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**CAPE member
organizations:**

Agudath Israel
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Association of Waldorf
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Missouri Synod

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Episcopal Schools

National Association of
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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

Principles Relating to School Choice Legislation

Introduction

The Council for American Private Education (CAPE) is a broad-based national organization representing private schools. In its vision statement, CAPE recognizes that America's children have greater opportunities because of access to an array of high-quality schools. CAPE's mission is to preserve and promote educational pluralism so that parents have a choice in the schooling of their children. In keeping with its vision and mission, CAPE offers the following principles to guide school choice legislation at the state and federal levels.

Choice initiatives have taken various forms, including government vouchers for parents, tax credits/deductions for parents, and tax credits/deductions for corporate or individual contributors to programs that award scholarships. Because any one of these approaches might be best in a given situation, these principles are intended to apply to all of them.

General Principles

- Funds relating to school choice should flow through parents rather than directly to schools.
- School choice initiatives should not in any way infringe upon the existing right of private schools to control the hiring of staff.
- School choice programs should safeguard the right of private schools to control the instructional program and curriculum, and should not add restrictions or regulations in this regard beyond what may already exist in state law.
- School choice programs should allow schools to retain their admission policies.
- Test scores should never be allowed to become a sole or dominant indicator of achievement or failure.

Level and Distribution of Benefits

- Benefits to families should be substantial enough to allow families to select from a variety of schools.
- Benefits should vary with family financial need to ensure that families with the greatest need receive the greatest benefit.
- Families with children already in private schools should be eligible for benefits.

Responsibilities of Participating Schools

- Participating schools should comply with federal, state, and local requirements that currently apply to private schools, including those relating to civil rights, nondiscrimination, background checks for employees, and student health and safety. However, choice legislation should not give rise to additional regulation of private schools.

Approved by CAPE's Board of Directors, March 2006