

# cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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**Council Members:** American Montessori Society • Association of Christian Schools International • Christian Schools International • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America • Friends Council on Education • International Christian Accrediting Association • Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod • National Association of Episcopal Schools • National Association of Independent Schools • National Catholic Educational Association • Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education, K-12 • Solomon Schechter Day School Association • Toussaint Institute for Historically Black Independent Schools • U.S. Catholic Conference • 31 Affiliated State Organizations

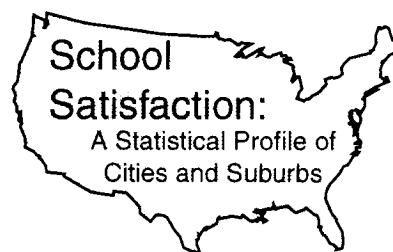
## ACSI Joins CAPE

The Association of Christian Schools International, the second-largest association of private schools in the country, joined the Council for American Private Education last month, marking a new chapter in CAPE's history and reflecting the growing role of evangelical Christian schools in American education. With the addition of ACSI, CAPE's member organizations now collectively represent about 80 percent of the nation's elementary and secondary private school enrollment.

Between 1989 and 1997, K-12 enrollment in ACSI's member schools jumped from 346,722 to 549,156 students, according to figures from the National Center for Education Statistics. The dramatic 58 percent enrollment leap makes ACSI by far the fastest-growing major private school association in the country. By NCES's count, 3,000 ACSI-affiliated schools serve 11

## Most Private School Parents Satisfied With Public Schools

Only 35 percent of parents who enroll their children in private schools in America's major metropolitan areas are dissatisfied with public elementary schools, according to a study released late last month by the Educational Testing Service. The ETS report suggests a substantial share of private school parents choose their schools "not because of public school quality, but for other reasons," including a "desire for alternatives" or the search for something other than what public schools can offer.



*Profile of Cities and Suburbs* profiles the public perception of school quality in 55 of America's largest cities and their neighboring suburbs. The comprehensive report provides the views of various population groups on whether or not they are satisfied with their public elementary schools. Data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, income, and the type of school a respondent's child attends. Findings are presented for each of the 55 metropolitan areas, with separate breakouts for cities and suburbs. In short, the document is chock-full of valu-

*School Satisfaction: A Statistical*

**Continued on page 2**

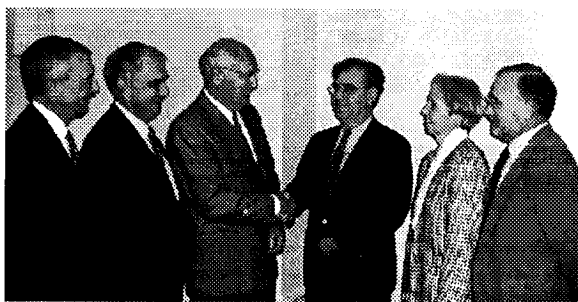
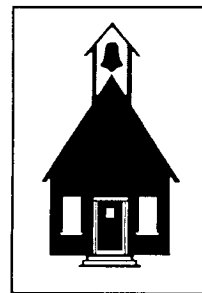
percent of the nation's K-12 private school enrollment.

With headquarters in Colorado Springs, CO, and regional offices across the country, ACSI provides a plethora of services to evangelical Christian schools from the preschool to post-secondary levels. Its mission is to "enable Christian educators and schools worldwide to effectively prepare students for life." Its vision is that students in its schools acquire "wisdom, knowl-

edge, and a biblical world view" evidenced in lives marked by "character, leadership, service, stewardship, and worship."

While most of its member schools are in the United States, ACSI's reach is worldwide. Its 4,000 member schools span 90 countries and educate over 870,000 pre-K to college students.

For more information about ACSI, see <http://www.acsi.org>.



CAPE's Executive Committee welcomes ACSI. From left, CAPE Treasurer Richard Osborn (SDA), CAPE Vice President Carl Moser (LC-MS), ACSI President Ken Smitherman, CAPE President Michael Eanes (AMS), Sr. Lourdes Sheehan (USCC), CAPE Secretary Peter Relic (NAIS).

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able information for those responsible for development, planning, and improvement in public and private schools.

For instance, although most families are satisfied with public schools, a "substantial proportion" are dissatisfied. Indeed, in more than half the cities surveyed, between 16 and 34 percent of households consider their public schools unsatisfactory. Not surprisingly, in cities where families are least pleased with public schools, children are "more likely to attend private schools." Nearly 50 percent of all metropolitan area families unhappy with public schools enroll their children in private schools. In Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and New Orleans, the figure is closer to 60 percent (table).

