



ASSOCIATION OF WALDORF
SCHOOLS OF NORTH AMERICA™

Recently Patrice Maynard, AWSNA Leader for Outreach and Development, attended the Council of American Private Education (CAPE) spring meeting in Washington, D.C. CAPE is a coalition of national organizations and state affiliates serving private elementary and secondary schools. Its fundamental principle is that independent education is "good for students, good for families, and good for America."

This is what Patrice writes about her experience:

Dear Colleagues,

CAPE meetings were very lively and well-attended. All the 33 state CAPE organizations were represented and met all day on Sunday. The CAPE Board of twenty met with them on Monday and we all went together on Tuesday to the newly opened, and very beautiful, Capital Visitor Center (CVC), completely underground beneath the Capitol building. We met at the same time as the United Council of Catholic Bishops gathered for their "advocacy days." We met separately but joined together for all meals and two receptions.

News from independent and faith-based schools is similar to our schools' news. There is much anxiety about enrollment declining, if not this year, next year. The political outlook feels grim. However, my final feelings are optimistic because of these highlights:

We had two surprise visitors at our Monday evening reception in the Russell Senate building: Senator Joe Lieberman, D-Connecticut; and Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio. Both of these gentlemen were very eloquent and committed to independent and faith-based education as a necessary component in our educational landscape. Dennis Kucinich shook my hand (my only having to scootch over a few feet to happen to be in his way as he departed!) and when I introduced myself he lit up and said, "I have spoken at two Waldorf school events, and your students are remarkable. They are truly remarkable."

We also had visits in the lobbying day that were interesting: Representative Howard McKeon, (R-California) Ranking Member, House Education and Labor Committee; and Representative Dale Kildee, (D-Michigan) Chairman, House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education. Both seemed quite determined to get somewhere in supporting independent schools.

Most exciting of all was traction that came in the whole CAPE group for working to foster and introduce a new idea to present to President Obama, Arne Duncan, and other powers that be. This idea is to identify the wholeness of educational delivery systems in America (homeschooling, charter schools, faith-based schools, public schools, independent schools) as part of the glory of America. The divisiveness of looking at this as an either/or problem deprives the nation of the best solution available in the world for offering every child an opportunity to succeed. If we could look at the whole gamut and put it all to work for children we could get somewhere very good. So, President Obama could tell the world that he is going to appropriately focus his attention and much financial support on public schools with tax dollars and fiduciary oversight; and while he does this he could call on the philanthropic community to do the same for the faith-based and independent schools. He could call on everyone to treat this variety of approach to education, unique in the world, as a national treasure to be protected and nourished before it is lost and opportunities for children with it.

CAPE representatives warmed to this idea. Also, we developed an idea which we could appeal to Arne Duncan and his discretionary \$5 billion to fund. We could ask for a roundtable/think tank with representation from all the educational constituencies (homeschooling, charters, independent schools, etc., see above). Each constituency could put forward several of its brightest and best for consideration through a screening process. Twenty people, for example, would be chosen to meet twice a year in person, and regularly by Internet and phone between these meetings, as tenders of innovation in education and in utilization of all educational potential on behalf of children. To enter the circle, each participant must sign a promise to leave at the door all personal interest, party interest, union interest, specific group interest, and all interest but that in children and their educational opportunities.

Anyone who violates this promise while on the circle will be expelled and will not be allowed back in. A journalist could be part of the group and could "tell the story" to the world as it unfolds at each meeting. Two other CAPE Board members and I worked this idea into a form and will polish it and give it to Joe McTighe, our Executive Director, and then to the whole CAPE Board and State CAPE network for revision and added value ideas.

Everyone was very excited about the potential in this. Optimism was strong in our group, even with the struggles we all face. We'll see what happens. Feeling the strength we hold in our circles of leadership, both at our AWSNA level and at the level of our schools, was particularly gratifying in these meetings. Thank you for all your substantive work and dedication. It allows for inspiration to occur!

Yours,

Patrice

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