

Council for American Private Education

# CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

## Millennials Prefer Private Schools and Give Them High Grades

If given the opportunity to select whatever school they could for their child, more millennials would prefer a private school than any other option, according to a national poll released October 11 by EdChoice, formerly the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

Asked "If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, and financial costs and transportation were of no concern, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?" 43 percent of mil-

lennials said they would select a private school (including independent, parochial, and religious); 28 percent would choose a regular public school; 13 percent, a home school; and 8 percent said they would choose a charter school.

Respondents were split into two groups, half being asked the question above and the other half asked the same question without the condition "and financial costs and transportation were of no concern." Results varied, but when the two groups were combined, 38 percent of millennials said they would choose a private school; 30 percent, a regular public school; 12 percent would homeschool their child; and 11 percent would enroll their child in a charter school.

### Glaring Disconnect

The report noted a "glaring disconnect with actual school enrollment patterns." It continued: "The reality check is profound. About 83 percent of K-12 students attend public schools across the country. Only about 10 percent of students enroll in private schools. Roughly 5 percent of

students currently go to public charter schools. It is estimated that just under 3 percent of the country's students are home-schooled."

### What Drives the Choice?

Among millennials who selected a private school as their preferred school type,

18 percent said the most important school characteristic influencing their choice was school quality and the opportunity for a better education. Twelve percent said class size and student-teacher ratios were

the driving force of their decision, and another 12 percent said individual attention and a customized education were the main reasons. A host of other private school attributes also attracted millennials, though no single one attracted more than 10 per-

### School Grades

The preference of millennials for private schools was also reflected in how they rated different types of schools. Respondents were asked to give a grade of A through F to the schools in their area. The report provided results for all respondents as well as for those who actually gave a grade to each school type. As the report put it: "Millennials are much more likely to give grades A or B to private/parochial schools in their communities compared with their local public schools." More precisely, "When examining only those

responses giving grades to different school types in their communities, we observed approximately 41 percent of millennials give an A or B to local public schools; 74 percent give an A or B to local private/parochial schools; and 68 percent give an A or B to charter schools."

Looking at all respondents, "approximately 35 percent of millennials give an A or B to local public schools; 51 percent give an A or B to local private/parochial schools; and 42 percent give those high grades to public charter schools."

### Schooling in America

This is the fifth year EdChoice has conducted what it describes as "a national poll on the state of K-12 education and opinions about school choice policies," and the first year it has oversampled millennials.

"We wanted to look not just at the national trend lines on school choice over the past five years, but also at how millennials think about these issues and what types of activities families are undertaking to access K-12 schooling options," said Ed-

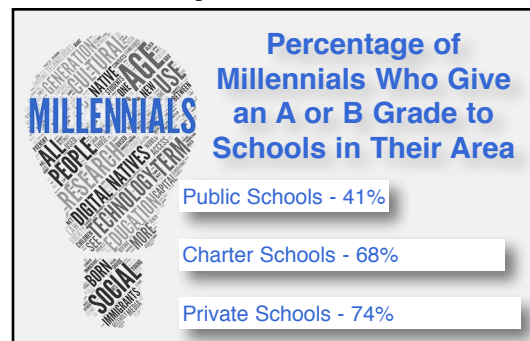
Choice President and CEO Robert Enlow.

"Today, 83 percent of students attend public district schools, but only 28 percent of parents told us that's their preference," Enlow said. "These

data once again make the case for more educational choices across the board."

Two reports are available from the 2016 "Schooling in America" survey: one providing results from the general public, and one providing results from millennials. Both are available for download at <[www.edchoice.org](http://www.edchoice.org)>.

[image © XtravaganT / Adobe Stock]



**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
- Council of Islamic Schools in North America
- Council on Educational Standards and Accountability
- 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
- Affiliated State Organizations

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## Science Performance Improves in Grades 4 and 8

Media reports across the country October 27 captured some positive news about the performance of the nation's students in science: fourth- and eighth-graders are improving. In fourth grade, 38 percent of students nationally scored at or above the proficient level of achievement in 2015, up from 34 percent in 2009. In eighth grade, 34 percent of students scored proficient or higher, compared to 30 percent six years ago.

There was essentially no change in the performance of twelfth-grade students since 2009.

### Varied Results

As is always the case with results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the performance of students varied by type of school. The average science scale score for fourth-graders attending Catholic schools (167) was 14 points higher than the score for students attending public schools (153). In eighth grade, the Catholic/public difference was also 14 points (again, 167 vs. 153). And in twelfth grade, the Catholic school advantage was 18 points (167 vs. 149).

The science assessment scale ranges from 0 to 300. The 50th percentile mark for grade 4 is 157, and the 75th percentile mark is 178. So just over 20 points on the fourth grade scale represent 25 percentiles, information helpful in situating the Catholic school scores. In grade 8, the 50th and 75th percentile points are identical to those in grade 4 (157 and 178, respectively), while in grade 12, they differ slightly, with a 50th percentile score of 151 and a 75th percentile score of 176.

