

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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Private School Students Bolster National Exam Scores

Above Average on SAT

Hidden behind the headlines last month about the rise in HSAT math scores was the above-average performance posted by private school students.

Overall, SAT takers from the class of 2000 had an average math score of 514, the highest in 30 years and an increase of 3 points since last year. Their average verbal score was 505, a standstill level since 1996. But when performance is analyzed by type of high school, some significant differences emerge. Public school scores were 510 math and 501 verbal; religious school scores were 523 math and 529 verbal, and independent school scores were 566 math and 547 verbal. The higher private school scores clearly help lift the national average and may be responsible for as much as one-third of the overall increase in math scores since last year.

Private schools account for 17 percent of senior SAT takers from traditional schools, even though they enroll only 9 percent of the nation's 12th graders. The term "traditional school" does not include home schools, charter schools, or correspondence schools, which the College Board reports in a separate catchall category.

The College Board Web site posts private school scores for each year since 1996. Between that base year and now, combined SAT scores (math and verbal) have risen 6 points for the nation as a whole, 3 points for public schools, 17 points for religious schools, and 10 points for independent schools. In each of the five years, public schools enrolled 83 percent of college-bound SAT takers from traditional schools; religious schools enrolled 12 percent, and independent schools 5 percent.

For more information about SAT scores, visit the College Board Web site at <http://www.collegeboard.org>.

	Verbal	Math
National	505	514
Public	501	510
Religious	529	523
Independent	547	566

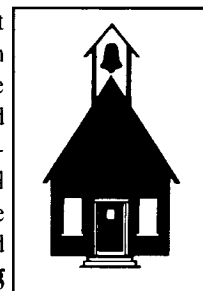
Above Average on NAEP

Like the two finalists in *Survivor*, Al Gore and George Bush are pleading their cases in preparation for the national tribal council's ultimate decision in November. Among the issues being employed to influence the outcome, education has emerged as an especially intriguing one, with each candidate hoping his positions will help win him the political equivalent of an immunity necklace.

So, when the National Center for Education Statistics last month released a major report on trends in student performance — a report that provided some good news and bad news about the nation's schools — it was no surprise that the Bush campaign and the Clinton-Gore administration seized different details to support different interpretations. Bush, apparently referring to the stagnant or declining scores in science and reading since 1992, promised he would "not repeat the mediocrity of the 1990's." He also denounced the wide achievement gap between black and white students. Education Secretary Richard Riley, on the other hand, using 1990 rather than 1992 as the base year, was able to say most scores were up significantly during the 90's. And he made sure to emphasize the generally consistent upward trend in math scores since 1973, noting that "for every age level in 1999, the math scores reached their highest level ever."

Private School Performance

But for all the scrutiny they gave the numerous charts and tables in the trend report, the campaigns — and for that matter, the media — completely ignored some significant data in the document: that relating to the performance of students in private schools. It turns out that those students, since the time NCES first started making public-private test score comparisons, have consistently scored well above the national average in all three subject areas (reading, mathematics, and



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CAPE Symposium on Funding for School Choice

In the same city where 75 years ago the Supreme Court ruled that parents have the right to choose religious and independent schools, CAPE sponsored a symposium this summer to explore ways to make that abstract right a practical reality for all parents, regardless of income. Four experts on private education addressed the topic "Government Funding for School Choice: The Legacy of *Pierce*" in a discussion that, coincidentally, took place just 12 days after the high court handed down yet another decision of potentially historic significance for private education, *Mitchell v. Helms*.

Lead-off speaker Burt Carney, director of legal and legislative issues for the Association of Christian Schools International, presented his organization's policies regarding tuition tax credits and vouchers "that further parental involvement and choice in education." Carney said ACSI supports legislation that provides aid to parents, rather than schools, and does not restrict schools in matters such as educational philosophy, operational policies, staff selection, curriculum content, and student admission. To win ACSI's approval, such legislation should also "require participating schools to be nondiscriminatory on the basis of race, sex, color, or national and ethnic origin." Employing these criteria, ACSI currently supports voucher ballot initiatives in California and Michigan.

Next Logical Step

While praising the *Pierce* decision's affirmation of the right of parents to direct the education of their children, Carney noted that the court did not take what he called "the next logical step" of providing some assistance to parents who choose alternative schools. He said the fact that "most low-income families are left with no choice at all" is an issue of social inequity and public justice that "needs to be addressed."