Still, in many metropolitan areas a significant proportion of parents dissatisfied with public schools continue to send their children to them. While the report does not address the reasons, it may be that for some families, private

schools are neither available nor affordable; for others, the degree of discontent may not be high enough to leave.

**Intensity of Dissatisfaction Varies**

The intensity of school dissatisfaction varies from city to city. The report measures intensity by the share of families so displeased they want to move out of the area. On average, less than 7 percent of households in the cities sur-

veyed are ready to move because they are unhappy with public schools. Cleveland, Oakland, and Philadelphia top the list of cities with the most intensely dissatisfied parents. They each have more than 15 percent wanting to pack up and leave.

**Some Surprises**

Some of the report's findings are predictable, but others are unexpected. On the predictable side, suburban parents are more satisfied with public schools than city parents. But for those who expected poor or minority parents to be less pleased with public schools than other groups, the report has some surprises. In general, poor parents are not more dissatisfied with schools than wealthier families, and African American and Hispanic parents are "likely to be more satisfied than White parents."

To read the report, see <http://www.ets.org/about/ets/news/99102601.html>, then click on the ftp link in the news release.

Metropolitan Area	Public Schools	Private Schools
New Orleans, LA	39%	64%
Boston-Lawrence-Lowell, MA-NH	41%	61%
Milwaukee, WI	40%	59%
Philadelphia, PA-NJ	44%	58%
Chicago, IL	43%	57%
Cleveland, OH	42%	56%
Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	54%	52%
Anaheim-Santa Ana, CA	51%	52%
Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	51%	50%
Rochester, NY	48%	49%

Source: Educational Testing Service. School Satisfaction: A Statistical Profile of Cities and Suburbs, by Anthony P. Carnevale and Donna M. Desrochers. Princeton, NJ: 1999.

**Court Watch: U.S. Supreme Court to Hear Title VI Case**

On the first day of December, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in *Mitchell v. Helms* (98-1648), a case of considerable consequence in the always confounding arena of government aid to students in religious schools. At issue is whether it is a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment for the federal government to provide computers, software, and other instructional equipment for use by students in religious schools.

Under Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the U.S. Department of Education allocates funds to states and school districts, which in turn spend the funds on an equal per-student basis to purchase instructional materials for use by all the children in the district, regardless of the school they

attend. Last year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans determined that the program's extension to children in religious schools is unconstitutional. Three years ago, the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco reached a contrary conclusion.

The history of Supreme Court jurisprudence on matters of government aid to religious school students is confusing, to say the least. Past cases have allowed textbooks, for example, but have disallowed certain instructional materials. In a decision expected before July 1, 2000, the court will determine where it now wants to place the line that divides acceptable from unacceptable forms of aid. The decision will provide a road map to help lower courts maneuver through similar cases in years to come.

As a measure of the case's importance, numerous private school associations have filed or signed on to *amicus curiae* briefs, including the Association of Christian Schools International, the International Christian Accrediting Association, the National Association of Independent Schools, the National Catholic Educational Association, the U.S. Catholic Conference, and state CAPE affiliates in Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.



# NCR Committee Calls for Large-Scale Voucher Experiment

## Wants to Know If Program Can Cause Broad-Based Improvement

The Committee on Education Finance of the National Research Council (NCR) has called for a "large and ambitious school voucher experiment, including the participation of private schools." The NRC report, *Making Money Matter: Financing America's Schools*, says the purpose of the experiment would be to determine "whether a carefully crafted voucher program can bring about broad-based improvement in educational outcomes, especially for children in areas of concentrated disadvantage."



benefits to the children who otherwise would attend public schools in those districts."

The report says the scale of the experiment is "crucially important." In order to test the hypothesis that vouchers would improve education not only for students who transfer to private schools, but also for those who remain in public schools, the

experiment must be "sufficiently large for public schools to perceive a growing private sector as effective competition."

### Ten-Year Timeframe

The experiment also has to "continue for an extended period," so parents and those intending to open new private schools can count on continued funding. Parents will also need time to evaluate the new options, public schools will

*"[I]t would make no sense to initiate a large-scale choice experiment and then place such a broad range of constraints on private schools that they will, as a consequence, fail."*

need time to respond to the changed landscape, and private schools will need to iron out initial wrinkles. "A ten-year time frame seems sensible," according to the Committee.

To ensure that low-income families truly benefit from the program, the report suggests a number of provisions: scaling the amount of the voucher to family income, so the low-income parents pay next to nothing; requiring par-

ticipating schools to set aside a specified portion of seats for the poor; covering transportation costs for needy families; and providing additional funding for children at risk or in need of special education.

