

# cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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## Study Links Education Freedom to Student Performance

As the nation continues its long-standing debate on what makes for school reform, a new study offers a wonderfully democratic answer: educational freedom.

According to a report released last month by the Manhattan Institute, states looking to strengthen student achievement would do well to provide parents with more educational freedom. The pioneering study, which ranks the school options that families have state by state, concludes with a straightforward message: "Freedom matters in education." Put another way, high levels of state support for parent choice in education correlate with high levels of student performance.

Jay Greene, author of the study and senior fellow at the Institute, ranked each state on five measures of educational freedom: the degree of (1) charter school choice, (2) subsidized private school choice, (3) home school choice, (4) school district choice by changing residence, and (5) district choice without changing residence. By combining these measures, using standard scores and equally weighted averages, Greene derived an Education Freedom Index (EFI), ranging from a high of 3.27 to a low of 0.61.

Arizona, which has a high number of charter schools, a private school tax credit, few restrictions on home schooling, and unrestricted inter-district school

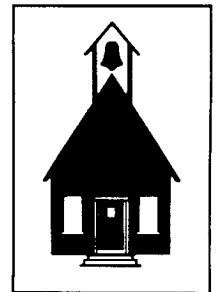
choice, received the highest EFI score. Hawaii earned the lowest score, mainly for having only one school district, which makes attending school in another district impossible.

### Freedom and Achievement

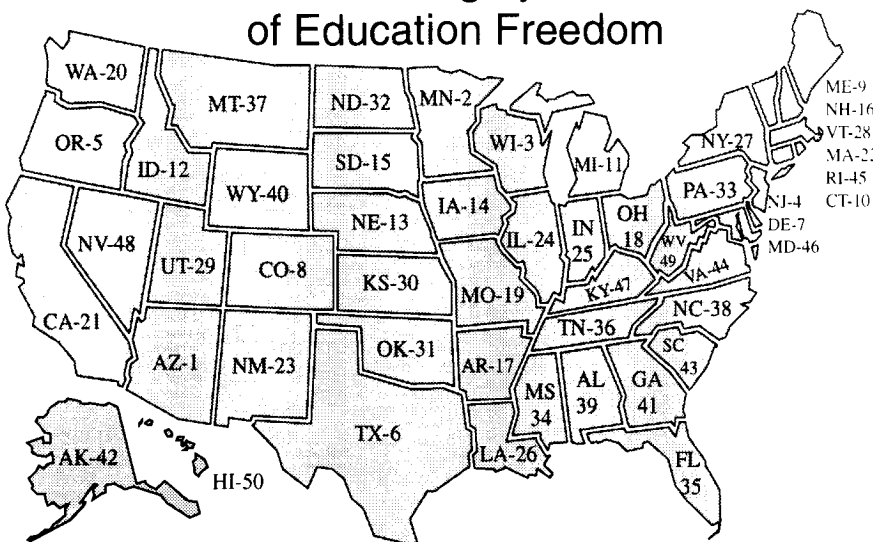
To see if freedom in education relates to student achievement, Greene used a state's EFI to predict SAT scores as well as the percentage of students scoring at the "proficient" level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. After controlling for the percentage of minority students in each state, along with median household income, per-pupil spending, and average class size, Greene discovered what he called "striking" results. "Even after controlling for these other factors, EFI is a significant predictor of student achievement," he wrote. His model found that a one-point rise in a state's EFI resulted in a 5.5 percent increase in the percentage of students performing proficiently on NAEP, and a 24-point increase each in verbal and math scores on the SAT.

Why are such results striking? Consider this. A \$1,000 increase in a state's median household income would lead to only a 0.3 percent increase in the percentage of students performing proficiently on

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on page 2**



### State Ranking by Amount of Education Freedom



Source: The Education Freedom Index

**Continued from page 1**

NAEP, according to Greene. To achieve a performance boost similar to that produced by a one-point increase in EFI, a state would have to hike median household income by an astounding \$19,000 — an improbable outcome even in an era of budget surplus. “Increasing education freedom,” wrote Greene, “is one of the most practical ways for policymakers to improve the quality of education.” He added that providing families with more choice in education “has a larger independent effect on student achievement than increasing education spending or reducing class size.”

