

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Government Offers H1N1 Guidance and Resources

Mary Pappas, a school nurse at St. Francis Prep in New York City, got a jarring preview of what school officials across the country may experience this fall. Pappas was the first responder in the first school hit by the H1N1 flu outbreak last spring.

At the national flu summit this summer on the campus of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD, Pappas recounted how she triaged the scores of sick and scared students who sought her care when the flu first erupted—scared because they had arrived at school healthy that morning only to suddenly develop symptoms later.

Pappas, who eventually sent home 102 students that day, enlisted the assistance of other school personnel to take temperatures and record the results on a sticky note stuck to each student's uniform. With just a single phone line in her office, she commissioned students to use their own cell phones to find parents so she could inform them of their child's condition.

The key to handling the emergency, said Pappas, was staying calm and relying on her experience and training as a medical professional. (Quick thinking and ingenuity also played an obvious role.) Preparing for the next possible outbreak, she counsels students to stay at home if they're sick, cough into their arms and, when they come upon a strange substance, "If it's wet and it's not yours, don't touch it."

Prepare for the Worst

The main message to school officials at the flu summit and through official government announcements since then has been the same: Prepare for the worst. No one can tell with certainty the extent to which the H1N1 virus will strike in coming months, but as President Obama told delegates at the summit during a phone call from Italy, "the potential for a significant outbreak in the fall is looming." He called for "vigilance and preparation."

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, and Education Secretary Arne Duncan all addressed the summit, with Duncan summoning "parents, educators, health providers, and local, state and federal governments" to work together on emergency management plans. "Our primary goals at the Department of Education," said Duncan, "are the health and well being of students, faculty and staff, and ensuring that, in the event of any school closures, the learning process will continue."

Secretary Sebelius announced plans for a possible massive vaccination program this fall focusing on students, a vulnerable segment of the population. Since the announcement, Joe McTighe, CAPE's executive director, has been serving on a working group established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to advise on procedures and protocols relating to school-based vaccinations. Final plans for the program depend on the successful testing and manufacturing of the vaccine in coming weeks.

Toolkit and Guidance

In early August, the federal government released updated **guidance** and a new **toolkit** to help school officials prepare for and respond to the flu. The guidance includes recommendations for school responses to flu outbreaks similar in severity to what took place this past spring as well as to potentially more severe outbreaks. The toolkit includes practical advice on how to

contain the spread of flu, sample letters to parents, and posters related to prevention.

"We can all work to keep our children healthy now by practicing prevention,

close monitoring, and using common sense," Secretary Duncan said when the toolkit was released.

On the issue of school closings, the guidance urges school officials to "balance the goal of reducing the number of people who become seriously ill or die from influenza with the goal of minimizing social disruption and safety risks to children

sometimes associated with school dismissal." CDC and the U. S. Department of Education have set up a **School Dismissal Monitoring System** for school officials to report on closings related to H1N1.

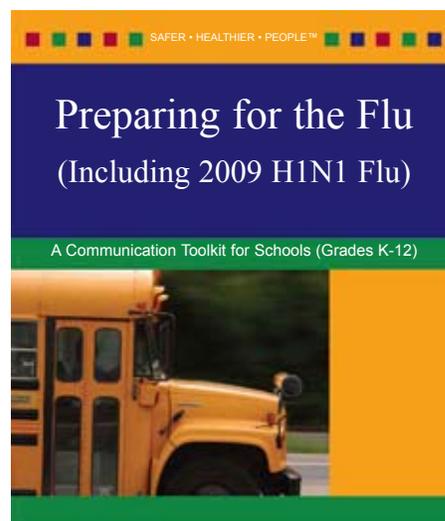
Continuity of Learning

On August 24, government officials released specific **recommendations** on how to ensure that learning continues when students are absent or a school has to close.

"We know that some students may be affected by H1N1. And our top priority is making sure that they have a way to get well, stay well and to keep learning. With these recommendations, we're providing a menu of strategies for educators to help ensure that the learning process will continue," Secretary Duncan said.

The recommendations include advice for home-based assignments and using online technology to conduct lessons and to post learning activities.

Resources referenced in this article are available at <www.capanet.org/new.html>.



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
33 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 \$35. 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



DC Scholarship Debate Heats Up

The summer brought some sizzle to efforts to save the school choice scholarship program for low-income students in the District of Columbia. A bipartisan panel of senators introduced legislation to reauthorize the program; a majority of the D.C. City Council announced support for the initiative; a new poll showed overwhelming backing for the program among D.C. residents; *The Washington Post* continued to offer strong editorial support, and a radio ad and rally called on Education Secretary Duncan and President Obama to “save the 216,” a reference to students who had been offered scholarships for the first time this year only to have them revoked after Congress voted to phase-out the program.

SOAR Act

In late July, U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) introduced bipartisan legislation to extend the scholarship initiative for five years. Called the *Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act of 2009* or “SOAR Act,” the bill (S. 1552) is cosponsored by Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Sen. Robert C. Byrd, (D-WV), Sen. Susan M. Collins (R-ME), Sen. John Ensign (R-NV), Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH). The legislation would increase the current scholarship amounts and impose additional requirements on participating schools. In unveiling the bill, Lieberman said, “It’s a program that puts children first. And I am happy to say that it’s working.”

