

Council for American Private Education

# CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

## Private School Officials Meet with Deputy Secretary Simon

CAPE's board of directors and state CAPE representatives met in March with Dr. Raymond Simon, deputy secretary at the U.S. Department of Education, to discuss a host of private school issues and to strengthen bonds between CAPE and the department.

The affable deputy secretary, who seems driven by a deep commitment to excellent education for every student, touted the merits of the *No Child Left Behind Act* and called for partnerships between public and private schools. But mostly Dr. Simon listened to, and responded to, various messages presented by private school leaders.

### Importance of Private Education

Patrice Maynard from the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America rehearsed for Dr. Simon a variety of private school statistics relating to demographics and academic success. She reported that the more than six million children attending private schools save American taxpayers over \$48 billion annually. Rejecting an entrenched prejudice about private schools, Maynard said the majority of students are from middle- and low-income families “who struggle to keep their children in schools that hold values that they hold dear.” Those families, she added, “pay thousands and thousands of tuition dollars per year in addition to paying the educational taxes that all pay. So they are double taxed.”

Looking at indicators of success, Maynard said private school students are much more likely to graduate from high school, secure a college degree, and engage in community service than students from public schools. To illustrate the call to service, Maynard recounted a recent presentation by a Waldorf school graduate who affirmed “that he resisted following his inclination and talents to become an actor, because he knew very deeply, from the education he had received, that his life

needed to be in service. He knew that this was the only real way to fulfill his potential as a human being.”

Noting the value of choice in education, Maynard said families “who can choose the education they wish for their children are empowered and engaged simply because they have a choice. That choice, in turn, helps students to feel connected and empowered in their learning.”



Deputy Secretary of Education Ray Simon

Finally, Maynard explained why private schools are good for America: “Our enlightened documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America—were forged by founding forefathers who were educated in a variety of ways: home schooling, one-room school houses, public school equivalents, private schools, and boarding schools on both sides of the Atlantic. They were schooled in clear and flexible thinking. They were schooled in respect for a variety of diverse opinions. They were schooled to expect rigorous discourse on ideas and possibilities. The variety is what made something new a possibility. Had they been educated in schools that were all similar with a single outcome expected, we might not have these enlightened documents and they, most likely, would not have been our founding fathers.” She

went on to urge the deputy secretary to support choice and variety in education.

### Autonomy and Accountability

Dr. Charles Glenn, professor and chairman of the Department of Administration, Training, and Policy in the School of Education at Boston University, reviewed for Dr. Simon issues relating to autonomy and accountability in private education.

Glenn said that when he started working for the Massachusetts Department of Education some 35 years ago as head of the office responsible for equal educational opportunity and urban education, the tendency at the time was to believe “that every problem in education could be solved by regulations.” He eventually came to realize, however, that although state regulations “could to some extent prevent what should not be done to children, they had little power to create effective schools.” In fact, said Glenn, “The effort to prevent a few educators from doing bad things discouraged a far greater number of educators from exercising creativity and professional initiative to do the good things that children—especially poor and minority children—so desperately need to experience in their schools.”

Professor Glenn told Dr. Simon that higher education provides evidence that “quality flourishes [1] when educators have the opportunity to develop and offer distinctive programs that they believe will both attract students and serve them well, [2] when public and private institutions are able to do so on roughly equal terms, disciplined primarily by the ‘market,’ and [3] when government concerns itself primarily with providing resources that at least to some extent level the playing field for students.”

“Government does not tell my university who is qualified to teach in my department, or what courses we should offer, or

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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 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
- 28 Affiliated State Organizations

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

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

[www.capenet.org](http://www.capenet.org)



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what applicants we should admit,” said Glenn. “Appropriately, government requires us, as it should, to treat our students and faculty justly.” He said government officials should strive to find “the right balance between the autonomy that allows educators to do their job effectively and the accountability that ensures that everyone has an opportunity to receive a good education.”

## Urban Catholic Schools

Sr. Glenn Anne McPhee, secretary of education at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Dr. Karen Ristau, president of the National Catholic Educational Association, reviewed for Dr. Simon the decline in enrollment in urban Catholic schools and the consequences thereof. Ristau explained that many low-income families can no longer afford “the modest tuition” of Catholic schools, resulting in lower enrollments, higher per-pupil costs, and ultimately the closings of some schools. She called the closings “tragic for America.”

McPhee noted that urban Catholic schools have a history of welcoming new immigrants, serving as a stabilizing force in communities, providing “solid education,” and producing good results. Their decline, she said, hurts neighborhoods, communities, and the country.

Ristau offered New Orleans as an illustration of the importance of private schools in a community. Catholic schools there reopened quickly after Hurricane Katrina. She said families returned to the city because the schools were open, thereby helping to revitalize the community and adding to civic and financial well-being.

