

Council for American Private Education

# CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

## Federal Surveys Provide Picture of Private Schools

Reports released this summer on two federal surveys provide, from an array of angles, a penetrating look at the state of private education in the United States.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in August released selected findings from the 2011-12 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a nationally representative survey of public and private school principals and teachers. The SASS project is an enormous undertaking, encompassing a sample size of 11,000 public schools and 3,000 private schools, and involving mailed questionnaires with telephone and in-person follow-up.

The survey offers a rich assortment of information about schools, the people who run them, and the students who attend them. It turns out, for example, that 64 percent of graduates from all private high schools and 81 percent of graduates from Catholic high schools go on to a four-year college. The same is true for 40 percent of graduates from traditional public schools and 37 percent of graduates from public charter schools. (Graduation data are for the class of 2011.)

### Participation in Federal Programs

The data also show that a surprising number of private schools participate in well-known federal school-centered programs. For example, 21 percent of all private schools and 48 percent of Catholic schools enroll students who receive services under Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Similarly, 23 percent of private schools and 50 percent of Catholic schools participate in the National School Lunch Program.

Nearly two-thirds of private schools (64 percent, to be precise) have students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) because of "special needs or a formally identified disability," while 16 percent of private schools have students who are English-language learners (ELL) or limited-

English proficient (LEP). Eighty percent of Catholic schools have students with an IEP, and 16 percent (identical to the total for all private schools) have ELL or LEP students.

### Influential Principals

Private school principals see themselves as having more influence over the establishment of curriculum and performance standards than do principals in public schools, reflecting a greater degree of local autonomy in private schools. Seventy percent of private school principals say they have a major influence on establishing curriculum at the school, compared to 43 percent of public school principals. Eighty-one percent of private school principals and 74 percent of public school principals regard themselves as influential in "setting performance standards for students."

But regardless of their influence, private school principals on average receive an annual salary (\$65,300) that is considerably less than that received by their public school counterparts (\$90,500). Not surprisingly, the salary differential also holds true for teachers, with regular full-time private school teachers receiving an average annual base salary of \$40,200, compared to \$53,100 for public school teachers.

### Private School Universe Survey

In July, NCES released its first look at results from the 2011-12 Private School Universe Survey (PSS), a comprehensive count of the number of private schools, students, and teachers in the United States.

Unlike the SASS, which seeks data from a sampling of schools (albeit a very large sampling), the target population of the PSS is every private school in the country.

The massive outreach starts with letters inviting schools to complete an online survey. Follow-up correspondence, phone interviews, and visits by field representatives help ensure a high response rate—a tad over 92 percent this year.

The PSS estimates that in the fall of 2011, there were 30,861 private elementary and secondary schools in the United States, serv-

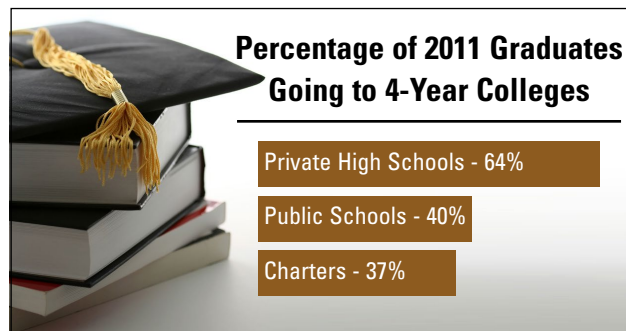
ing 4,494,845 students in grades K-12 and employing 420,880 full-time equivalent teachers. The enrollment figure represents of drop of 4 percent since 2009 and 16 percent since 2001.

As for basic demographics, 51 percent of private school students are male; 49 percent are female. Ten percent of students enrolled in private schools are Hispanic; 9 percent are black; 6 percent Asian, and 71 percent white.

Private education is mostly faith-based, with 80 percent of students attending 21,086 schools with a religious orientation.

Schools tend to be small. Sixty-eight percent have enrollments under 150 students, and only 6 percent enroll 500 or more students. The data suggest that class sizes are small, too, in that private schools have an average of 10.7 students for every teacher.

All-boys schools account for 2.3 percent of the private school pool, and all-girls schools account for 1.8 percent, leaving nearly 96 percent coeducational.



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- Association of Christian Schools International
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- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12  
Executive Director: Joe McTigue

**Outlook is published monthly (September to June) by CAPE. An annual subscription is \$35. ISSN 0271-1451**

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## Senators Sponsor School Choice Forum

Four prominent Senate Republicans beamed a bright light on the value of school choice during a roundtable forum they hosted July 30 on Capitol Hill. The event featured more than a dozen parents, students, and school leaders, collectively witnessing to how the opportunity to attend a successful school can change the course of a child's life and strengthen education for the country.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) and Senators Lamar Alexander (TN), Rand Paul (KY), and Tim Scott (SC) hosted the "Success for Our Children" forum, billed as "a conversation about advancing education by encouraging the ideals of school choice."

