

# cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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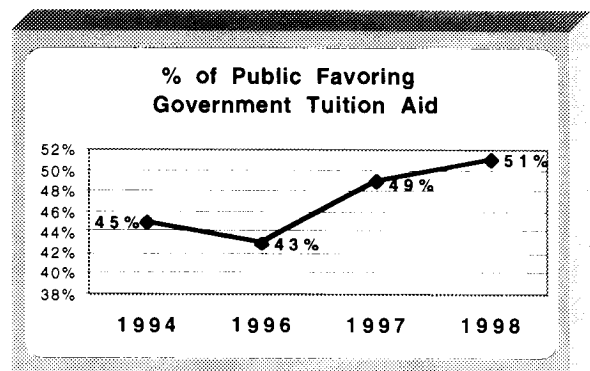
## Poll Shows Growing Support for School Choice

The second most talked about topic inside and outside the Beltway these days may very well be education. Everyone seems to have at least two cents' worth of passionate opinion about how to raise standards, improve schools, and reform the system. Of course, whenever there's a strongly held position about anything in America, there's a pollster trying to track it. And the latest tracking of views on education by the granddaddy of education polls, the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, appears to be signaling a significant shift in the landscape.

One question the poll asked was whether respondents would favor or oppose a proposal "that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose," with the government paying "all or part of the tuition" at

nonpublic schools. For the first time since 1994, when the poll started asking the question, a majority of respondents said they favor the idea (see graph). Key groups support the proposal by wide margins: nonwhites (68 percent), 18- to 29-year-olds (63 percent), and public school parents (56 percent).

Responses to other questions attempting to measure sentiment on school choice are just as encouraging (see table). Both public school parents and nonpublic school parents generally show strong support for vouchers and tax credits, and they overwhelmingly endorse tax-free education savings accounts, even though the question limited the accounts to covering "tuition and other expenses at pri-



vate and church-related schools." A solid 68 percent of the public supports the idea.

In July, President Clinton vetoed the Coverdell-Torricelli education savings accounts bill, which would have allowed parents to earn tax-free interest when saving for education expenses connected with public, private, or home schools. In reacting to the poll, U.S. Senator Paul Coverdell (R-GA) said, "Citizens clearly want the freedom to save for their children's education, and that is why I have been deeply disappointed by the President's unwillingness to work with Republicans and Democrats to enact this common-sense proposal."

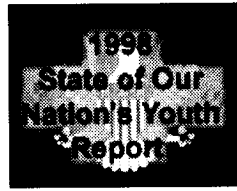
The full report on the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll may be found on the Web at [www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kp9809a.htm](http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kp9809a.htm).



% of Respondents Who Favor...	National Totals	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
Vouchers to pay part of tuition at a private or church-related school.	52%	58%	61%
Vouchers to pay all of tuition at a private or church-related school.	48%	55%	69%
Tax credits to cover part of tuition at a private or church-related school.	66%	73%	89%
Tax credits to cover all of tuition at a private or church-related school.	56%	63%	89%
Tax-free savings accounts to cover tuition at a private or church-related school.	68%	74%	NA
Voluntary national tests.	71%	78%	72%

## Some Surprises in Teen Survey

We're so used to hearing bad news about America's teens, that a positive report on their behavior and perceptions tends to catch us off guard. But the 1998 back-to-school report by the Horatio Alger Association, entitled *The State of Our Nation's Youth*, actually includes a good deal of encouraging,



mother is a person who really cares about them, or that 73 percent believe it is important that they do their best in all their classes? That's not exactly the picture of teens we get on TV.

The report is based on a survey of 14- to 18-year-olds that was conducted last May via self-administered mail questionnaires.

Depending on the question, responses were sometimes stratified by gender, race, and type of school attended. The table at the left provides a sampling of opinions and perceptions of students in public schools and in private schools. The complete report is available on the Web at <[www.horatioalger.com/](http://www.horatioalger.com/)>.

Students who...	Public	Private
Grade their school with an A or B.	63.6%	83.0%
Always feel safe in their school.	40.0%	67.9%
Believe no or few students in their school cheat.	52.0%	67.4%
Believe it is important to most of their teachers that they do their best.	64.9%	84.9%

and yes, surprising, news about young people. Would you believe, for instance, that 96 percent of respondents say their

## Private School Enrollment Up

This summer the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) published its *Projections of Education Statistics to 2008*, and the simple summary is this: enrollment is on the rise.

