

Coleman II: The Data Are In

"What do we know about private schools?" This question, serving as the working title of a Washington policy seminar on April 7, sponsored by the National Commission on Education Statistics, can now be answered: "A great deal more than we did before publication of James Coleman's 271-page draft report, "Public and Private Schools."

The report, dubbed "Coleman II" in deference to his earlier study of educational opportunity for black and white children, was based on the Spring 1980 data collected for *High School and Beyond*, a national longitudinal study of U.S. high school seniors and sophomores sponsored by NCES and conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The study sample involved 1,016 high schools and 58,728 students.

Coleman establishes the context for his data analysis by acknowledging that policy makers differ on the desired role of private education in the country: some would augment it; others would diminish it. Arguing that their proposals are predicated on assumptions about private schools, Coleman examines the data to see if they yield evidence to substantiate or disprove certain suppositions.

Looking first at eight premises underlying policies that would increase the role of private schools, he concludes that two of them are completely valid, three are only partially so, and three are not supportable by the data at hand. In that order, they are:

1. *Private schools produce better cognitive outcomes than do public schools:* even when family background factors predictive of success were taken into account, students in private schools showed greater achievement than students in public schools. (Coleman enters a caveat here, saying "despite extensive statistical control on parental background, there may very well be other unmeasured factors in the self-selection into the private

sector that are associated with higher achievement.")

2. *Private schools provide a safer, more disciplined and more ordered environment than do public schools:* Analysis proved these elements to account for the greatest difference "in school functioning" between public and private schools.

3. *Private schools provide better character and personality development than do public schools:* Of the attributes measured by the study ("self-esteem" and "fate control"), students in non-Catholic, or, as Coleman categorizes them, "other private schools," scored higher than either students in Catholic or public schools. (He suggests that an explanation might lie in the low student-teacher ratio at these "other private schools.")

4. *Private schools are smaller and thus bring about greater degree of participation in sports and other activities than do public schools:* Evidence supported this premise for "other private schools," but not for Catholic schools.

5. *Private schools have a smaller class size and thus allow teachers and students to have greater contact:* The first half of this contention proved to be partially true, i.e., that "other private schools" have distinctly lower student-teacher ratios than public schools. However, Catholic schools have slightly higher ratios. Notwithstanding this difference, the data yielded no direct evidence on contact between students and teachers.

6. *Private schools are more successful in creating an interest in learning than are public schools:* The data analyzed neither confirmed nor denied this premise.

7. *Private schools encourage interest in higher education and lead more of their students to attend college than do public schools with comparable students:* The data contained no strong evidence to support this premise.

8. *Private schools are more efficient than public schools, accomplishing their task at a lower cost:* The data contained no evidence to support this premise.

Turning next to seven premises underlying policies that would decrease the role of private schools, Coleman found two of them verifiable by the data, three only partially valid, and two not confirmable. In that order, they are:

1. *Private schools are divisive along religious lines, segregating different religious groups into dif-*

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ferent schools: The evidence supported this contention, showing that "private schools do contribute to the segregation of Catholic and non-Catholic students . . ."

2. *Private schools do not provide the educational range that public schools do, particularly in vocational and other non-traditional courses or programs:* Data indicated that private schools provide primarily academic programs and have few vocational or technical courses. Some of the smaller private schools offer a limited range of academic subjects.

3. *Private schools are socially divisive along income lines, creaming students from higher income backgrounds, and segregating them into elite schools:* The data showed that the public sector displays a higher degree of internal segregation by income than does the private, although "other private" schools' students come from "somewhat higher," and Catholic school students come from "slightly higher," income backgrounds.

4. *Private schools are divisive along racial lines in two ways: they contain few blacks or other minorities, thus segregating whites in private schools from blacks in public ones; and the private sector itself is more racially segregated than the public sector:* While the data demonstrated that blacks are underrepresented in private schools, it showed that Hispanics are not. Moreover, the public sector revealed itself to be far more internally segregated than the private sector.

