

Council for American Private Education

# CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

## Students Exceed SAT Benchmark and Lift National Average

Average SAT scores for 2013 graduates from religious and independent schools significantly exceeded the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark, a combined score of 1550 on three SAT tests (critical reading, writing, and mathematics) that is associated with success in college.

For college-bound seniors in independent schools across the nation, the combined average SAT score was 1662 (112

points above the benchmark) while the average for religious school students was 1595 (45 points above the benchmark). Public school students scored 1474, which was 76 points shy of the standard.

In each of the subjects tested, SAT scores for college-bound seniors in religious and independent schools were significantly higher than the national average, actually helping to boost that average. Mean SAT scores for students in public schools were 491 in reading, 480 in writing, and 503 in math, while comparable scores for students in religious schools were 531, 528, and 538. Students in independent schools scored 536, 545, and 581.

### 16 Percent in Private Schools

Among SAT class of 2013 students for whom a high school is known, 9.4 percent attended a religiously affiliated school, 6.4 percent attended an independent school, and 84 percent attended a public school. That translates into 145,802 students from religious schools, 99,327 from independent schools, and 1,295,267 from public schools. For 119,651 students, the type of high school was "other or unknown." Overall, roughly 1.66 million students in

the class of 2013 took the SAT.

The College Board reported last month that "only 43 percent of SAT takers in the class of 2013 graduated from high school academically prepared for the rigors of college-level course work." In other words,

only 43 percent met or exceeded the benchmark. "This number has remained virtually unchanged during the last five years," according to the College Board.

"While some might see stagnant scores as no news, we at the College Board consider it a call to action," said College Board President David Coleman. "We must dramatically increase the number of students in K-12 who are prepared for college and careers. Only by transforming the daily work that students do can we achieve excellence and equity. The College Board will do everything it can to make sure students have access to opportunity, including rigorous course work."

The College Board developed the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark "to help secondary school administrators, educators, and policymakers evaluate the effectiveness of academic programs in order to better prepare students for college," according to a news release from the company. The 1550 benchmark "is associated with a 65 percent probability of obtaining

a first-year GPA of B- or higher, which in turn is associated with a high likelihood of college success."

### Attend and Complete College

Students who meet the benchmark are more likely to enroll in a four-year college and complete a degree. Research shows that 78 percent of students who met the benchmark enrolled in a four-year college or university, "compared to only 46 percent of those who did not meet the benchmark." Benchmark students are also more likely to finish college on time, with 54 percent earning a bachelor's degree within four years, "compared to only 27 percent of those who did not meet the benchmark."

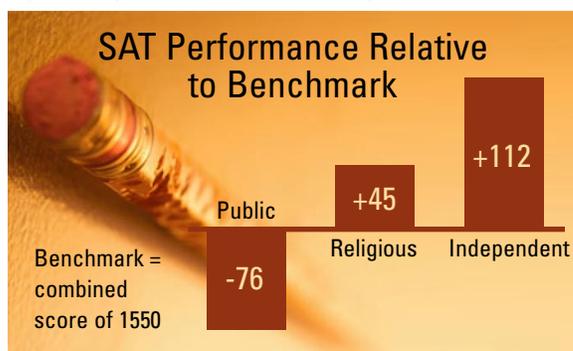
Students who met the benchmark also shared "a number of other critically important academic characteristics that must be expanded to all students if our nation is to make meaningful gains in educational attainment." For one, benchmark students

were "likely to have completed a core curriculum," defined as "four or more years of English and three or more years each of mathematics, natural science, and social science or history." They were also

more likely "to have taken honors or AP courses and "to be ranked in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class by GPA."

According to the College Board, the SAT is "used in the admission process at nearly all four-year colleges and universities in the United States."

An infographic of the SAT results is available at [capenet.org/infoSAT.html](http://capenet.org/infoSAT.html).