Senator Paul, who chaired the event, described himself as "a big believer that choice is good for kids." He called for "thinking outside the box" and said education should incorporate principles from the marketplace, where competition and choice fosters success.

Drawing upon his own schooling as a child, Senator Tim Scott said, "The theory that education leads to freedom cannot be more true." He described education as a "power" that helped him achieve his goals, and said alternative schools offer "exactly the same power" to students. Flexibility, creativity, and empowering parents with "the opportunity to make choice for their kids" are elements that provide youngsters with the chance to succeed.

Senator Lamar Alexander, who once served as U.S. Secretary of Education (1991-93), compared higher education in the United States with elementary and secondary education. "Now everyone says we have the best system of colleges in the world," said Alexander. He said he once asked the president of the University of California why that was, and the answer he received was twofold: institutional autonomy and allowing "dollars to follow the students to the schools they choose."

Senator Alexander suggested that federal education dollars, or at least the dollars earmarked for Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), should follow students at the K-12 level to the school of their choice, much as Pell grants and subsidized student loans follow students to private, religious, or public colleges and universities.



Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) speaks July 30 at the Senate Republican forum on school choice in Washington, D.C.

He said supporting school choice would be better than having the current battery of federal programs and telling people "where to go and what to do."

Indeed, Alexander likened the current system of assigning students to schools with the military draft. He called that assignment system "the most coercive thing in American life," except for the draft. "We got rid of the draft but we still have the pupil assignments. So why not borrow from colleges the same idea that they have, and use it for schools with school choice?"

## Justice Department Sues Louisiana Over Voucher Program

The U. S. Justice Department in August asked a federal court to stop the State of Louisiana from awarding vouchers in the 2014-15 school year to students in districts that are under federal desegregation orders unless authorized to do so by "the appropriate federal court overseeing the applicable desegregation case." The suit charges that in 2012-13, nearly 600 students in such districts received vouchers and "many of those vouchers impeded the desegregation process."

The lawsuit sparked immediate reaction. Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal called the action "shameful" and an effort to "keep kids trapped in failing public schools."

State Education Superintendent John White told *The Times-Picayune* that almost all the students using vouchers are black and that the suit's main argument is "a little ridiculous." The newspaper said White "thought it ironic that rules set up to combat racism were being called on to keep black students in failing schools."

Kevin Chavous, executive counsel to the American Federation for Children (AFC), said the "assault on educational options is unprecedented and directly impacts low-income families." He said the AFC will continue to fight to ensure that students "trapped in failing schools are not left behind."

## New Jersey Set to Elect Senator Who Supports Choice

The two candidates for U.S. Senate in New Jersey differ dramatically on a raft of significant issues. Pick a topic, and chances are the Democratic and Republican contenders will be at opposite poles on the political spectrum. But the rule of opposites is not without exception, and in this campaign, the exception is school choice.

Perhaps a mark of how mainstream and popular the issue has become, even in this solid blue Northeastern state, Democratic candidate Cory Booker and Republican rival Steve Lonegan have remarkably similar positions on the right of parents to choose their child's school.

Newark Mayor Booker's credentials on choice prompted the American Federation for Children, a prominent school choice advocacy organization, to tap him as a keynote speaker last year at its policy summit. During his speech at the event, the mayor decried the fact that educational opportunity is sometimes reserved for a certain few. "What have we created, a system that if you're connected, elected, have wealth and privilege, you get freedom in this country? And now you want to deny that to my community? No. I'm going to fight for the freedom and the liberty and the choice and the options of my people in the same way you will defend that right for yourself."

This summer, during the Democratic primary debate at Montclair State University, one of Booker's rivals, Representative Frank Pallone, Jr., took a jab at the mayor's stance on choice. "Mayor Booker has been very supportive of Gov. Christie's plans on education, which means vouchers, which means privatization of schools," Pallone said.

Booker was quick to defend his position. "For poor kids below the poverty line who are stuck in persistently failing schools, who really have no hope, I support scholarship programs that give them a lifeline," he said.

The mayor's support for vouchers has roots. In a speech at the Manhattan Institute in 2000, when he was a member of the Newark City Council, Booker described his journey toward choice. "I have always been, up until maybe four or five years ago, a strong advocate for the old-fashioned way of educating children. I supported public schools only.... But after four or five years of working in inner-city Newark, I began to rethink my situation, rethink my philosophy, rethink my views on public education, simply because of the realities I saw around me. Being outcome-focused started to change my view in favor of options like charter schools, contract schools and, yes, vouchers."



Newark Mayor Cory Booker speaking at the AFC policy summit May 4, 2012, in Jersey City, NJ. (Photo courtesy of the American Federation for Children)

With the primaries behind him, the latest blows against Booker are no longer that he supports choice, but that his position on the issue is neither clear enough nor strong enough.



Steve Lonegan addresses supporters after winning the Republican primary election. (Photo courtesy of the Longegan campaign)

Attacking Booker from the other side of the voucher issue, businessman and former Bogota (NJ) Mayor Steven Lonegan charges that Booker "has not been aggressive" on school choice.