**Private School Options**

One of the five components of the EFI is the measure of government-assisted private school choice. Greene calculated that measure as an equally weighted average of “1)

**State Ranking by Support for Private School Choice**

	Score	Rank		Score	Rank
Minnesota	2.96	1	Florida	0.28	26
Maine	2.59	2	Alaska	0.28	27
Illinois	1.61	3	Colorado	0.28	27
Vermont	1.51	4	Maryland	0.28	27
Iowa	1.23	5	Mississippi	0.28	27
Wisconsin	1.23	6	Missouri	0.28	27
Ohio	0.99	7	Montana	0.28	27
Connecticut	0.85	8	Nevada	0.28	27
Louisiana	0.85	8	New Mexico	0.28	27
Nebraska	0.85	8	North Dakota	0.28	27
New Hampshire	0.85	8	Tennessee	0.28	27
New Jersey	0.85	8	Texas	0.28	27
New York	0.85	8	Alabama	0	38
Pennsylvania	0.85	8	Arkansas	0	38
West Virginia	0.85	8	Georgia	0	38
Arizona	0.77	16	Hawaii	0	38
California	0.57	17	Idaho	0	38
Delaware	0.57	17	Kentucky	0	38
Indiana	0.57	17	North Carolina	0	38
Kansas	0.57	17	Oklahoma	0	38
Massachusetts	0.57	17	South Carolina	0	38
Michigan	0.57	17	South Dakota	0	38
Oregon	0.57	17	Utah	0	38
Rhode Island	0.57	17	Virginia	0	38
Washington	0.57	17	Wyoming	0	38

the percentage of students in a state attending private schools with government-paid vouchers; 2) the maximum dollar value of tax credits and deductions for private school expenses; and 3) the extent of direct state subsidies to private schools for expenses such as transportation, textbooks, and health care.” Minnesota, which offers education tax deductions and credits and also provides aid for transportation, textbooks, and auxiliary services, received the highest score for assisting parents with private school choice. Maine, where nearly 2 percent of all students attend private secular schools using state vouchers, came in second. Thirteen states that provide no help at all for parents who choose private schools received a score of 0.0 (see chart).

The report, titled *The Education Freedom Index*, is available on the Web site of the Manhattan Institute at <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/>.

**Black Alliance Formed to Support Educational Options**

Howard Fuller sounded like a resolute general rallying troops for battle. “BAEO today declares war on a fundamentally un-American condition,” he said at a recent press conference in Washington to launch the Black Alliance for Educational Options. “Parental school choice...in America is widespread — unless you’re poor,” he declared. “Starting today, we take direct aim on this inequity.”

Fuller, former superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools and president of the newly formed coalition, cited data from the National Center for Education Statistics showing that parents with children in private schools have significantly higher levels of satisfaction with schools, teachers, academic standards, and discipline than parents of children in public schools. He also presented evidence that family income helps determine the degree of school choice a family is able to exercise.



*Dr. Howard Fuller, president of BAEO, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC.*

BAEO has begun promoting its message through a series of print ads in *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, *The New Republic* and 18 community newspapers serving a primarily black audience. The first ad describes the country as divided by a canyon when

it comes to school choice. “On one side, with few educational options, are low-income parents, mostly of color. On the other side, with many choices, are middle- and upper-income, mostly white parents.” Another ad in the series looks at studies on the effect that vouchers have on black students. “Clearly, there is an emerging consensus among researchers about the generally positive impact of school choice initiatives on black children from low-income families,” the ad concludes.

Fuller is remarkably determined. Denouncing the choice chasm, he proclaimed at the briefing, “We will struggle as long as it takes to change this unacceptable condition.”

For more information about BAEO, go to <http://www.schoolchoiceinfo.org>.



## 15 Percent of Private Schools Use E-Rate

Schools that seem to need the E-Rate the most are using it the least, according to a government report released last month.

Private school instructional room access to the Internet "lags far behind" that of public schools, says the report. Twenty-five percent of private school classrooms are connected to the Internet, compared to 63 percent of classrooms in public schools. Yet, despite being on the "have not" side of the digital divide, only 15 percent of private schools sought E-Rate discounts during the program's first two years, an application rate one-fifth the rate for public schools and districts.

Created by Congress in 1996 and implemented two years later, the E-Rate provides discounts on the costs of telecommunications services for public and private schools and libraries. The U.S. Department of Education's report, titled *E-Rate and the Digital Divide*, says the program's "greatest potential effect on education" is that "it can ensure that all communities have access to the latest technology, while allowing them to use their scarce resources to support other critical aspects of modern schools." Despite the program's limited penetration within the technology-poor private school community, the report claims the E-Rate has been successful "in getting funds to the places with the greatest need" — a claim largely based on high levels of per-pupil funding in high-poverty public schools.

### Sectors and Schools Differ

Sectors and schools within the private school community make use of technology at widely different rates. A report released earlier this year by the National Center for Education Statistics showed, for example, that nonsectarian

private schools, with 41 percent of instructional rooms hooked to the Internet during the 1998-99 school year, enjoyed access levels significantly higher than private schools in general, though still

lower than public schools. Also, the National Association of Independent Schools and the National Catholic Educational Association report that the schools they represent have

higher levels of E-Rate participation than the private school average. NCEA says that almost 60 percent of Catholic schools applied for the E-Rate in 1999-2000.