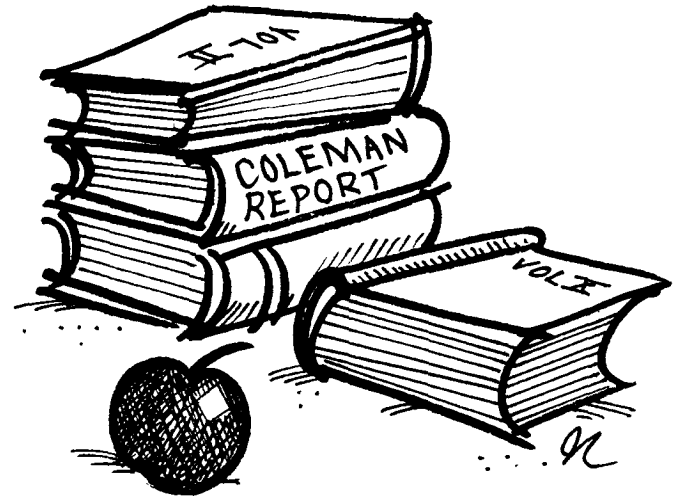
5. *Private schools are unhealthily competitive, and thus public schools provide a healthier affective development:* Indirect evidence suggested that "other private" schools' students have a higher sense of self-esteem and fate control than public school students.

6. *Private schools have a narrower range of extracurricular activities, and thus deprive their students of participation in school activities outside the classroom:* The data contained no evidence to support this conclusion.

7. *Facilitating the use of private schools aids whites more than blacks and those better off financially at the expense of those worse off; as a result, it increases racial and economic segregation:* Data analysis supported the view that a tuition tax credit or school voucher would facilitate private school

enrollment for lower income families more than it would for higher income families; thus "either of those policies would even more greatly increase the proportion of blacks or students from low-income backgrounds in the private sector." Policies which opened access to private schools "would not increase segregation along racial or economic lines but would decrease it . . ."

Note: A report on the second presentation at the policy seminar, "Minority Students in Catholic Secondary Schools," by Dr. Andrew M. Greeley, will be published in the next issue of CAPE OUTLOOK.



But According to NAEP . . .

Private school students may be more proficient at reading than their public school counterparts, but their prowess is attributable to their socioeconomic status, not to the kind of school they attend, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

NAEP examined the reading skills of 9, 13 and 17-year-olds who attended a nationwide sample of public and private schools in 1979-1980. Students were tested for literal comprehension, inferential comprehension and reference skills.

National scores revealed that private school children earned 5 percentage points more than public school children at age 9; 6 points at age 13; and 6.5 points at age 17.

However, further examination of the data showed that public and private schools were deal-

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ing with "different clienteles," with private schools serving "a much higher proportion of students from backgrounds known to be associated with higher academic performance and a lower proportion of students from backgrounds associated with low academic performance."

NAEP concludes, "... private school students performed somewhat better on the reading assessment The difference appears to be accounted for largely by the different student populations involved."

Legislative Update

Tuition Tax Credits

S.550 (Packwood, R-OR; Moynihan, D-NY; Roth, R-DE).

Pending before Subcommittee on Taxation and Debt Management.

H.R. 380 (Luken, D-OH) and others.

Pending before Ways and Means Committee.

Youth Training and Employment

H.R. 3219 (Hawkins, D-CA).

Simple extension of Title IV-A of CETA.

Pending before Committee on Education and Labor.

S.648 (Quayle, R-IN).

Committee on Labor and Human Resources voted to extend youth employment legislation for a year.

Charitable Deductions to Extend to Non-Itemizers

S.170 (Packwood, R-OR and Moynihan, D-NY).

Pending before Finance Committee with 24 co-sponsors.

H.R.501 (Conable, R-NY and Gephardt, D-MO) and others.

Pending before Ways and Means Committee with 230 co-sponsors.

Youth Opportunity Wage

S.348 (Hatch, R-UT); S.430 (Percy, R-IL); S.658 (Nickles, R-OK).

Pending before Labor Subcommittee.

H.R.157 (Campbell, R-SC); H.R.1068 (Hinson, R-MS); H.R.2001 (Simon, D-IL).

Pending before Subcommittee on Labor Standards.

Guidance for Elementary School Children

S.948 (Stafford, R-VT).

Pending before Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities.

H.R.1598 (Perkins, D-KY).

Pending before Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education.

Tax-Exempt Status of Private Schools

H.R.82 (Ashbrook, R-OH) and others.

Pending before Ways and Means Committee.

Sunset Review

H.R.2 (Blanchard, D-MI).

Pending before Rules Committee and Subcommittee on Legislation and National Security.

H.R.58 (Long, D-LA); H.R.502 (Roe, D-NJ).

Pending before Rules Committee.

Foreign Language Training

H.R.3231 (Simon, D-IL).