Claiming that Booker has not introduced a voucher program in Newark, Lonegan states in a news release, "It is time for Cory Booker to man up and say once and for all whether he will support school vouchers if he is elected to the U.S. Senate or will he join President Obama in shutting down school voucher programs."

On his campaign Web site, Lonegan is described as "a strong supporter of school voucher and tax credit ideas that put parents in charge of their children's education."

The special election to determine who will fill the U.S. Senate seat of Frank Lautenberg, who died in June, is scheduled for October 16. But one way or another, it looks like New Jersey will soon have a senator who supports the right of parents to choose a child's school.

## Choice Roundup

The past several months have seen remarkable progress for the school choice movement. Here's a roundup of recent legislation.

**Alabama** – Lawmakers in May approved tax credits of up to \$7,500 for contributions to scholarship-granting organizations. They also enacted tax credits for parents who transfer students out of failing public schools into private schools or other public schools.

**Arizona** – Legislators in June extended the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) program to students in kindergarten, upwardly adjusted the funding formula for the accounts, and expanded the types of corporations that can contribute to the state's scholarship tax credit program.

**North Carolina** – Gov. Pat McCrory this summer signed into law two scholarship programs: one worth up to \$4,200 per year for children who qualify for the federal lunch program, and another worth up to \$6,000 for children with special needs.

**Ohio** – In late June, Gov. John Kasich signed an expansion of the state's EdChoice voucher program, allowing 2,000 low-income kindergartners across the state to participate. The program will expand with a new grade each year.

**Rhode Island** – Gov. Lincoln Chafee in early July approved a 50 percent increase (from \$1 million to \$1.5 million) in the cap on tax credits for contributions to scholarship organizations.

**South Carolina** – The legislature this summer enacted a tax credit for contributions to scholarship programs for children with special needs.

**Wisconsin** – Gov. Scott Walker in June signed a state budget that includes a tax deduction for private school tuition of up to \$10,000 per student. The budget also establishes a statewide school choice program for 500 low-income students in the program's first year and 1,000 students in subsequent years.

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## CAPE notes

★ Two recent polls reveal that parents have a favorable opinion about private schools.

The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 20 percent of parents of school-age children consider private schools in the United States to be excellent and another 41 percent regard them as good, amounting to an excellent/good combination of 61 percent. Just 4 percent of parents rate public schools in the U.S. as excellent, while 34 percent say they are good, for a combined total of 38 percent.

Taking another angle, the poll found that 91 percent of parents with children in private schools say their child's school is good or excellent, compared to 75 percent of parents with children in public schools.

Meanwhile, the Education Next-PEPG (Program on Education Policy and Governance) poll shows that 76 percent of parents give an "A" or "B" grade to private schools in their community, while 55 percent give the same grades to public schools in their community. African Americans in general (not just parents) have similar high regard for local private schools (74 percent give them an "A" or "B") but much lower regard for public schools. Only 30 percent of African Americans award local public schools with an "A" or "B."

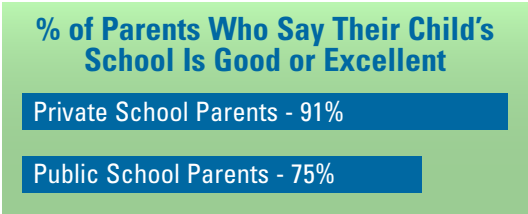
Be sure to check out CAPE's new infographic ([capenet.org/infographic.html](http://capenet.org/infographic.html)) depicting the AP-NORC data and more.

★ Peter M. Flanigan, investment banker, policy advisor, and staunch supporter of school choice, died July 29. He was 90.

Mr. Flanigan's broad involvement in the school choice movement included service in 1993 on the New York State Blue Ribbon

Panel on Catholic Schools. Charged by the state commissioner of education with recommending "creative ways" to address the "current pattern of Catholic school closings," the panel's recommendations included state tax credits not only for private school tuition, but also for donations to schools, programs, and scholarship funds. Flanigan at the time was managing director at the investment house Dillon, Reed & Company.

Flanigan's stellar commitment to school choice included establishment of the Patrons Program, which matched sponsors with needy schools; Student Sponsor Partners, which linked donors with individual students; and the School Choice Scholarships Foundation, which helped students with the costs of tuition. He served as chair of Children First America and was a founding board member of the Alliance for School Choice.



"Few in America have done more over the past two decades to advance educational choice for children than Peter Flanigan," said John Kirtley, vice chair of the American Federation for Children.

★ As part of the U.S. Department of Education's Equitable Services Implementation Plan (ESIP) to help improve the delivery of federally funded services to students in religious and independent schools, the department's Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE) has been very busy this summer producing a series of in-depth webinars. Each session features department specialists covering everything school officials need to know to have their students and teachers participate in the highlighted program.

All webinars have been recorded and are (or soon will be) available for viewing on the department's Web site at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/non-public/technical.html#webinars>.

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