

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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Public Knows Features That Make a Quality School

The Top 10 list, the mandatory device of movie critics in year-end reviews, provides a straightforward picture of what the list's producer most highly prizes. Recently, the American public was given a chance to produce a Top 10 list of features most prized when it comes to education. The straightforward results are encouraging for private schools in general and for independent schools in particular.

In a poll commissioned by the National Association of Independent Schools, 751 randomly-selected adults were asked to rate 25 school characteristics in terms of their significance for quality education. Respondents were then asked whether public schools or independent schools do a better job delivering each of the characteristics. The poll found that the 10 features the public thinks most important for successful

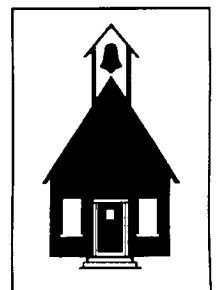
schooling range from employing high quality teachers (#1) to providing adequate tools for learning (#10).

Significantly, for all but 2 of the 10 items, respondents put independent schools well ahead of public schools (see chart). By a margin of 2 to 1, the public believes independent schools do a better job employing high quality teachers and preventing drug and alcohol use, the traits that rank, respectively, 1 and 2. And for the traits that rank 3 through 6 (keeping students motivated and enthusiastic about learning, challenging students to do their best, encouraging parents to participate in their child's education, and maintaining discipline), the independent school advantage ranges from 3 to 1 to nearly 6 to 1.

Differences: Clear and Many

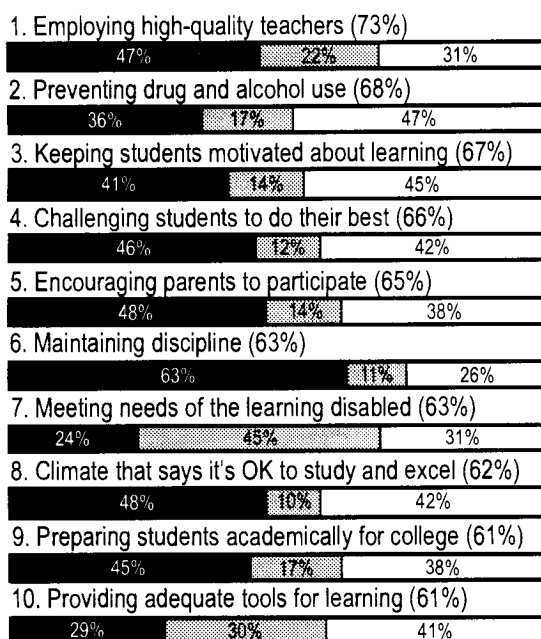
According to the project summary released by NAIS, one purpose of the poll was "to gauge the public's perceptions of independent schools' strengths and weaknesses compared to public schools." The study discovered that differences in how the public views the two sectors are "clear and many."

One prominent example: 66 percent of respondents think independent schools do a better job encouraging



Top 10 Traits of Quality Schools

(and the types of schools more likely to display them)



■ Independent ▨ Public □ No Difference

Among 25 traits of schools, the ones listed here were ranked by respondents as the ten most important for a good education. The numbers in parentheses are the percentages of respondents who rated the feature a 9 or 10 in importance on a scale of 1 to 10. The numbers in the bars for "Independent" and "Public" are the percentages of respondents who said that type of school does a better job achieving the feature in question. The numbers in the bar for "No Difference" are the percentages of respondents who see independent and public schools achieving the feature equally.

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NCES Report Provides Data on First-Time Teachers

With school administrators across the country worrying whether they'll find enough qualified teachers to fill next September's vacancies, a new report will at least help them learn a lot about a significant share of the teacher supply: first-time teachers. *Progress Through the Teacher Pipeline*, released last month by the National Center for Education Statistics, tracks the demographic characteristics and academic preparation of 1992-93 college graduates as they wind their way from diploma to first teaching job. The report provides a comprehensive look at what graduates become teachers, the qualities they bring to their work, how they are prepared, where they wind up teaching, and whether or not they stay.

who received their bachelor's degree in 1992-93 and who had not taught prior to that time. Graduates were interviewed in 1994 and again in 1997. Some in the cohort never became teachers by 1997, but of those who did, 13.1 percent taught exclusively in private schools, 83.2 percent taught exclusively in public schools, and 3.8 percent taught at one point or another in both sectors.