Schools	Reading	Writing	Math
Independent	536	545	581
Religious	531	528	536
Public	491	480	503
National Mean	496	488	514

**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  
Executive Director: Joe McTigue

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## Department of Justice Lawsuit Sparks Firestorm

A lawsuit by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) challenging implementation of a Louisiana school voucher program has sparked a firestorm of reaction, including newspaper editorials, press conferences, and letters of protest from members of Congress.

In August, the DOJ asked a federal court to stop the state from awarding vouchers, starting with the 2014-15 school year, to students in districts that are under federal desegregation orders unless authorized to do so by “the appropriate federal court overseeing the applicable desegregation case.”

### Bewildering

In early September, the editorial board of *The Washington Post* noted that 90 percent of the children who receive vouchers in Louisiana are black, all are poor, and “if not for the state assistance, would be consigned to low-performing or failing schools with little chance of learning the skills they will need to succeed as adults.” The *Post* called it “bewildering, if not downright perverse, for the Obama administration to use the banner of civil rights to bring a misguided suit that would block these disadvantaged students from getting the better educational opportunities they are due.”

Editorials against the suit also appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, the *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, and the *Chicago Tribune*.

### Handcuff Children to Failing Schools

In his own opinion piece about the suit in the *Post*, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal said that President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder “would rip children out of their schools and handcuff them to the failing schools they previously attended. And, in the ultimate irony, they are using desegregation orders set up to prevent discrimination against minority children to try to do it.”

Weeks later, Jindal again denounced the suit, calling it “cynical, immoral and hypocritical.” He spoke at the National Press Club, where he was joined by former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and South Carolina Senator Tim Scott (R).

Meanwhile, House Republican leaders sent a letter September 17 to Attorney General Holder protesting the suit. House Speaker John Boehner (OH), Majority Leader Eric Cantor (VA), Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (CA), Republican Conference Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA), Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (MN), and Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Chairman Todd Rokita (IN) said the suit “is extremely troubling and paradoxical in nature” and, if successful, would force students “to remain in failing schools.” The letter urged Holder “to consider the effects of this poorly conceived motion on the very children you profess to be protecting.”

### Cease and Desist

On the Senate side, Lamar Alexander (TN), the senior Republican on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, sent a letter to Holder requesting that DOJ “cease and desist from any further

activity that would interfere with Louisiana’s innovative efforts to provide high-quality school choices for all of its students.”

Opponents of the suit also took to the blogosphere. Grover J. “Russ” Whitehurst, director of the Brown Center on Education Policy and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, wrote that “if the DOJ persists in actions that have the effect of denying poor black parents whose children are trapped in underperforming schools the opportunity to choose something different and possibly better, then this is the civil rights division of the DOJ suppressing civil rights—ironic and tragic in the extreme.”

Protests also took the form of legal action. The Goldwater Institute and the Black Alliance for Educational Options filed to intervene in the case on behalf of families harmed by the lawsuit. Goldwater Institute litigator Clint Bolick said, “It is perverse that an order designed to secure educational opportunities for black children is being wielded to destroy those opportunities. This program is not a violation of desegregation orders; it’s a vindication of desegregation orders.”



Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal joins former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott to discuss the DOJ lawsuit against Louisiana’s voucher program at a National Press Club Newsmaker, Sept. 18, 2013. (Photo by Noel St. John)

## NAGB Member Urges Schools to Participate in NAEP

The private school representative to the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) urged the private school community to participate fully in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a national measure of what America's students know and can do in key subject areas.

