

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Private School Students Graduate from High School and College at High Rates

Students in private high schools are more likely than those in public schools to receive a diploma, attend a four-year college, and ultimately earn a bachelor's degree, according to data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at the request of CAPE. The findings hold true regardless of the race or ethnicity of students and should be of interest to policy makers determined to improve rates of high school graduation, college attendance, and college completion.

High School Graduation

In Catholic high schools, 97.2 percent of 2002 sophomores received a high school diploma by the summer of 2004. The same was true for 94.9 percent of 2002 sophomores in other private schools and 84.1 percent of those in public schools. For white students, the percentages of Catholic, other private, and public students who graduated high school by 2004 were, respectively, 98.1, 95.9, and 89.2; for black or African American students, the comparable figures were 93.3, 84.1, and 79.2; and for Hispanic students, 96.3, 87.0, 75.8.

College Enrollment

Percentages of 2002 10th graders who eventually enrolled in a four-year college or university also differed significantly by the type of high school students attended. In Catholic high schools, 76.2 percent of 2002 sophomores were enrolled in a four-year college or university in 2006. The comparable percentage for other private schools was 69.0 and for public schools, 40.5. Looked at by race and ethnicity, the Catholic/other private/public school

percentages were 80.2, 70.9, and 46.5 for white students; 71.7, 62.7, and 35.0 for black or African American students; and 61.6, 54.8, and 23.2 for Hispanic students.

Data relating to the progress of high school sophomores were drawn from NCES's Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), which followed a nationally representative sample of students from 10th grade and then into college and/or the world of work. Students were surveyed in the 2002 base year and then again in 2004 and 2006.

College Degree

Not every student aspires to a four-year college after high school. Other options include a two-year degree, vocational training, enlistment in the military, and entrance into the labor market. But of those students who began some postsecondary education in 2003-04—either full-time or part-time, in a four-year, two-year, or less-than-two-year institution—NCES was able to compile, by the type of high school attended, the percentages of students who attained a four-year bachelor's degree as of spring 2009.

Data came from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study of 2004/09 (BPS:04/09), which tracked

a nationally representative sample of students who began postsecondary education in 2003-04. Participants were initially surveyed at the end of their first year of postsecondary work and then were surveyed again at the end of their third (2005-06) and sixth year (2008-09). According to NCES, the dataset includes nearly 16,700 students.

It turns out that 49.4 percent of private high school students and 31.7 percent of public high school students who started any postsecondary study whatsoever in 2003-04 received a bachelor's degree by the spring of 2009. (If these numbers seem startlingly low, keep in mind that the base included part-time and full-time students as well as students who never intended to get a four-year degree in the first place, e.g., those seeking an associate's degree or a vocational certificate.) Examining the data by race and ethnicity, 54.1 percent of white students from private high schools and 37.4 percent of white students from public high schools who were in any postsecondary program in 2003-04 earned a bachelor's degree by 2009. For black or African American students the private/public high school breakout was 35.3 percent and 17.2 percent, and for Hispanic students it was 33.7 percent and 17.7 percent.

% of 2002 10th Graders Who Graduated High School by 2004
(by type of high school attended)

	Public	Catholic
Total	84.1	97.2
Black	79.2	93.3
Hispanic	75.8	96.3

% of 2002 10th Graders Enrolled in a 4-Year College in 2006
(by type of high school attended)

	Public	Catholic
Total	40.5	76.2
Black	35.0	71.7
Hispanic	23.2	61.6

% of '03 Postsecondary Starters Earning a Bachelor's by 2009
(by type of high school attended)

	Public	Private
Total	31.7	49.4
Black	17.2	35.3
Hispanic	17.7	33.7

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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

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How to Get the Best Teachers in the World

With research clearly demonstrating that the quality of teachers is the most significant school-related influence on the achievement of students, what can we do to strengthen teacher quality? That's the question that distinguished author and scholar John Chubb, interim CEO of Education Sector and soon-to-be president of the National Association of Independent Schools, discussed with CAPE's board of directors and state representatives at a meeting in Washington, DC, on March 11.

Chubb's most recent book, *The Best Teachers in the World: Why We Don't Have Them and How We Could*, served as focus for the energizing exchange.

Chubb pointed out that despite the lofty ambitions of presidents and policy makers over the past two generations to have America's schools be the best in the world, the nation has fallen far short of that mark, with student performance ranking somewhere in the middle of the international pack.

So how do we improve our standing? For Chubb, a key component is the "contribution of the individual teacher," a factor "that has emerged now in countless studies as the most important driver of achievement." To illustrate how vital teachers are to student success, Chubb said that if a student in the lowest quartile of performance had a chance to work for several consecutive years with teachers in the top quartile of effectiveness, the student herself would likely move to the top quartile. "That's the power of the influence of effective teachers," he said.

With teachers being the school-based factor that matters most, Chubb concludes that to have high-performing students, you need high-performing teachers. "How can you have the best students in the world if you don't also have the best teachers in the world?" he asked.