Striking a similar note, Leonard DeFiore, president of the National Catho-

lic Educational Association, said that implicit in the Supreme Court's recognition of the right of parents to educate their children is the responsibility of government to support that right. "Fundamental rights and duties are meaningless if the powerless can't exercise them," he said.

Liberty and Justice

Referring to the "liberty and justice" phrase from the Pledge of Allegiance, DeFiore said that *Pierce* secured "the liberty part, but what we continue to struggle for is the justice part."

His message was direct. "The question before the American people is whether the poor will be provided the same ability as the affluent to choose a suitable school for their children." The issue, he said, is a moral one: "The moral culpability of those who oversee the current inequities in American education and...choose to ignore them...is substantial, and we all know it."

Picking up on DeFiore's "liberty and justice" theme, Charles Glenn, a professor at Boston University and author of *The Ambiguous Embrace*, reminded the group that opponents of school choice invoke the same ideals — liberty and justice — to argue the other side. He said some educational elites argue, as did Plato, that society is best served if children are disconnected from the influences of their parents and raised by enlightened experts. Their most powerful metaphor for the teacher, he said, is that of emancipator, liberating children from tradition, family, and religion, and helping students become autonomous. The challenge for school choice advocates is to persuade the public "that justice and liberty are best served by allowing for educational freedom" — the freedom to establish alternative schools and also the freedom to choose those schools.

Glenn said the United States is "the only Western democracy, except Italy, that does not provide public funding for religious schools that parents choose."

Turning to recent Supreme Court decisions, David Zwiebel, executive vice president of Agudath Israel of America, hailed *Mitchell v. Helms*, which upheld the provision of instructional materials and equipment to students in religious schools, as a "harbinger of where the court will ultimately come down on the question of vouchers." But Zwiebel pointed out that on the same day it ruled on *Helms*, the court handed down *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*, which held that requiring the Boy Scouts to accept an avowed homosexual as a member and leader violated the organization's First Amendment rights.

Strings Attached

Zwiebel said one of the factors in the court's decision was the fact that the Boy Scouts organization was not a recipient of government funds. He wondered whether receipt of government funding would have resulted in an abridgement by the court of the organization's right to establish independent criteria for membership and leadership. "There's no question," he said, "that when government funds are involved, strings are often attached."

But while some people use the threat of potential government regulation as an argument against any form of government assistance, Zwiebel said he rejects that argument, noting "ample precedents" in which government funds leave institutions free to practice religious faith as they see fit. Various laws clearly provide the opportunity to both "receive the equitable benefits of government funds and nonetheless retain one's identity as a religious institution," he said.

CAPE's panel discussion took place on the eve of the U.S. Department of Education's two-day conference to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the *Pierce* decision. Summaries of the many excellent presentations at the Department's conference will be available soon on the USDE Web site at the following address: www.ed.gov/offices/OIA/NonPublic/.

Largest Adventist Teacher Conference in History

In the largest gathering of Adventist educators in history, more than 6,000 teachers and family members converged on Dallas, TX, last month for the church's first-ever division-wide teachers convention in North America. Part professional development, part spiritual renewal, and part family reunion, the meeting managed to attract about three-quarters of the North American Division's K-12 teachers and administrators.

The list of featured presenters for the four-day event read like a who's-who of motivational speakers, from futurist Leland Kaiser to educational theorist William Glasser to classroom manager Harry Wong. Top church officials also addressed the group, including Jan Paulsen, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and Don Schneider, president of the North American Division, both stalwarts of the church's school ministry.

Dr. Kaiser, an associate professor at the Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of Colorado, invited Adventist educators to become "paradigm busters," people who think differently about the future and challenge old ways. One paradigm that should go, he said, is the notion that teachers must teach. They instead should define their job as facilitating, coaching, mentoring, and encouraging students in self-directed learning. The teacher's ultimate aim should be to help children discover and become what God intends them to be, he said.

Kaiser urged the church to use tech-

nology to share resources and harness collective wisdom. Students across the country should be able to link to master teachers in any subject area, and teachers should collaborate in curriculum development. "Our strength is in connectivity," he said.