Father Joseph M. O'Keefe, S.J., professor at Boston College, spoke at the ninth annual Private School Leadership Conference sponsored by the Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE) at the U.S. Department of Education. The event took place September 23, 2013, at the department's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

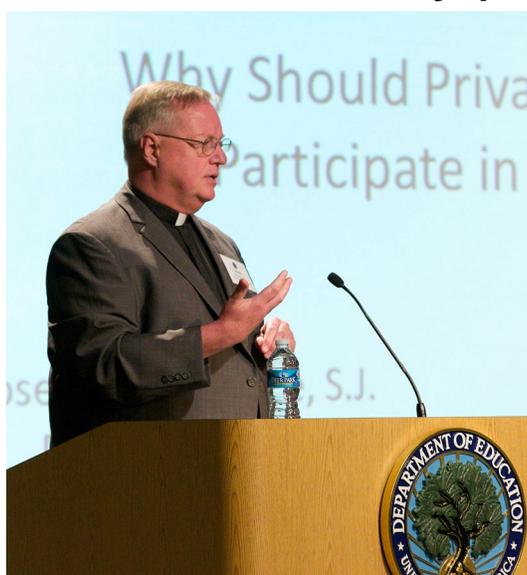
In an era when parents, donors, and policymakers want proof of educational performance, NAEP is a reliable gauge. "Like it or not, we live in a world that is about measures of quality," O'Keefe said, and NAEP provides "long-standing national evidence that private schools are high quality." What's more, it provides that evidence "without invading the autonomy, the local culture, the particular mission, and history of the school."

### Positive Results

O'Keefe reviewed results from a host of NAEP assessments demonstrating that students in private schools outscore the national average (see table). "Time and time again, over many, many years, in every different subject, what NAEP has provided is evidence of the effectiveness of private schools," he said. The text from one of his slides reinforced the point: "NAEP has consistently demonstrated how the performance of students in private schools compares positively to the performance of students in

public schools and to the rest of the nation."

Citing civic responsibility as one reason private schools should participate in NAEP, O'Keefe reminded the group how important it is "to have



Father Joseph O'Keefe, S.J., speaks to private school leaders at the U.S. Department of Education Sept. 23, 2013. (Photo by Paul Wood, U.S. Dept. of Education)

a complete picture of academic progress in the nation." It would be "tragic," he said, if the nine percent of American students who attend private schools were not part of that picture.

### 300 Schools

Approximately 300 private schools will be selected this school year to participate in NAEP assessments in civics, geography, U.S. history, technology and engineering literacy (TEL), as well as a pilot test in science. A threshold percentage of selected schools must participate

in order for aggregate private school results to be reported (scores for individual schools are never reported). In past years in certain grades, the threshold was not met, and private school scores were not published.

Individual students are only tested in one subject, and each student only takes a segment of the test, resulting in a total time commitment of 90 to 120 minutes. NAEP staff will administer the tests at schools between January 27 and March 7, 2014.

CAPE regularly reports on NAEP results on its Web site and in various publications. A CAPE letter urging selected schools to participate in the 2013-14 cycle noted, "Private school data make an important contribution to the picture of American education and to future policy decisions." The letter said that since private schools account for roughly 25 percent of the nation's schools, "it is important that our students' performance be included in all data that describe the condition of American education."

Grade 8 NAEP Scale Scores			
Test	Year	Public	Private
Reading	2011	264	282
Writing	2011	149	164
Math	2011	283	296
Science	2011	151	163
Civics	2010	150	169
Geography	2010	260	276
History	2010	265	280
Music	2008	149	163
Visual Arts	2008	149	159

## Choice Times Two

It's not too early to circle dates on the calendar for two upcoming events designed to advance parental choice in education.

The American Center for School Choice is sponsoring a summit for faith and school leaders from various religious traditions across the country November 19 in New York City at the American Bible Society. The event is intended "to increase the effectiveness of our faith communities in empowering parents to access our schools and to increase the understanding of the important role these schools play in American education."

The summit is part of the center's effort "to increase coordination among faiths to enact more legislation that empowers parents to access the school of their choice, including a religious school." The center is also working "to shift the messaging about faith-based schools so that more Americans understand that choosing one of these schools is an extension of the free exercise of religion by individuals and families."

More information about the summit is available at <<http://summit.amcsc.org>>.

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National School Choice Week (NSCW) will take place January 26 through February 1, 2014, and schools can register now to receive free "event kits" to celebrate what promises to be a major media promotion of school choice.