Academic Background

According to the report, graduates with higher college entrance examination scores were more likely to teach in private schools. Although private schools attracted 13 percent of first-time teachers overall, they drew 26 percent of the teachers who had college entrance

private sector were students who had majored in the humanities, math, natural sciences, or the social sciences.

Consistent with the lower share of education majors, private schools also had a lower share of state-certified teachers. Fifty-four percent of the cohort who taught in private schools were certified, compared to 88 percent of the public school group. But the private school teachers were hardly without high goals for professional development. Twenty-seven percent of the private school teachers expected to attain a doctoral degree or first-professional degree (e.g., in medicine or law) at some point in the future. The comparable figure for public school teachers was 19 percent.

Workload and Salary

Private school teachers had about the same workload as public school teachers but, probably to no one's surprise, were paid significantly less. Teachers responsible for general elementary classes taught an average of 30.7 students in public schools and 26.7 in private schools. For teachers responsible for single-subject classes, the average total number of students was 101.6 in public schools and 103.8 in private schools. Single-subject public school teachers taught an average of 5.8 periods a day, compared to 5.0 periods for their counterparts in private schools.

But while workload was comparable, salaries were not. Specifically, private school teachers earned an average annual salary of \$21,327, while public school teachers earned \$26,319, nearly one-fourth more.

Job Satisfaction

Despite their lower salaries, private school teachers typically were more satisfied with their jobs than their colleagues in public schools. In fact, on

Percent of Teachers Who Reported They Were Very Satisfied With...

	Private	Public
Student motivation to learn	36.2	22.9
School learning environment	54.7	42.0
Student discipline and behavior	42.4	29.1
Class size	68.2	41.8
Support from parents	51.5	26.3
Esteem of society for teaching profession	23.2	11.6
Percent quite satisfied overall	42.4	23.1

Base: 1992-93 bachelor's degree recipients who first taught after 1993 in a public or private elementary or secondary school. Respondents were evaluating the most recent semester of their most recent job as of 1997.

For officials in private schools as well as public schools, the study should prove particularly valuable because it segregates data for the proportions of graduates who enter the profession through positions in either sector. As might be expected, the differences between first-time teachers in public schools and private schools are significant in some areas, but not so in others.

The Cohort

The study looks at college students

Private schools, more than public schools, were inclined to hire graduates from private colleges and were disinclined to hire education majors. Nearly half (46 percent) of 1992-93 degree recipients who taught in private schools came from private postsecondary institutions, while only 22 percent of those who taught in public schools did so. Education majors accounted for 57 percent of public school teachers but only 46 percent of private school teachers. Just over half of first-time teachers in the

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all six aspects of job satisfaction examined in the study, substantially higher percentages of private school teachers reported they were "very satisfied" (see chart, page 2). Further, 42 percent of private school teachers, but only 23 percent of public school teachers, said they were "quite satisfied overall" during their most recent semester of teaching.

Stayers and Leavers

Given the higher levels of job satisfaction, one might expect the teachers in private schools to stay put longer. But that isn't the case. According to the report:

- Forty-one percent of 1992-93 graduates who had taught in private schools after graduation had left teaching by the spring of 1997. By contrast, only 16 percent of the comparable cohort in public schools had done so.

- Only 25 percent of 1992-93 graduates who had always taught in private schools said they expected to be teaching full time in three years, whereas

more than twice that number (56 percent) of public school teachers said the same thing.

The findings suggest that private schools will probably have to deal with replacement rates higher than public schools.

Teachers who had first taught and had then left teaching between their 1992-93 degree and 1997 were asked to identify the primary reason they had chosen to leave. For the 41 percent who had left private education, the reasons included pregnancy/child rearing (17.5 percent), pursuit of a career outside education (28.5 percent), coursework to continue career in education (9.3 percent), dislike or dissatisfaction with teaching (12.2 percent), other (25.1 percent). Notably, only 3.2 percent cited dissatisfaction with salary and benefits as their primary reason for leaving.

The NCES report entitled *Progress Through the Teacher Pipeline* is available on the NCES Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubinfo.asp?pubid=2000152>.

Court Watch

Judge Disallows Scholarship Program

U.S. District Judge Solomon Oliver Jr. last month turned his temporary order banning the Cleveland scholarship program into a permanent one, ruling that the program runs afoul of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Soon after the decision was announced, school choice advocates vowed an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and, if need be, to the U.S. Supreme Court. "The kids deserve more than a lump of coal five days before Christmas," said Clint Bolick, litigation director for the Institute for Justice, which represents parents of children receiving the scholarships. Students will be able to continue in the program during the Sixth Circuit review.