At the start of the summer, Lieberman wrote an op-ed piece in support of the scholarship program in *The Washington Post*. He quoted President Obama, who last March said that the secretary of education “will use only one test when deciding what ideas to support with your precious tax dollars: It’s not whether an idea is liberal or conservative, but whether it works.”

Save the 216

As the start of school neared, parents and students assembled outside the U.S. Department of Education building in late August to call on Secretary Duncan to help reinstate the scholarships of 216 students whose families were first notified of the awards last spring but later had them taken away. After being told the scholarships were rescinded, the families were forced to find placements in public schools. The rally coincided with a radio ad campaign calling on citizens to urge public officials to reinstate the scholarships.

A mother who spoke in the ad said the decision to revoke her daughter’s scholarship felt like a “slap in the face.”

A poll released in late July found that 74 percent of D.C. residents support the scholarship program. Conducted by Braun Research, the poll also found that 79 percent of parents of school-age children oppose ending the program. “This poll just confirms what we’ve seen and heard from people across the city,” said Anthony



A. Williams, former Mayor of Washington, D.C. “Local politicians, Congress, and the Obama administration need to take heed—this program is something

our residents want.”

Also in July, a majority of the D.C. City Council sent a joint letter to Secretary Duncan and D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty expressing support for the continuation of the scholarship program and calling the decision to revoke the scholarships of the 216 students “grossly unfair and completely injurious to the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of the families involved.”

Meanwhile, a new report from the Heritage Foundation and the Lexington Institute found that crime rates and acts of violence are significantly higher in D.C.’s public schools than private schools. The study concluded that the Education Department’s decision to withdraw scholarships from the students recently admitted to the program “will have the practical effect of forcing many children to attend less safe schools.”

In a lead editorial published August 28, *The Washington Post* offered two summer reading suggestions for President Obama. One was the Heritage study on crime rates in the city’s schools; the other was a new article in *Education Next* by Patrick J. Wolf, a professor at the University of Arkansas and the chief researcher for the Congressionally mandated study of the D.C. voucher program. The Post offered two salient sentences from Wolf’s article: “The D.C. voucher program has proven to be the most effective education policy evaluated by the federal government’s official education research arm so far.... On average, participating low-income students are performing better in reading because the federal government decided to launch an experimental school choice program in our nation’s capital.” The editorial suggested that both reports “might cause the president to rethink his administration’s wrong-headed decision to shut down the voucher program to new students.”

Vouchers, Charters, and Private Schools

With the Obama administration aggressively promoting charter schools, are other school choice policy options obsolete? The Thomas B. Fordham Institute last month assembled a panel of policy pros to address that issue. And although the dialogue did not resolve the matter, it managed to produce some interesting insights.

John F. Kirtley, chairman of the Florida School Choice Fund, argued that private schools, including faith-based schools, are “an essential element of the public education delivery mix” with distinctive missions that charter schools cannot replicate. What’s more, they are widely available and accessible immediately. He noted that in Jacksonville, Florida, there are only six charter schools but 90 private schools serving low-income children through the state’s tax credit scholarship program. With the right assistance, a needy parent in the city could enroll a child right away in a private school with a 99 percent graduation rate and a 90 percent college-going rate. But some policymakers, said Kirtley, would have that parent postpone the child’s opportunities until a charter school is built in the neighborhood. In the meantime, the child could be lost to drugs or gangs. He called it “morally wrong” to deny a private school option to low-income parents.

For those who argue that private school choice is too high a political hurdle, Kirtley cited the progress made in Florida. In 2001 only one Democrat in the state legislature supported the corporate tax credit scholarship program. But seven years later there was strong bipartisan support for a significant expansion of the program that raised the statewide cap to \$118 million. A majority of African-American legislators supported the expansion bill, as did 100 percent of the Hispanic caucus and half of all Democrats. “We have completely changed the environment in Florida,” said Kirtley. “There is now a growing bipartisan consensus around broad parental choice.”

Kirtley described a rally of some 4,000 people who traveled to Tallahassee in April 2007 to support school choice legislation. Calling the event the “biggest march on our capitol since the civil rights era,” he recalled that a Florida civil rights icon [Rev. H.K. Matthews] told the

largely black and Hispanic assembly that parental choice is a continuation of that movement.

Kevin Carey, policy director for Education Sector, argued that charter schools represent a better public policy option than vouchers or other choice initiatives that support attendance at private schools. Charters create market competition for public schools and bring new entrepreneurs into education who are not bogged down by the bureaucracy, but unlike religious schools, they avoid church/state issues.



Mike Petrilli (left), vice president for national programs and policy at Fordham, and Kevin Carey (right), policy director at Education Sector.

Gerard Robinson, president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, said his organization supports the expansion of quality school choice for parents through a variety of vehicles, including vouchers, charters, magnet schools, and tax credits. Addressing the church/state issue, Robinson said vouchers do not advance religion, they advance parental choice. If a parent then uses a voucher to choose a religious school, so be it.