### Preserving Autonomy

On the important issue of private school autonomy, the report says private schools should be given "a great deal of flexibility" when it comes to matters like curriculum design, hiring and promoting teachers, admission policies, and tuition. "[I]t would make no sense to initiate a large-scale choice experiment and then place such a broad range of constraints on private schools that they will, as a consequence, fail." Still, the committee cautions that a "great deal of careful thought" has to be given to designing a program that avoids the dangers of private schools (1) setting tuition so high as to preclude participation by the poor, or (2) picking and choosing students in a way that negates the value of a randomized experiment.

### Accountability and Flexibility

Regarding accountability, the report says it seems "sensible to require schools receiving vouchers to provide information to the public on curriculum, admissions policies, staff, and student test scores." Voucher students would need to take whatever standardized tests are necessary to evaluate accurately the program's effects. But at the same time the committee points out the importance of maintaining private school flexibility. "If private schools were required to meet a very long and detailed list of mandates, they would lose much of their freedom and the result of the experiment would be preordained."

The NRC report is available online at <http://www.nap.edu>.



### Random-Assignment Design

A "large scale project employing a random-assignment research design" is warranted, claims the committee, in part because similar research projects in fields like housing, welfare, and health care have been successful "in answering important questions about major social programs."

The NCR, an agency of the National Academy of Sciences, supports the work of the Academy in advising the government and the general public on issues of science and technology. The report, which covers a host of school financing issues, was developed under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education.

### Focus on Urban Poor

The Committee put forth specific design elements for the school voucher project. It wants the choice experiment to focus on large urban school districts where some low-income and minority children are poorly served. Reasoning that wealthier parents have ways of ensuring a quality education for their children, the committee said the purpose of the experiment should be "to explore the extent to which expanding choice, including the choice of private schools, in urban districts would have significant

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• Schools interested in receiving the E-rate discount for Year 3 of the program (July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001) should act now. The first step for most schools is to file the redesigned FCC Form 470, which lists the services a school is seeking. That form can be filed right away. The second form, Form 471, should be filed during a window period that is set to open in early November and close January 19, 2000. All applications filed during that period will be treated as if filed simultaneously. For more information about the program and its new streamlined application process, visit the Web site of the Schools and Libraries Division at [www.sl.universalservice.org](http://www.sl.universalservice.org).

• Pop Quiz: Which schools – Catholic, independent, or public – are the most progressive? A surprising answer found in a study of Ohio schools by Louis Chandler, professor of educational psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, is this: "On average, the most traditional of Ohio's elementary schools are the independent schools and the most pro-

gressive are Catholic schools. Public schools fall in the middle."

Released last month by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, the study "sought to measure the prevalence of traditional and progressive practices" in schools by asking principals to place their schools on a supposedly traditional-to-progressive spectrum for 10 educational practices. Most schools reported a "mix of practices," and there was much more variation within each sector (Catholic, independent, public) than between any two. Nonetheless, on a scale of 10 to 50, with 10 being the most traditional and 50 the most progressive, the mean score for Catholic schools was 28.7; for public schools, 26.9; and for state-chartered independent schools, 24.5.

For the full report, visit the Web site of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation at [www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net).

• School choice advocates should add a new publication to their "must read" list: the proceedings of the NCEA symposium on school choice, which was held in Washington last February. The book contains presentations from a litany of luminaries in the school choice movement, including Senator Joseph

Lieberman (D-CT), Rev. Floyd Flake, Dr. John E. Coons, Nina Shokraii-Rees, Jeanne Allen, and many more. The scope of topics spans the philosophical to the practical, covering privately- and publicly-funded choice programs at the national and state levels. Research updates, constitutional issues, and social justice arguments are presented in depth. *Catholic Schools and School Choice: Partners for Justice* is available from the NCEA publications office either for \$13 or \$10 (the latter for NCEA members) by calling 202-337-6232.

• Congratulations to all 59 recipients of this year's National Distinguished Principals Award, who were honored October 15 at a banquet in Washington, DC. The four private school awardees named in the program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals were: Grace Walker, St. Therese School, Alhambra, CA; Anita Westerhaus, Sacred Heart School, West Des Moines, IA; Sr. Mary de Lourdes Charbonnet, St. Edward the Confessor School, Metairie, LA; Dennis L. Vierk, St. Paul's Lutheran School, Janesville, WI.

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COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN PRIVATE EDUCATION • PMB 457 • 13017 Wisteria Drive • Germantown, MD 20874

Tel: 301-916-8460 • Fax: 301-916-8485 • Email: [cape@impresso.com](mailto:cape@impresso.com) • Web: [www.capenet.org](http://www.capenet.org)

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12

Executive Director: Joe McTighe

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