Kaiser also made pitches for tapping the experience and energy of retired members of the community, providing opportunities for the professional and spiritual renewal of teachers, and involving schools more fully in community social justice causes like fighting poverty and prejudice. "Schools should be a community resource as well as a church resource," he said.



Author William Glasser addresses Adventist educators in Dallas, TX.

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science) at all three age levels (9, 13, and 17). During the time span covered by the trend assessment, private school students have outperformed their public school peers by margins ranging from 11 to 23 points on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) scale. In 1999, the average difference between public and private school students for all subjects and age levels was 15.4 points, with a range of 11 to 21, depending on subject area and age level (see chart). To give some perspective to all of this, Education Department officials say that an increase of

10 points on the NAEP scale is roughly equivalent to an increase of one grade level.

The report does not relate the public-private performance difference to particular causes. Indeed, the authors caution readers not to draw conclusions about the relative effectiveness of public or private schools, noting that differences in student performance "may reflect a range of socioeconomic and educational factors not discussed in [the] report." They go on to point out that the superior private school performance might be explained by such factors as "per-pupil spending, academic

curricula, course-taking patterns, school climate, and the level of parental aspirations and involvement," most of which are school-related.

Given the wide public-private performance gap and the possibility that at least some of the gap can be explained by school effects, it would seem reasonable to examine more closely and comprehensively the private school performance phenomenon.

Come November, voters will decide whether Bush or Gore is the last to have his Tiki torch extinguished. With education continuing at the top of the country's list of concerns, and with the performance disparity continuing between black students and white students, whichever candidate is the last to survive would do well to support a study of the causes of private school NAEP achievement. It just might be that what's going on in these schools can bring about improvement in education across the board.

1999 NAEP Scores by Type of School			
	All Schools	Public	Private
Reading			
Age 17	288	286	307
Age 13	259	257	276
Age 9	212	210	226
Mathematics			
Age 17	308	307	321
Age 13	276	274	288
Age 9	232	231	242
Science			
Age 17	295	293	311
Age 13	256	254	269
Age 9	229	228	239





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• A new study from Harvard University has found that African American students who used privately funded vouchers to switch from public to private schools in Dayton, Ohio, New York City, and Washington, D.C., performed significantly higher on standardized tests than a control group that remained in public schools.

After two years, the voucher students outscored the control group by an average of 6.3 national percentile points, an advantage that translates into 0.33 standard deviations, or one-third of the average national difference between the test scores of black students and white students. The positive effects of school vouchers led the report's authors to this promising declaration: "Given the widespread concern about racial differences in academic performance, our research is particularly salient in that it suggests that school voucher programs may have the capacity to shrink the black-white test-score gap for participating students."

The complete report is available on the Web at <http://data.fas.harvard.edu/pepg/>.

• New York City Schools Chancellor Harold Levy announced last month what may be the country's first salary incentive program expressly designed to entice private school teachers to teach in public schools.

The program increases the salary cap for certified teachers with experience outside the New York City system who agree to teach in designated low-performing schools. A teacher with a master's degree, formerly limited to a starting salary of about \$39,000, would earn approximately \$48,000 under the new program.

The chancellor said the program would help religious and independent school teachers "do the work they love without having to make a financial sacrifice."

When private school officials complained that the program might tempt teachers to engage in unethical conduct by breaking contracts for the coming year, Levy replied, "Under no circumstances would I condone or encourage unprofessional or unethical conduct." He did not, however, say that under no circumstances would the city hire teachers who were, in fact, currently under contract.

• Teachers in private or public schools serving high-need areas would be eligible for up to \$5,000 in college loan forgiveness under new rules proposed last month by the U.S. Department of Education. But the rules, designed to implement provisions in the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, would not take effect until July 1, 2001, at the earliest.

Under the proposed rules, a teacher must be a new borrower in the FFEL program or the Direct Student Loan program on or after October 1, 1998. Loans may cover the cost of graduate or undergraduate work. A teacher is eligible after five years of consecutive teaching in a low-income public or private school if at least one year of the teaching years is 1998-99 or later.

For a school to be designated as low-income, more than 30 percent of the total enrollment must qualify for services provided under Title I and the school must be listed in the Annual Directory of Designated Low-Income Schools for Teacher Cancellation Benefits. For a list of schools currently designated, go to www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/Students/repayment/teachers/search_t99.html.