally established bipartisan panel that not only identifies the subject areas to be tested by NAEP but also approves the content and performance levels for each assessment.

NAGB Chair Darvin M. Winick deftly fielded a host of questions about NAGB and NAEP. In response to one inquiry, he identified the NAEP frameworks as a valuable resource for persons involved in curriculum development. The subject-specific frameworks (available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/frameworks.asp>) are developed by a team of experts and undergo an extensive review process. They provide a national perspective on what students should know and what skills they should master in the subjects being tested.

An ongoing challenge for NAEP is ensuring that it truly reflects the performance of all students. Since children in private schools make up a significant component of the country’s student population, NAGB makes every effort to encourage private schools to participate in the national assessment. Sr. Mary Frances Taymans, SND, who heads the secondary schools department at the National Catholic Educational Association and serves as the private school representative on NAGB, provided data on the performance of private school students and confirmed the importance of participation in NAEP.

Getting outlook from someone else?

Subscribe for free and get it directly from CAPE the day that it’s published!

As a bonus, you also get CAPE’s timely and informative email updates!

capenet.org/email.html

CAPE

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ **Fast Fact About Private Schools:** Private school students in the high school class of 2008 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 529 for students in religious schools and 553 for those in independent schools. On the critical reading section of the test, public school students had an average score of 497, religious school students 532, and independent school students 550. Math scores were 510 public, 531 religious, 574 independent.

The scores of private school students, who accounted for 16 percent of SAT test takers from the class of 2008, helped boost national average scores, which were 494 for writing, 502 for critical reading, and 515 for mathematics.

According to the College Board, “The SAT continues to be the nation’s most widely taken standardized college admissions test. Combined with high school grades, the SAT is also the best predictor of college success.

Commenting on the record number of test takers, Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board, said, “It’s essential that all students strive to attend college—and then succeed in their classes and, ultimately, graduate. We’re gratified to see that our country is moving increasingly toward being a nation of college graduates.”

The report on the SAT performance of 2008 college-bound seniors is available at

http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/Total_Group_Report.pdf.

★ “If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?” In a recent survey of likely voters in Maryland, 45 percent of respondents answered “private school”; 18 percent said “regular public school”; 20 percent said “charter school”; and 12 percent said “homeschooling.”

In another question, after being told that Maryland’s private schools save taxpayers an estimated \$1.56 billion in yearly public school expenditures, respondents were asked to assess the importance of private schools to public education in the state. Roughly two-thirds (66 percent) said they were either “very important” (29 percent) or “somewhat important” (37 percent).

The survey also found that a majority of voters (52 percent) would favor a proposal to “give businesses a tax credit if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that either distribute private school scholarships or fund supplemental programs affiliated with public schools.”

Conducted by Strategic Vision from June 27-29, 2008, the telephone survey of 1,200 randomly selected likely voters has a margin of error of 3 percentage points. The report on the survey, published by The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and cosponsored by several orga-

nizations, including the Maryland CAPE, is available at <http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/friedman/research/ShowResearchItem.do?id=10098>.

★ Leaders of state CAPEs went on a fact-finding trip to Philadelphia this summer to learn about Pennsylvania’s exciting Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program, which currently provides companies with a 75 percent tax credit (90 percent if they commit to two consecutive years) for donations either to an organization that provides private school tuition scholarships or one that funds innovative programs in public schools. Hosted by the Reach Foundation, the two-day event covered every significant aspect of the EITC program. Panels of experts talked about the politics behind the program’s inception and growth, how the program operates, and why corporations want to participate. The program enjoys the support of Democratic Governor Ed Rendell.

This issue of *Outlook* is sponsored by



EDUCATE AND SUSTAIN TOMORROW'S LEADERS.

We help your school manage time and money—so you can help your students reach their goals.

877.606.2587 | www.factsmgt.com

Learn more about CAPE's sponsors at
capenet.org/corp.html