Pending before Subcommittees on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education; and Post-secondary Education.

National Commission on the Educational Problems of America's Linguistic Minority Children

H.J.Res.219 (Roybal, D-CA).

Pending before Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education.

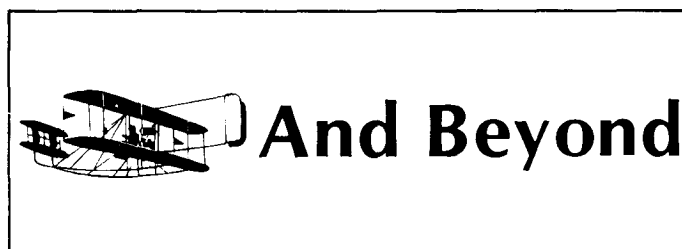
Capenotes

... CAPE's Executive Director spoke in late April at Arizona CAPE-sponsored tuition tax credit meetings in Tucson and Phoenix.

... CAPE participated in Secretary of Education Bell's recent briefing for educational leaders on the block grant legislation.

... An article on tuition tax credits by the Executive Director appeared in the May 11 issue of *Education Times*.

... CAPE's latest development appeal has just been sent out to nearly 500 potential friends of private education within CAPE member organizations.



The States and the Schools

The issue of private school-state relationships is appearing with increasing regularity on the dockets of state courts and calendars of state legislatures. Within recent months, state governments have coped with such matters as private school placement of handicapped children, conditions of exemption from public school attendance rules and state regulation of religious schools.

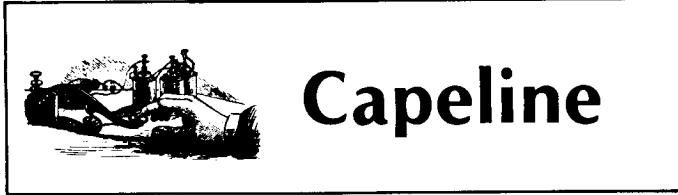
In *Commonwealth v. Springfield School Committee*, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that an amendment to the state constitution barring the use of public funds to aid private schools does not conflict with the placement of handicapped children in nonpublic schools.

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HB 1171 in South Dakota allows children to be excused from public school attendance but requires them to take a "nationally standardized achievement test of basic skills" to ensure that they make satisfactory progress in their alternative schools.

In Vermont, Senate Bill 52 would exempt religious schools from state oversight on the basis of a written explanation by the schools of their religious convictions against such regulation.



● **The Private High School Today:** This survey of private high schools, conducted by CAPE and the National Institute of Education, was undertaken to provide a national picture of private secondary education. It is a companion piece to the survey of public schools by NIE and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (*High School '77*). The 169-page volume includes a description of the nature of private schools (programs, organization, management) and the kinds of services and programs they provide. A comparison is drawn between the attitudes and goals of public and private school heads, and a close look is directed at the Catholic high school. External pressures and their effect on management practices are examined for both sectors. The susceptibility of private schools to marketplace motivation is scrutinized, followed by an inquiry into the private schools' response to parental desire for school involvement. The book

ends with a discussion of implications for practice, future research and policy. It may be obtained, free of charge, from Educational Finance Program, NIE, 1200 19th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20208.

● **NEH Fellowships:** NEH announces a June 1 deadline for applications for Fellowships for Independent Study and Research. Applications are welcomed from those "...who work in the humanities, from people with broad humanistic interests as well as from scholars working in specialties." Amount of stipends can be as high as \$22,000 for work begun between January, 1982 and Spring, 1983. Write Division of Fellowships and Seminars, Mail Stop 101, National Endowment for the Humanities, 806 15th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506.

● **AASA Resolution:** One of the continuing resolutions enacted on February 15 by the American Association of School Administrators' 1981 Delegate Assembly reads as follows: "Public-Nonpublic Cooperation and Respect: AASA believes that public and nonpublic educators should strive for communication, cooperation, mutual respect, and trust, despite pressures caused by changing enrollments, fiscal austerity, and differing philosophical approaches."

● **State Boards-Private Schools Study:** Robert L. Lamborn's study, *The State Board's Role with Private Schools*, has been requested by many patrons of the Eric Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse. According to ERIC, it is in demand as a source for individual research efforts. The ten-page paper can be read on microfiche at any ERIC collection, or can be ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service at P.O. Box 190, Arlington, VA 22210 at a cost of \$2.00 for the paper copy and \$.91 for the microfiche version.

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