### Missing Results

Missing from the 2015 science results were breakouts for private schools in general. Although enough Catholic schools (a subgroup of private schools) participated in NAEP to yield results for that sector, the response rate among other private schools unfortunately fell well be-

low the 70 percent threshold required to produce separate private school findings that accurately reflect the private school population. National school participation rates for the science assessment at grade 4 were 61 percent for private schools and 83 percent for Catholic schools. At grade 8 they were 56 percent for private schools and 80 percent for Catholic schools. And at grade 12 they were 57 percent for private schools and 76 percent for Catholic schools.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which oversees the administration of the tests, the NAEP science assessment results "were based on a representative sample of 115,400 fourth-graders from 7,650 schools, 110,900 eighth-graders from 730 schools, and 11,000 twelfth-graders from 730 schools."

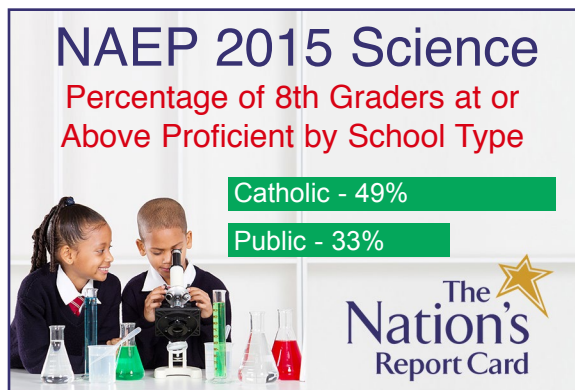
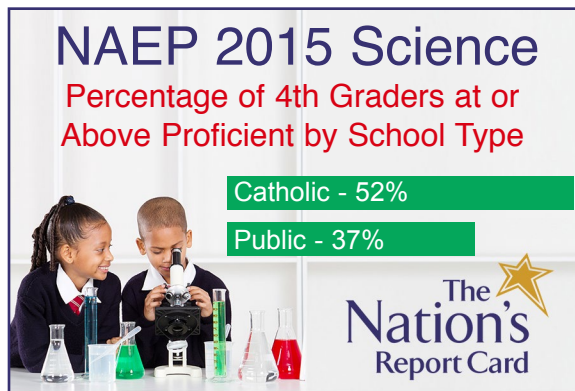
### Higher Proficiency Levels

NCES also presents results as percentages of students meeting various achievement levels. As the accompanying charts demonstrate, a significantly higher percentage of Catholic school students scored at or above the proficient level than public school students in grades 4 and 8. Fifty-two percent of Catholic school fourth-graders reached that mark, compared to 37 percent of fourth-grade students in public schools. In eighth grade, 49 percent of Catholic school students and 33 percent of public school students reached or exceeded the proficient level. In grade 12, the comparable percentage for Catholic schools was 37, and for public schools, 21.

According to the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which sets policy for NAEP, "The 2015 science assessment measured students' knowledge of physical science, life science, and Earth and space sciences."

NAEP science results are available at [www.nationsreportcard.gov](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov).

[image © michaeljung / Adobe Stock]



## ESSA Private School Guidance Begins to Flow

Guidance on the new private school provisions of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) is starting to flow from the U.S. Department of Education, and more is expected soon as private school leaders begin to meet with district and state education officials to prepare for the 2017-18 school year, when ESSA finally takes full effect.

The new law includes numerous provisions advocated by the CAPE community to improve equitable services to private school students and teachers. For example, under Title I, which provides assistance to school districts to help high-need students do well in school, a school district now has to calculate funds for services to private school students based on its total Title I allocation.

Under Title II-A, designed to ensure high-quality teachers, a district now has to set aside a proportionate share of funds for services to teachers in private schools based on its total Title II-A allocation, not just on the funds it earmarks for professional development.

In addition, the new law requires states to designate an ombudsman to monitor and enforce the requirements imposed on school districts to ensure equitable services to private school students and teachers.

Further, the all-important consultation process between public school officials and private school officials is strengthened to a significant degree by specifying that the goal of consultation shall be to reach “agreement on how to provide equitable and effective programs for eligible private school children.”

### Guidance Starting to Flow

So far, the U.S. Department of Education has issued several guidance documents on ESSA, including those relating to Title II-A (preparing educators), Title III-A (English learners), Title IV-A (student support and academic enrichment), and early learning. The title-specific guidance documents all contain footnotes addressing services relating to private school students and teachers that are similar to this footnote in the Title IV-A guidance: “New or

changed requirements that affect the equitable participation of private school students, teachers and other educational personnel under the ESEA will be addressed in forthcoming guidance. Except as otherwise provided in that guidance, the existing non-regulatory Title IX, Part E Uniform Provisions, Subpart 1 – Private Schools (Revised March 2009) will remain applicable.”

The “forthcoming guidance” referenced in

the footnote, which will specifically address private school issues, is expected to be released before the middle of January.