Kirtley offered a similar take on providing public dollars to help parents choose religious schools. “There are certain children who are only going to be saved by a faith-based school,” he said. “A charter school is not the same thing as a Catholic school.” By helping parents select religious schools, “you are not subsidizing religion, you’re subsidizing parents to make a choice.”

Susan Zelman, former superintendent of public instruction with the Ohio Department of Education and current senior vice president at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, professed her belief in the separation of church and state, but recognized the important role that religious schools have played “in serving poor children in poor communities.”

Zelman, whose name headlines the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, which upheld Ohio’s school voucher plan, said that in her current role with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, she would welcome the opportunity to work with all schools, public and private, to integrate engaging, motivating, high quality public service media into the school curriculum.

A video of the Fordham discussion “With charter schools ascendant, is there still a future for vouchers?” is available at <<http://www.edexcellence.net/>>.

Faith-Based Forum

Last September, the U.S. Department of Education published a report by the Bush administration’s Domestic Policy Council entitled *Preserving a Critical National Asset: America’s Disadvantaged Students and the Crisis in Faith-Based Urban Schools*. The report detailed the loss of many urban religious schools, described the national and local effects of that loss, and offered ways to address the problem.

Fast forward to July 15, 2009, when a new administration and a new Department of Education take steps to address the report’s findings by hosting a forum in Washington on “Improving the Sustainability and Performance of Urban Faith-Based Schools.” The meeting brought together “private school leaders, entrepreneurs, funders, experts in a variety of relevant fields, and other interested parties,” according to the letter of invitation. Administration representatives and principal speakers included Joshua DuBois, executive director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; Jim Shelton, assistant deputy secretary at the Education Department’s Office of Innovation and Improvement, and Peter Groff, director of the Education Department’s Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Department officials summarized the purpose of the forum as providing “an opportunity for people in strategic positions to discuss innovative models and practices, and to begin a coordinated approach to stem the tide of closures of urban faith-based schools.” Shelton and Groff jump-started the follow-up process by organizing participants into four working groups to address (1) alternative funding sources, (2) alternative models, (3) transparency and quality, and (4) partnerships. The groups are expected to produce reports and to propose action plans in the coming months.

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ **Fast Fact About Private Schools:** Seventeen percent of students in the class of 2009 who took the SAT attended religious or independent schools, and those students outscored their public school counterparts by significant margins. The average SAT writing score for public school students was 487, compared to 530 for students in religious schools and 555 for those in independent schools. On the critical reading section of the test, public school students had an average score of 496, religious school students 533, and independent school students 550. Math scores were 510 public, 533 religious, 578 independent.

The report on the SAT performance of 2009 college-bound seniors is available at <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/cbs-2009-national-TOTAL-GROUP.pdf>.

★ The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Non-Public Education recently published an updated edition of *State Regulation of Private Schools*, which "provides a brief description for each state of state legal requirements that apply to K-12 private schools in the United States."

The report assembles information for each state in a host of categories, including accreditation/registration/licensing/approval, teacher certification, length of school year/days, curriculum, recordkeeping/reports, health and safety requirements, transportation, textbooks, testing, special education, nursing and health, technology,

professional development, reimbursement for performing state/local functions, tax exemption, public aid for private education, homeschooling, and information resources. Tables at the conclusion of the document provide handy summaries of state requirements for private schools and state services to students.

The report summarizes the diverse landscape of state regulations this way: "The contents illustrate the nation's ability to approach similar areas of education in a variety of ways. Not one of the states regulates private schools in exactly the same way as another. Rather, the statutes reflect the unique circumstances, concerns, and policy perspectives in each state."

★ Young people need adult guidance and wisdom to help them fully ripen as wise, caring, and competent human beings. Rev. Daniel R. Heischman, executive director of the National Association of Episcopal Schools and a member of CAPE's board of directors, provides advice to parents and educators on how to be the adult models that students need in his new book *Good Influence: Teaching the Wisdom of Adulthood*.

Commenting on the book, Paula Lawrence Wehmiller, educator, author, and Episcopal priest, writes "Dan Heischman offers a thoughtful, often courageous, always heartening book about the art of helping young people become healthy adults. I hope parents, teachers, and students will read this important book together,

sharing ideas about the practice of good influence and imagining ways of furthering each other on this journey." The book is available at Amazon.com.

★ Two significant figures in the world of private education retired this summer: Jack Klenk, director of the Office of Non-Public Education at the U.S. Department of Education, and Ken Smitherman, president of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) since 1996 and president of CAPE since 2005. In his 28 glorious years of federal service, Jack worked tirelessly and joyfully to secure equity in federal education programs for children in religious and independent schools. Ken led both CAPE and ACSI with great tact and skill and wisdom. CAPE's new blog offers more extensive and well-deserved words of thanks and tribute to Jack and Ken. Visit the blog at www.capenet.org (the "blog" link is on the left).

Helping Schools Help Families



Learn more at
sss.nais.org



Comprehensive financial aid
services for private schools.