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moral and spiritual development, while 9 percent think public schools do better. Other areas where a majority of the public believes independent schools have the advantage are these: keeping class size smaller (69 percent think independent schools do better, 10 percent think public schools), giving individual attention to each child (65-10), teaching values and manners (64-9), maintaining discipline (63-11), and maintaining bonds with graduates (55-13). As the report put it, the public regards independent schools as "most different in offering a more personalized, customized education, and an environment that is civil and controlled."

But independent schools do not have the edge in every area. The two features where a majority of the public assigns the advantage to public schools are involving students in athletics and sports (53 percent say public schools do better, and 15 percent say independent schools) and drawing students from a range of cultures, races and income groups (56-18). Commenting on these particular

findings, Dr. Peter Relic, president of NAIS, said, "I am concerned about the public misperceptions regarding participation in athletics and sports and about diversity in independent schools." He added, "Often independent schools are more diverse than neighboring public schools, because the independent schools reach out to the entire community whereas public school population is of-



ten determined strictly by geographic boundaries." NAIS reports that students of color account for 17.8 percent of the enrollment in its member schools.

In another section of the survey, participants were asked how well certain words describe independent schools. The adjectives the public most strongly associates with such schools are *structured, safe, selective, personalized, caring, responsive, rigorous, and comfortable*.

The positive associations may help

explain why such a large share of adults would like their children to attend independent schools. When asked where they would choose to send their children to school if cost and school proximity were not factors, 58 percent said independent or parochial schools and 39 percent said public schools.

Specifically, 30 percent of those polled said they would choose independent schools, a response the report's authors called "profound" because independent schools currently serve only about 1 percent of K-12 students in the United States. NAIS reports that its member schools account for 1,025 of the 27,700 private schools in the country and 473,000 of the 5,927,000 private school students.

The project summary of *The 1999 National Public Opinion Poll on Perceptions of Independent Schools* is available on the NAIS Web site at www.nais.org.





Return Service Requested

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• Democratic presidential hopefuls **Al Gore** and **Bill Bradley** had plenty to say about vouchers last month. In a debate on *Meet the Press*, the candidates sparred over Bradley's willingness to consider vouchers if the current experiments in Cleveland and Milwaukee show they improve public education. The Vice President repeated his unequivocal opposition to vouchers, claiming they would drain money away from public schools. He drew a sharp distinction between himself and Bradley on the issue saying, "Every time the Republicans proposed vouchers for 18 years, Senator Bradley supported it; every time the Republicans proposed vouchers when I was in the Congress, I opposed them." On a different school choice issue, Bradley said he opposed tuition tax credits because he doesn't think "tax cuts should be gummed up with a lot of credits." He said he prefers a tax system "with lower rates and fewer loopholes."

Two days after the *Meet the Press* appearance, Bradley "mounted an aggressive defense" of his willingness to try vouchers, according to *Washington*

Post reporter Mike Allen. In a campaign appearance in Des Moines, Bradley said, "I believe that every child deserves a quality education, not just the children of parents who are wealthy." He added that "honest leadership should be willing to try new and innovative ways to achieve this end."

• Teachers in public or private schools are now eligible to purchase single-family homes at half price through a new program sponsored by the Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD). The **Teacher Next Door** (TND) program is designed to encourage teachers to move into designated revitalization areas, described by HUD as low- and moderate-income neighborhoods that have many vacant properties and high crime rates, but are regarded as "good candidates for economic development and improvement." The HUD-owned homes are available for a downpayment as low as \$100 if purchased with a mortgage insured by the Federal Housing Administration. Teachers must be state certified and must agree to live in the house as their sole residence for a minimum of three years. The program, says HUD, is a way of

recognizing teachers "for the value they bring to community and family life."

For more information, call 1-800-217-6970 or visit HUD's Web site at www.hud.gov/tnd/tnd.html.

• Saying that children involved in religious activities are less likely to use drugs and more likely to stay out of trouble, **President Clinton** last month announced the release of a set of guidelines to help public school teachers "teach about religions" and to help faith-based organizations "join the effort to improve public education."

"I have never believed the Constitution required our schools to be religion-free zones," said the president. "Common sense says that faith and faith-based organizations from all religious backgrounds can play an important role in helping children to reach their fullest potential."

Education Secretary **Richard Riley** said the guidelines were developed to inform communities "about the proper way to treat religion and religious topics in our nation's public schools."

The guidelines are available on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at www.ed.gov.

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