Of the nearly \$3.7 billion in discounts provided to schools and libraries during the first two years of the E-Rate, about 3 percent went to private schools, 84 percent to public schools, 6 percent to federally administered schools and state consortia, 4 percent to libraries, and 3 percent to other types of consortia. The 3 percent share for private schools represented \$111 million.

### Why Lower Private School Rates?

One question the report flags for further research is this: "What explains the lower penetration of the program into the library and private school sectors?" (About half of all public libraries participate in the program.) The private school part of the question probably has numerous answers. Some sectors within the private school community may have questions about the value of instructional technology or may be opposed to the program in principle. Others simply may not be aware of the E-Rate. Smaller schools with limited administrative staff may not have the time or technical ex-

pertise to cope with the program's formidable application process. For them, the paperwork may be too high and the payoff too low.

And that leads to another possible explanation for low private school participation, namely, the way a school's E-Rate discount is determined. The program uses a school's poverty count as a surrogate measure of its technology needs. Discounts, which range from 20 percent to 90 percent, are based on the percent of students in a school eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Thus, a school serving families with incomes too high to qualify for the lunch program, but too low to support the school's technology needs, may only be eligible for the lowest discount rates despite having Internet access levels well below national norms. To make matters

worse, such schools would likely have a hard time making the hefty co-payments necessary for services that are minimally discounted.

### Promising Step

This first comprehensive analysis of the E-Rate documents the degree to which the program has helped schools and students take advantage of the technology revolution. In quantifying the level of participation in the program and asking why the program is more successful with some schools than others, the report represents a promising step toward making a good program even better.

E-Rate and the Digital Divide is available on the Department of Education's Web site at the following address: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/evall/elem.html#technology>.



### Percentage of Schools and Instructional Rooms With Internet Access

	Public 1999	Private 1998
Schools	95	67
Classrooms	63	25

### Percentage of Schools that Applied for the E-Rate

	Public	Private
Year 1	74	15
Year 2	78	16



Return Service Requested

## capenotes

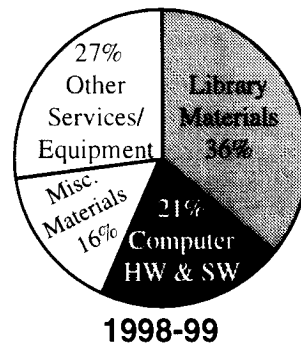
- For decades, private school officials in New York City have been trying to secure for their students the equitable health services prescribed by state law. This year, finally, those efforts have paid off.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has agreed to provide for students in religious and independent schools the same level of nursing services available to their counterparts in public schools. The city will assign full-day nurses to schools serving 100 or more students and half-day nurses to smaller schools. The nurses will serve students on site every school day.

- A new report on Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act shows that in 1998-99, the program reached 4.3 million students and 141,000 teachers in private schools with services costing nearly \$19 million. Most of that money (\$13.7 million) was used for instructional and educational materials, including library materials (\$6.8 million) and computer hardware and software (\$3.9 million).

The report, compiled by the Title

### Title VI Program in Private Schools



VI National Steering Committee, demonstrates the significance of the decision last June by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Mitchell v. Helms*, which upheld the constitutionality of Title VI.

- More students in private schools (91 percent) give their schools a grade of A or B than students in public schools (65 percent), according to the Horatio Alger Association's annual *State of Our Nation's Youth* report. The survey of 14- to 18-year-olds also found that private school students were more likely to say their courses are challenging (81 percent private vs. 55 percent public), are interesting (61 percent private, 49 per-

cent public), and definitely prepare them for the future (87 percent private, 63 percent public). When asked about school safety, private school students (64 percent) were nearly twice as likely as public school students (36 percent) to say they always feel safe in school. They were also more likely to say that "teachers and administrators have taken all necessary steps for my safety and security" (57 percent private, 41 percent public). The report is available online at [www.horatioalger.com](http://www.horatioalger.com).

- This month CAPE's board of directors meets under the guidance of a new team of officers. Carl Moser, who represents the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on CAPE's board, is CAPE's new president; Peter Relic, president of the National Association of Independent Schools, is vice president; Richard Osborn, vice president for education for the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is treasurer; and Mark Siegel, state CAPE representative from Oregon, is secretary. Moser succeeds Michael Eanes, director of the American Montessori Society, who provided outstanding service to CAPE as president for the past four years.

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