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**CAPE member
organizations:**

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
Solomon Schechter Day
School Association
Southern Baptist
Association of Christian
Schools
Toussaint Institute for
Historically Black
Independent Schools
United States Conference of
Catholic Bishops
28 Affiliated State
Organizations

Educational Accountability

CAPE believes that all educational institutions have a responsibility to provide their students with the knowledge, skills, values, ethics, and social commitment they will need to succeed, to be good citizens, and to be positive forces in a dynamically changing society and global environment.

Ultimately, each private school is most immediately accountable to its students' families, and to its graduates—one by one. Private education is based on choice. Families *choose* private schools for their children, and parents will always be judges of whether a school meets the needs of their children. All private schools are also to some degree dependent on generous, voluntary support from graduates, families, and others who are pleased with these schools.

Other forces also shape a private school's destiny. The performance of private schools is continually assessed by their governors and sponsors. These overseers have an ongoing duty to evaluate outcomes and make their decisions based in large part on each school's performance.

Many private schools voluntarily participate in an accrediting process as a way of accounting to the school's own public as well as the larger community. Accrediting bodies conduct extensive site-based reviews of every aspect of a private school's operations and program, measuring and certifying that it meets prescribed standards.

Some states, in varying degrees, are also involved in some forms of accountability. The U.S. Supreme Court in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (268 U.S. 510 [1925]) limited the state's authority to "standardize its children" by forcing them to submit to only one kind of instruction, because "the child is not the mere creature of the state." While guarding the liberty of parents to "direct the education and upbringing of children," the state has a legitimate responsibility to ensure that students are educated in safe environments that promote democratic values. Private schools comply with applicable statutes and regulations. But in carrying out its regulatory role, government must not impose on private schools rules "so pervasive and all-encompassing" that compliance would "effectively eradicate the distinction" between public and private schools and thereby deny parents their capacity to guide their children's education (*Ohio v. Wisner*, 351 N.E.2d 750, 768 [1976]).

At a time when test scores are seen by some as the ultimate measure of attainment, the accountability of private schools for student achievement, teacher quality, and school success cannot be addressed by standardized testing alone or any single scale of measurement. While students in private schools routinely take standardized tests as one tool for assessing achievement, and while other forms of periodic assessment also have their place as well, CAPE believes that test scores should *never* be allowed to become a sole or dominant indicator of achievement or failure. Educational accountability requires a much broader,

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long-term assessment of outcomes. These must include the family's educational goals for its children, how students do at the next level(s) of schooling, accomplishment in life, and evidence of productive good citizenship.

An accumulation of accountability mechanisms—not any single one—combines to assure the public that private schools will provide the resources and vision needed to help every enrolled student succeed. Within such an environment of accountability, private schools pursue their mission, and survive or fail on the merit of their performance. CAPE supports policies and initiatives that will preserve and enhance this environment of accountability—so that private schools remain good for students, good for families and good for America.

Approved by CAPE's Board of Directors: March 2004

Modified from a statement approved March 1, 2003, by the National Association of Independent Schools.