Turning to the issue of government aid for education, Sr. Glenn Anne said, “Federal programs that benefit public school students and teachers should offer equal benefits to comparably situated private school students and teachers.” She expressed deep concern about inadequate funding in President Bush’s FY 2007 budget for Title II-D (Education Technology) of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, Title IV-A (Safe and Drug-Free Schools), and Title V-A (Innovative Programs). She told Dr. Simon,

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than public schools had parents who reported being very satisfied with various aspects of the school, and this was true whether the public school parents chose their schools or were assigned to them. *The Condition of Education 2006* is available at <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006071>>.

“We need your help to work with the president and Congress to take a new look at budget allocations.”

## Federal Programs

Dr. Ron Reynolds, executive director of the California Association of Private School Organizations, observed that the titles of various federal laws (e.g., the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*) emphasize the particular, individual beneficiaries and underscore a quintessentially American ideal: “Our government accords infinite value to every single human life.” Grounded in that principle, said Reynolds, is “the commitment to the equitable participation of private school children in federally funded programs.”

Reynolds said the private school community is concerned about “the potential shifting of resources” from programs that have traditionally served private school students to programs that may or may not serve such students. He also reiterated the concern expressed by Sr. Glenn Anne McPhee about the loss of funds for Titles II, IV, and V, citing examples of how students have been helped by these programs. Reynolds urged the continuation of these programs and the equitable participation of private school students in all programs of federal assistance.

Responding to Dr. Reynolds’s presentation, Dr. Simon said equitable participation is “high on the priority list of this administration.” He said that earlier in the day department officials had discussed how private school students could be included in some of the initiatives the president is promoting, and he assured the group that department staff will keep thinking about how to do that. Simon added, however, that the administration’s strategy regarding education funding is to do away with some narrowly focused programs that do not produce results and to pool those funds into wider initiatives that can make a difference. He urged the private school community to help the department come up with greater levels of accountability for the funds being spent in programs that private schools think should be retained.

## % of Parents Very Satisfied with Various Aspects of Their Child’s Schools

	Public Assigned	Public Chosen	Private
Child’s school	53.7	64.2	75.8
Child’s teachers	56.4	64.5	72.0
Academic standards	54.5	63.8	79.0
Order and discipline	55.9	64.8	81.0

## Principles Presented on Autonomy and Accountability

In his presentation on autonomy and accountability to U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Raymond Simon on March 13, 2006 (see related story), Dr. Charles Glenn, professor and chairman of the Department of Administration, Training, and Policy in the School of Education at Boston University, proposed the following principles for consideration.

- Other things being equal, schools are more effective when everything they do is based on a clear and distinctive way of understanding their mission. This means that attempts by government to make all schools the same tend to level them down rather than up.

- Schools should be held accountable for outcomes, not for how they go about obtaining those outcomes.

- Government has an important role of ensuring that all children can attend schools that are safe, acceptable to their parents, and effective as measured by academic outcomes.

- That role does not—or should not—extend to deciding who is qualified to teach, which pupils will be able to benefit most from the distinctive education and environment provided by a particular school, or how it should instruct.

- Private schools—whether they serve two-thirds of all pupils, as in some Western democracies, or only a small share—serve the public interest, through modeling distinctiveness and the search for excellence, providing safe and focused educational environments for many at-risk pupils, and responding to the legitimate hopes and concerns of parents.

- It is for this reason that it is appropriate that private schools be recognized as providing

public education, and supported financially and in other ways by government so that poor families have an equal opportunity to choose those schools; most other Western democracies provide such support.

- Private schools can carry out their distinctive missions only if they are not forced, overtly or subtly, to look more and more like the schools operated by local government. As the German Constitution puts it, they should be at least equivalent to but not the same as public schools.

- To put that even more strongly, private schools that are forced into conformity with public schools—or even with other private schools—rather than allowed to express their distinctiveness in every aspect of school life, are in grave danger of losing precisely those qualities which allow them to make a special contribution.

- Of course, it is possible that an individual school—like an individual family—could be harmful to children, and in those cases society, through government, has a responsibility to intervene; it is in fact in the interest of the great majority of decent private school communities that it protect their reputation by doing so.

- But government should not use the pretext of identifying the very few private schools that are unworthy of trust to fall into the bad habit of imposing burdensome reporting and other requirements on all private schools. That is overkill and soon smothers distinctiveness.

[Editor's Note: CAPE's position paper on school accountability, approved by CAPE's board in March 2004, is available at <<http://www.cape-net.org/pdf/IP-Account.pdf>>.]

## SES Guidance

Private school officials thinking about having their schools become providers of supplemental educational services (SES) will find new reasons to do so in guidance released last month by the U.S. Department of Education.

Since the program started, the department has been encouraging private schools to become SES providers. Some private school officials regard the program—which provides free tutoring to low-income children attending poor-performing public schools—as an opportunity not only to reach out to the community but also to generate some additional income for the school and its teachers.