But the barriers to having the best teachers are significant. For one, schools tend to recruit teachers who have not been the best students themselves. Chubb said the average combined math and verbal SAT score for elementary school teachers is 960, which is below the national average of 1000. Another barrier is that teachers are generally being prepared in low-ranking universities. And a third obstacle is that working conditions and salaries are not always that attractive.

How do we overcome the obstacles and at-

tract effective and bright teachers? Chubb offered three suggestions. The first is to use technology to change the instructional delivery model, freeing teachers from routine tasks and allowing them to work with smaller groups of students on higher-order skills. As an illustration, he pointed to one school where students rotate in small groups among three sessions: teacher-led classes, computer-assisted instruction, and project-based activities with peers. The model enables fewer teachers to staff the school but gives both teachers and students the benefit

of interacting in manageable groups. Incorporating technology to support instruction for part of the day would allow schools to spread existing salary expenditures over fewer teachers, thereby boosting teacher pay and, in turn, attracting better teachers.

A second way to attract the best teachers is "to get our major universities much more involved in teacher preparation." Chubb cited Peabody College at Vanderbilt University as an example of a top school of education that is attracting high-caliber candidates and preparing excellent teachers.

Chubb's third suggestion is to ensure that schools are guided by great heads and principals who know not only how to recruit, train, and evaluate teachers but also how to build a culture and organizational structure that fosters success.

Turning to private schools, Chubb suggested that since such schools do not require teacher certification, they are free to consider more essential qualifications when recruiting teachers, such as knowledge of subject matter. Further, private school heads tend to focus on academics, which Chubb called a great strength. Also, the schools themselves are independent of state control, which means they "face the future with more flexibility than our government schools."

One challenge for private schools is to find ways to incorporate instructional technology into an education and business model that works for families and matches the school's culture. Another challenge is finding ways to draw great teachers in a market that is now competing with organizations like Teach for America as well as some attractive charter schools.

"In education, I think talent...is everything," said Chubb. It's a "people enterprise," and schools should focus on how to get "the very best people."



John Chubb, interim CEO of Education Sector (photo from Education Sector)

Brookings Scholar Talks Choice to CAPE Leaders

With school choice offering a promising road to education reform, is there an objective way to measure the extent to which school districts are actually providing families with meaningful options? Should federal pre-K policy allow parents to choose their child's preschool? What are the upsides and downsides of President Obama's pre-K proposal?

These and several related topics served as the center of a stimulating discussion between Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst, director of the Brookings Institution's Brown Center on Education Policy, and leaders of private education during a luncheon sponsored by CAPE on March 11 in Washington, DC.

Whitehurst described the Brown Center's Education Choice and Competition Index (ECCI), which grades over 100 school districts using scoring rubrics in 13 categories, such as the availability of alternative schools (including charter schools, magnet schools, and affordable private schools), access to virtual education, and whether funding follows students. The ECCI ranked the Recovery District in New Orleans at the top of the list, giving it an overall grade of A, including high scores for a choice architecture that uses an algorithm created by a Nobel Prize winner to match students to the schools their parents prefer. Whitehurst said New Orleans also has an extensive "private school marketplace" supported by state vouchers.

A Brown Center report on the ECCI explores the advantages of educational choice and competition. For starters, "The evidence is overwhelming that parents in schools of choice are more satisfied with their children's schools than are parents whose children are assigned to a school by a school district," according to the report. Equity for low-income and minority students is another advantage in that such students too often are assigned to schools of "poor quality and low effectiveness in raising student achievement." Choice also breeds innovation, productivity, and efficiency. "Introducing more choice and competition in K-12 education has the potential both to lower costs and raise achievement," states the report, whose principal author was Whitehurst.

Turning to pre-K policy, Whitehurst offered

some context about the relative contributions of school and family to educational outcomes. Referring to 10 years of data on public school students in Florida and North Carolina that he and colleagues at the Brown Center analyzed, Whitehurst reported that only about 10 percent of academic outcome is attributable to factors within the control of a school system. "So whenever we think about preschool education, we have necessarily to keep the family in the focus of what we're doing," he said.

Children show up at the start of school with enormous differences in readiness based on family background. He cited, as an example, a study by Betty Hart and Todd Risley that found, among other things, that by age 3, children in professional families had heard, on average, 11 million words spoken by parents, while children in poor families had heard just three million words. The disparity in vocabulary between the two groups of children was staggering.

What's more, entry levels of preparedness predict performance in later grades, graduation rates, college attendance rates, and even adult income. "Anything you care about is predicted by these early childhood differences," he said.

Whitehurst expressed concern about overselling the benefits of pre-K, despite positive findings from two well-cited studies (the Perry Preschool Study and the Abecedarian Study), which he described as research on high-cost, multi-year, intensive, "hothouse" interventions that typical one-year, modestly funded statewide pre-K programs are not likely to match.