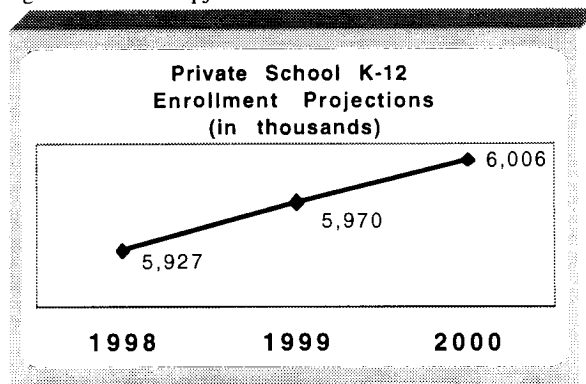
According to the NCES, private school enrollment, which is estimated to be 5,927,000 students during the 1998-99 school year, is expected to climb to 6,091,000 by school year (SY) 2005-06. After that year we will start to see modest declines through 2008.

Not surprisingly, the magnitude and timing of the enrollment increase will be quite different at the elementary and secondary levels. Elementary enrollment in private schools is only expected to rise by 1.8 percent through SY 2003-04, after which it will start to return to current levels. Secondary enrollment, on the other hand,

is headed for a whopping 12 percent increase by SY 2007-08, its projected peak year.

All these projections assume that private/public enrollment patterns will remain the same. The projection model does not account for shifts between the two sectors. Throughout the period, private schools are expected to enroll about 11.2 percent of all K-12 students.

You can read the full report on the Web at <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/pj2008/index.html>>.



## Court Watch...

### Supreme Court Asked to Rule on School Choice

One big question that followed the decision last June by the Wisconsin Supreme Court to uphold the Milwaukee school choice program was whether the plaintiffs would ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review the ruling. Because the case was so strong, the hope among school choice supporters was that opponents would appeal, but precisely for the same reason, the worry was they wouldn't.

Well, the NEA, People for the American Way, and others were quick to answer the question on August 31, when they filed papers requesting review by the high court. But the funny thing is, they weren't the only parties petitioning the court



to take the case. In a rather unorthodox play, the Institute for Justice, which successfully represented low-income families in the suit, announced that it too would ask the court to review the decision. "The children in this program cannot be secure until the U.S. Supreme Court removes the constitutional cloud from school choice," declared Clint Bolick, litigation director for the Institute. The Institute apparently believes the Wisconsin case is impressive enough to secure a win in a Supreme Court showdown on school choice.

With both sides now asking the court to consider the matter, the chances of it doing so may have increased. The justices will likely decide whether or not to take the case sometime in October.

Meanwhile, an estimated 6,000 students in Milwaukee took advantage of the voucher program when they went back to school last month. "Welcome to the beginning of a new era in education," said Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson in an address at Milwaukee's Messmer High School, where nearly half the students receive vouchers.

**E-Rate  
update**

True enough, no one thought it would be an easy journey toward the E-Rate, but then again, no one thought it would be this excruciating either. With processing delays, funding cutbacks, political opposition, and a host of technical glitches, schools have had to hang tough in the pursuit of telecommunications discounts.

According to the Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC), which administers the program, approximately 27 percent of private schools across the country took the first step toward the E-Rate by filing the initial Form 470. Presumably, most of those schools continued the process by submitting Form 471. For those schools, the end MAY be in sight. With everyone keeping fingers crossed, the SLC is intending to issue funding commitment letters early this fall.

Once a school receives a funding commitment letter and begins receiving services, it must file Form 486, which lets the SLC know that services have been received and it can pay the discounted portion of the bill to the vendor. For existing services, Form 486 must be filed within five days of receipt of the funding commitment; for new services, it is due within five days of the service start-up date.

**College Test Results Released**



Those involved with secondary education know the torturous effect the simple acronyms ACT and SAT can have on students. They're the standardized tests that colleges use to help determine admission and placement.

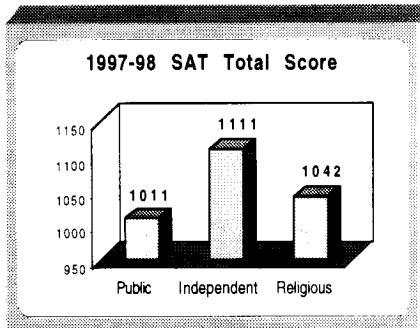
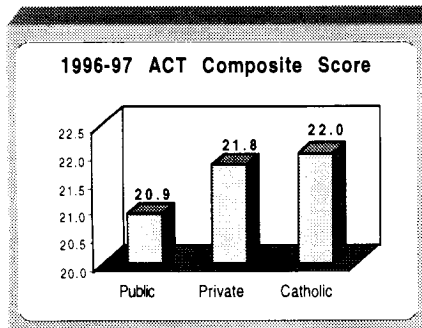
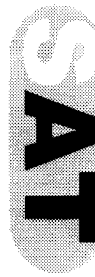
Results from both tests were released in recent weeks, and they show virtually no improvement from last year. The national average composite ACT score remained at 21.0, and while the average SAT math score went up 1 point to 512, the verbal score remained the same, 505.