According to organizers, the 50-person kits are available at no cost to schools that plan to host events during NSCW. Schools can plan whatever kind of event they want — "a community open house, a recruitment drive, a pep rally, a student/teacher awards ceremony, etc. The sky is the limit, and every event counts!"

Kits include scarves, rally signs, promotion posters, stickers, a yard sign, and banner. Visit <[www.schoolchoiceweek.com/schools](http://www.schoolchoiceweek.com/schools)> to register today.

Return service requested

## CAPE notes

★ U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced September 24 the names of 286 schools identified by the U.S. Department of Education as the National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2013.

Schools were selected either because their standardized test scores in reading and math placed them among the top-performing schools in the nation or state, or because they served disadvantaged students and made extraordinary progress in improving performance.

Fifty private schools were among the awardees this year. Each state's commissioner of education nominates public schools for the award, and CAPE nominates private schools. All winning schools will be honored at an awards ceremony November 18-19 in Washington, D.C.

"Excellence in education matters, and we should honor the schools that are leading the way to prepare students for success in college and careers," said Secretary Duncan. "National Blue Ribbon Schools represent examples of educational excellence, and their work reflects the belief that every child in America deserves a world-class education."

An infographic that looks at this year's private schools is available at [www.capenet.org/pdf/BRSinfo.pdf](http://www.capenet.org/pdf/BRSinfo.pdf).

The following schools were named National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2013.



**Alabama** – Holy Spirit Regional Catholic School, Huntsville • **Arizona** – Xavier College Preparatory, Phoenix • **Arkansas** – Immaculate Conception Catholic School, Fort Smith • **California** – La Reina High School, Thousand Oaks • Valley Christian Junior High School, San Jose • **Connecticut** – St. Jude School, Monroe • **District of Columbia** – St. Peter School, Washington • **Florida** – Arthur I. Meyer Jewish Academy, West Palm Beach • The First Academy Middle School, Orlando • **Georgia** – St. Catherine of Siena Catholic School, Kennesaw • **Illinois** – Northside Catholic Academy, Chicago • Our Lady of Mount Carmel Academy, Chicago • Queen of Angels School, Chicago • St. Andrew School, Chicago • St. Francis Xavier Elementary School, LaGrange • St. Joan of Arc School, Evanston • St. Michael School, Orland Park • St. Norbert School, Northbrook • St. Peter Lutheran School, Arlington Heights • **Indiana** – Holy Family School, Jasper • St. Louis de Montfort Catholic School, Fishers • St. Maria Goretti School, Westfield • Trinity School at Greenlawn, South Bend • **Louisiana** – Most Blessed Sacrament School, Baton Rouge • **Maryland** – Holy Cross School, Garrett Park • St. John the Evangelist School, Silver Spring • St. Joseph School, Cockeysville • St. Margaret School, Bel Air • St. Mary's Elementary

School, Annapolis • **Missouri** – Messiah Lutheran School, St. Charles • **Nebraska** – St. Patrick's Catholic School-Elkhorn, Elkhorn • **New Jersey** – Academy of Our Lady, Glen Rock • Aquinas Academy, Livingston • Immaculate Conception School, Annandale • Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva, Edison • St. Francis Academy, Union City • St. Rose of Lima Academy, Short Hills • **Ohio** – Incarnate Word Academy, Parma Heights • Incarnation Catholic School, Centerville • St. Margaret of York, Loveland • St. Paul the Apostle Catholic School, Westerville • **Pennsylvania** – St. Andrew School, Newtown • St. Patrick School, Malvern • **South Dakota** – St. Joseph School, Pierre • **Tennessee** – Holy Rosary Academy, Nashville • **Virginia** – Sacred Heart Academy, Winchester • St. Patrick Catholic School, Norfolk • St. Veronica Catholic School, Chantilly • **Wisconsin** – Aquinas Middle School, La Crosse • Our Redeemer Lutheran School, Wauwatosa.

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