Analyzing President Obama's pre-K plan, Whitehurst said he liked that it is means-tested and targeted towards lower income families, that it pays attention to outcomes and assessment data, and that it is decentralized to states.

On the downside, the president's plan calls for paying preschool teachers the same as K-12 teachers, which Whitehurst called a recipe for prohibitive costs and happy teacher unions. Another flaw is the apparent intention of putting pre-K programs under the charge of school districts, some of which are failing to educate K-12 students. Whitehurst also fears that the plan may not offer parents much, if any, school choice, effectively consigning children to a district's preschool with a standardized curriculum.



Russ Whitehurst discusses the Education Choice and Competition Index on a Brookings Institution video.

The Indy 5-0

In a decisive 5-0 ruling, the Indiana Supreme Court last month erased any doubts about the constitutionality of the state's Choice Scholarship Program, paving the way for the program's growth and offering a legal roadmap for other states.

The Indiana program, one of the most expansive in the country, provides assistance to low- and middle-income families to help their children attend private schools. Over 9,400 students take advantage of the scholarships, up from 4,000 last year.

The court tackled head-on the Blaine provision in the Indiana Constitution, which prohibits state spending "for the benefit of any religious or theological institution." Citing as examples fire and police protection, water service, and paved sidewalks, the court said it was "inconceivable" that the framers of the constitution "intended to expansively prohibit any and all government expenditures from which a religious or theological institution derives a benefit."

The primary beneficiary of such services is the public, said the court, while any benefit to religious institutions "though potentially substantial, is ancillary and indirect." Similarly, "The direct beneficiaries under the voucher program are the families of eligible students and not the schools selected by the parents for their children to attend."

Since dozens of states have similar provisions in their constitutions, the rationale used by Indiana's highest court could serve as a jurisprudential template.

Dick Komer, senior attorney at the Institute for Justice, which represented parents of scholarship students in the case, said the decision "will have national implications" essentially because "the court's reasoning will be highly persuasive to other state courts that evaluate the constitutionality of their state's school choice program."

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CAPE notes

★ Alabama has become the latest addition to the growing list of states offering school choice. On March 14, Governor Robert Bentley signed the *Alabama Accountability Act of 2013*, which offers not one, but two tax credits to advance the right of parents to direct the education of their children.

“All children deserve access to a quality education, no matter where they live,” said the governor. “This provides a new option to help children receive the best education possible.”

The bill offers tax credits to low-income families whose children attend or are assigned to attend persistently low-performing public schools, allowing them to transfer to better schools, including private schools. The credit would be up to “80 percent of the average annual state cost of attendance for a public K-12 student during the applicable tax year.” Credits would be “refundable,” which is to say they would apply in full even when a family’s tax bill does not exceed the amount of the credit.

The bill also provides a tax credit to individuals or corporations that contribute to a nonprofit organization that provides scholarships to private schools. Businesses will receive a tax credit equal to 50 percent of their donation, and individuals will get a credit up to 100 percent of their donation. All such credits across the state are capped a \$25 million annually.

“Alabama leaders should be commended for giving thousands of families this new opportunity,” said Robert Enlow, president

and CEO of the Friedman Foundation.

“In a state currently lacking in educational options for families, I applauded the state legislature and Governor Bentley for taking this first and important step to give...children trapped in schools that do not work for them a way out,” said Kevin P. Chavous, executive counsel to the American Federation for Children.

★ Sometimes school choice initiatives show up at the darndest times. The latest sighting was during “vote-a-rama,” an extended marathon amendment process leading up to final passage of the U.S. Senate’s budget proposal on March 23.

Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) offered Amendment #515 on behalf of himself and Senators Rand Paul (R-KY), Patrick Toomey (R-PA), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Mitch McConnell (R-KY). The amendment would allow “funding under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* to follow children from low-income families to the school the children attend.”

In the two-minutes allotted for debate, Senator Alexander argued that since “poorer children—the ones we intend to help—are left in schools with less money... let the money follow the child to the school, whether it is public or private.”

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), who chairs the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, responded, “We have tried this before. The District of Columbia has a voucher program that

we passed in Congress in 2003. And guess what they have found since 2003? It made no impact whatsoever on student achievement, and now the program is to the point it is being phased out.”

The “no impact” claim should surprise researchers who found significantly higher graduation rates for scholarship students in private schools. The “phase out” claim should surprise everyone else.

The amendment was defeated 39-60.

★ The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE) experienced its own version of March Madness last month with a whirlwind of activities relating to private schools.

On March 11, ONPE hosted a meeting of state CAPE representatives and key USDE officials to review a number of important initiatives at the department. A few days later, department officials released a plan designed to strengthen services to private school students under current regulations and guidance relating to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Then on March 25, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Deb Delisle and Special Assistant for Early Learning Steven Hicks held an informative and friendly conference call with private school officials to review provisions in President Obama’s pre-K proposal.

CAPE thanks ONPE Director Maureen Dowling, her staff, and everyone involved with these outreach efforts.