A disturbing trend corroborated by the test results is grade inflation. The share of high school students with an A+, A, or A- grade point average has

increased from 28 percent in 1988 to 38 percent in 1998, while SAT scores in the same period dropped 12 points on the verbal test and 3 on the math.

Private school students represent a significant portion of SAT and ACT test takers, and as a group they consistently score above the average. The tables below show how they fared. (Because private school results for the 1997-98 ACT tests will not be released for another few months, we provide last year's ACT scores for both private and public school students.)

Reports on each of the exams are available at the following Web sites: <[www.collegeboard.org/index.html](http://www.collegeboard.org/index.html)> <[www.act.org/news/index.html](http://www.act.org/news/index.html)>.

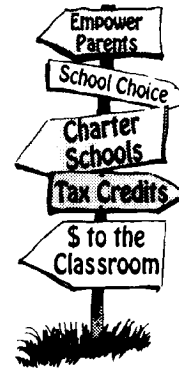


SAT total scores are a combination of the mean verbal score and the mean math score for each group.

**CAPENOTES continued from p. 4**

to these children. We are going to push this legislation forward until it's law."

• "America's education system is at a crossroads." So says a report released this summer by the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Under the chairmanship of **Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-MI)**, the committee undertook "an intensive review of the federal role in education"



in an effort to find out the extent to which current programs are making a difference. The report's main conclusion: "[F]ederal education dollars should support effective state and local initiatives." Among

the recommendations:

- empower parents
- encourage choice in education
- create opportunity scholarships
- return control to the local level
- expand charter schools
- send dollars to the classroom.

A copy of *Education at a Crossroads: What Works and What's Wasted in Education Today* is available on the Web at <[www.house.gov/eeo/oversight/crossroads.htm](http://www.house.gov/eeo/oversight/crossroads.htm)>.

• Want to SPICE up your school? The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) has a project called **Selected Programs for Improving Catholic Education**, which identifies, validates, and disseminates model programs and practices so that educators in other schools (not just Catholic) can adapt them. The project has resulted in a series of books called *Conversations in Excellence*. Two volumes are available: *Providing for the Diverse Needs of Youth and Their Families* (\$20) and *Integrating the Mission* (\$16). Each book highlights exemplary programs, including goals, activities, and steps for implementation, and also includes various articles relating to the volume's theme. To order, call 202-337-6232 and ask for the Publications Department.



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## capenotes

• Which schools, public or private, are more likely to provide students a more racially mixed education? After studying lunchroom integration patterns in a random sample of public and private schools in two cities, **Jay P. Greene**, an assistant professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin and a research associate at Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Governance, has concluded that "private schools tend to offer a more racially integrated environment than do public schools." Greene says the main reason private schools are better integrated is that unlike public schools, which tend to replicate the segregation found in their attendance areas, private schools are more likely to draw students from a variety of neighborhoods. Greene's paper, entitled *Integration Where it Counts: A Study of Racial Integration in Public and Private School Lunchrooms*, was presented earlier this month at the American Political Science Association meeting in Boston.

A second paper delivered by Greene

at the APSA meeting, *Civic Values in Public and Private Schools*, examines the job schools do in transmitting democratic values. His conclusion? Despite the claim by some that public schools work best at promoting democratic ideals, the evidence demonstrates that, on average, private schools are not only better racially integrated, but also "display greater racial tolerance and generally convey stronger democratic values than do public schools."

The full text of both papers may be found on the Web at <<http://PRO.harvard.edu/search.htm>>. After you reach the search site, enter keyword "Greene."

• Since its inception in the early '90s, the charter school movement has seen steady growth. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that this

**US**  
**CHARTER SCHOOLS**

year over 1,000 charter schools will serve more than 200,000 students. A report released this summer by **President Clinton** looks at the movement, docu-

ments the expansion, and identifies the attributes of charter schools that make them popular with parents and students. Among the most powerful attractions:

- nurturing environment
- safe environment
- value system
- quality of academic program
- high standards
- small class size
- specialized curriculum focus

The report, *A National Study of Charter Schools*, is available on the Web at <[www.uscharterschools.org/](http://www.uscharterschools.org/)>.

• Displaying a "never say 'die'" spirit, the House of Representatives earlier this month once again approved an amendment to the annual D.C. funding bill which would provide "opportunity" scholarships to 2,000 low-income families in the District of Columbia. Worth up to \$3,200 each, the scholarships would allow parents to send their children to the private school of their choice.

"Desperate parents in the District have been looking for a way out of dangerous and failing school systems," said **Rep. Dick Armye (R-TX)**, the amendment's sponsor. "I'm committed

**Continued on page 3**