The guidance clarifies and explains several important points about SES. For example:

- “An SES provider, merely by being a provider, is not a recipient of Federal financial assistance.” (Question 2)

- “A private school may provide tutoring services to its own students alongside the public school students that it serves in its SES program.” (Question 3)

- “The funds that an SES provider receives for providing SES are essentially income for the provider in exchange for its providing services to public school students. Any funds that a private school receives for providing SES may be used at the discretion of the school for any purpose, including for supporting non-SES students.” (Question 4)

- “[A]n SES provider, merely by being a provider, is not a recipient of Federal financial assistance. The regulations that define ‘Federal financial assistance’ do not contemplate that a school or other organization that receives a contract from an LEA procuring its services as a provider of SES is thereby a recipient of Federal financial assistance.” (Question 10)

The new guidance document is available at <<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/onpe/sesguidance.html>>.

## Condition of Education 2006 Released

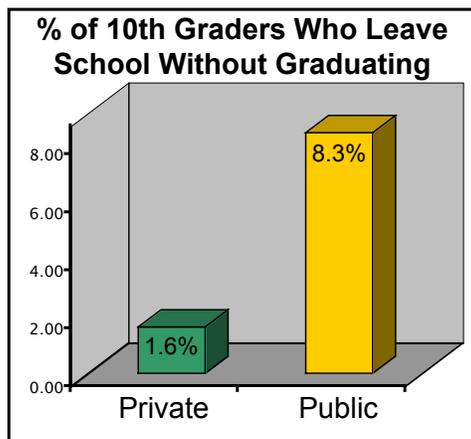
On June 1, the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released *The Condition of Education 2006*, an annual report that summarizes important developments in education.

The 2006 report includes 50 indicators of the state of American education that cover everything from trends in enrollment to the after-school activities of students.

Indicator 28, for example, draws on data from NCES's *Education Longitudinal Study of 2002* to report on the percentage of high school students in 10th grade who, two years later, “were not in school and had not graduated with a regular diploma or certificate of attendance.” The chart to the right shows the five-fold difference in non-completion rates between sophomores in public schools and those in private schools.

Indicator 38 reports on parents' attitudes toward schools. As the table on page 2 shows, a greater percentage of children in private schools

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## CAPE notes

★ **Fast Fact About Private Schools:** Seventy percent of Advanced Placement exams taken in 2005 by students not attending public schools resulted in a score of 3 or higher, compared to 58 percent of the AP exams taken by students attending public schools. Most colleges require a score of 3 or higher before awarding college credit for AP courses taken in high school.

The College Board recently released statistics relating to the May 2005 administration of the Advanced Placement examinations. The report shows that since the year 2000, the percentage of high school students earning a grade of 3 or higher on the AP exams has increased.

In 2005, American students took a total of 2,065,045 AP exams. Students in public schools accounted for 1,759,299, or 85 percent, of those exams, while students not in public schools (private school students, home school students, and others) accounted for the remainder.

The College Board's AP statistical summary is available at <[http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/student/testing/ap/sumrpts/2005/xls/national\\_summary.xls](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/student/testing/ap/sumrpts/2005/xls/national_summary.xls)>.

★ The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) last month released results from the 2005 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) science test, and according to the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for the NAEP program, the results show

that "science achievement in the United States has improved for elementary school students over the last decade, but has remained flat for middle school students and has declined among high schoolers."

The exam is administered by NCES to students in grades 4, 8, and 12 in public and private schools. The participation rate for private schools in 2005 was not high enough to allow for the reporting of scores for private schools in general. But the response rate was high enough in Catholic schools in grades 4 and 8 (though not in grade 12) to allow for the reporting of scores for that sector. Average scale scores for Catholic school students were 14 to 16 points higher than those for public school students.

★ The Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries announced June 5 that over \$1 million has been awarded, in grants of up to \$5,000 each, to 206 school libraries, including eight private school libraries, "to create or expand their library book collections." "Books inform, entertain and inspire," Mrs. Bush said. "And the books we read as children shape who we become as adults. These grants to school libraries will make sure more children have access to books—also making sure more children enjoy the lifelong benefits of reading."

Last month the foundation's Gulf Coast School Library Recovery Initiative fund provided \$500,000 in grants to 10 schools, including several private schools, to help

rebuild libraries damaged by the hurricanes last fall.

Since its founding in 2002, the foundation has awarded over \$3 million to 634 schools in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. For more information, visit <<http://www.laurabushfoundation.org/>>.

★ Graduates of private high schools who qualify for college Pell Grants and who have completed a rigorous program of study during their high school years are eligible for Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG) starting July 2006. Last month the U.S. Department of Education defined what constitutes a "rigorous secondary school program of study" for the purposes of this new program. To find out more about the program and the requirements, visit <[www.capenet.org/new.html](http://www.capenet.org/new.html)>.

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