### Title IV-A

The new Title IV-A block grant program provides states and school districts with considerable flexibility in directing funds to a broad array of educational purposes. Fortunately, Title IV-A is covered by provisions under Section 8501 of the *Elementary*

*and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) that require states and school districts to provide equitable services to address the needs of private school students and teachers. Indeed, a school district’s application for the grant has to include an assurance that it will comply with the equitable services provisions.

The new Title IV-A guidance document notes that public school district officials must “consult with private school officials to identify the needs of eligible private school students and teachers consistent with the requirements in section 8501 of the ESEA.”

### New Dynamic

Private school officials across the country are hoping the new provisions in ESSA will result in measurable improvements in services to students and teachers in private schools. And their hope is shared by others. At a recent conference of private school leaders sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Philip H. Rosenfelt, the department’s deputy general counsel, expressed optimism that the new private school provisions in ESSA will provide a “new dynamic” at the local, state, and federal levels and a “fresh start” in addressing equitable services issues.

[image © Robert Kneschke / Adobe Stock]

## Religious Freedom

What is the “role of civil society in the protection of education rights for the more defenseless people and groups?” That very question was the focus of a conference in Budapest, Hungary, last month sponsored by the European Association for Education Rights and Policy (ELA).

Dr. Charles Glenn, a member of CAPE’s board of directors and professor emeritus at Boston University, was a featured speaker at the conference, addressing the topic “Strengthening Civil Society.”

In his paper, Glenn made the case for preserving voluntary associations and not-for-profit institutions, including religious schools, as “an essential part of a healthy civil society and of a democratic political order.”

How can public policy protect a school’s religious freedom? Glenn argued that government should “distinguish between education and instruction, with the latter encompassing the skills and knowledge which students should acquire, while the former refers to the formation of character and life-perspectives.” Government “may reasonably require that schools provide effective instruction in prescribed areas,” but “it is not government’s role to prescribe how schools educate students into a responsible, caring, and purposeful life.” The education dimension should be left “to the educators, parents, and supporters.”

Further, government should “base public policy on structural pluralism” to allow “different worldview-based communities to operate their own institutions reflecting their own norms, provided that...individuals be completely free to enter or to leave them.”

Glenn’s bottom line is this: “Government agencies and courts need to learn to think in new ways about the nature and goals of regulation and of public support in order to promote a flourishing, pluralistic civil society.”

## CAPE notes

★ Applications, rules, and eligibility criteria for the 2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools recognition program are now available on CAPE's Web site at <[capenet.org/brs.html](http://capenet.org/brs.html)>. The U.S. Department of Education released the application October 20.

CAPE administers the private school component of the program, while state education departments administer the public school component.

Private schools interested in applying must register for the program no later than November 15, 2016.

★ U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King announced last month the eight 2016 recipients of the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership. Among the awardees is Dr. Judy Armstrong, principal of St. Thomas More Catholic School in Baton Rouge, LA.

"The Bell Award recognizes principals who are transformational leaders. They inspire greatness in their students, in their teachers, and in their communities," King said. "Winning a Bell Award is a small acknowledgment of the tireless work these principals have done in their effort to create positive school cultures where teachers are empowered and all students, regardless of background, can and do succeed."

According to a posting on the Web site of the U.S. Department of Education, "Dr. Armstrong strives to develop and implement a rigorous, engaging, and dynamic academic environment that fulfills

the needs of her students while providing a supportive and nurturing school community." She and the school "have been able to adapt to a changing and unexpected world."

One example of adaptation: "Three weeks into her term as principal, Armstrong opened St. Thomas More's doors to 440 students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina, an unanticipated population shift that required the school to quickly grapple with new ways to reach students."

More information about Dr. Armstrong's inspiring accomplishments are available at <<http://nationalblueribbon-schools.ed.gov>>.

★ "Clearly, from the choices being made by parents, education is not a 'one-size-fits-all' enterprise in this state," writes Sharon Schmeling, executive director of the Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools, the Wisconsin CAPE affiliate. Schmeling's engaging essay against politicians who want to dismantle school choice was published last month in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* under the headline "School Wars Don't Work."

Schmeling argues that Wisconsin is not "well-served by efforts to force children to attend schools that their parents think are a bad fit, and don't provide the education their children need." She notes that over 25 years ago the state legislature started the process of creating various K-12 choice programs "to provide children the opportunity to attend the school of their

parents' choice," an idea that "caught on like wildfire."

Wisconsin now has public school choice or "open enrollment," notes Schmeling, as well as special needs scholarships, vouchers for low-income students, and tax deductions for private school tuition. Moreover, many parents exercise choice by moving into a school district with schools that meet their family's needs.

But some critics, says Schmeling, would like to "take Wisconsin back 26 years when families had no options for their children."

She reminds readers that as some politicians "try to pit public and private schools against each other," they should remember "that the point of all this money is to educate children successfully — not sustain systems, public or private, for the sake of adults."

"If a parent feels a school is failing her child," Schmeling asks, "shouldn't we want to find a better option?"

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



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