

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Private School Students More Likely to Attain College Degrees

With a college degree widely regarded as a ticket to success in life, it turns out that students attending private high schools are significantly more likely than other students to attain one.

According to a report released in January by the National Center for Education Statistics, tenth-graders in private high schools in 2002 were nearly twice as likely as their public school counterparts to receive a bachelor's degree or higher by 2012. In turn, degree recipients were ultimately more successful in securing a job and realizing higher earnings—considerable consolation in an economy scarred by persistently high levels of unemployment.

College and Career Ready

At a time when an aggressive push is being made in education to ensure that all students are “college and career ready,” data from the NCES report suggest that the country has a long way to go to achieve that goal. Only one-third (33.3 percent) of all students who were high school sophomores in the spring of 2002 went on to attain a four-year college degree or more by 2012, when most were in their mid-twenties. But the percentage of degree-recipients varied significantly by the type of high school attended, with 31.1 percent of public school sophomores reaching a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 61.9 percent of sophomores in Catholic high schools and 57.1 percent of those in other private high schools.

Attainment of a degree carried real-life consequences concerning employment.

High school sophomores in 2002 who had no postsecondary experience faced an unemployment rate of 17 percent in 2012, with an additional 10 percent saying they were out of the labor force entirely

(i.e., not looking for work). By contrast, only 4 percent of students who were able to attain a bachelor's degree said they were unemployed, while another 2 percent said they were not seeking employment. A third group of students—those who received an associ-

ate's degree or an undergraduate certificate, or who took some postsecondary courses but did not receive a credential—experienced an unemployed rate of 9 percent and an out-of-labor-force rate of 4 percent.

Income Advantages

Better educated students also enjoyed income advantages. One-third of students with a bachelor's degree or higher had income from employment in 2011 of \$40,000 or more. That was true for only 21 percent of students with an associate's degree and 14 percent of those with only a high school diploma or its equivalent. On the flip side of the coin, only 4.6 percent of four-year degree recipients said they had received some form of public assistance during 2011, compared to 16.9 percent of those with an associate's degree, 32.4 percent of those with only a high school diploma, and an astounding 47.2 percent of those who had failed even to complete

high school.

The correlation between high school attendance and future success is captured in what NCES calls a “first look” at follow-up data collected in 2012 in connection with the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002). The massive study initially involved over 750 public and private high schools and more than 15,000 students. During the 2002 base year, information was gathered through questionnaires from students, parents, teachers, administrators, and librarians. Student performance in math and reading was also assessed. Follow-up surveys were conducted in 2004, 2006 (about two years after high school graduation), and 2012, the third and final follow-up. The “first look” at the final follow-up focuses on “current work and education activities, postsecondary enrollment and educational attainment, labor market experiences, family formation (marital and parental status), and current living arrangements.”

Even at the postsecondary level, students in privately sponsored institutions seemed to enjoy certain advantages. For example, 49.1 percent of students who first attended a private, not-for-profit postsecondary institution after

high school had a bachelor's degree by 2012, and 17 percent had a master's degree or higher. By contrast, only 31.5 percent of students who first attended a public postsecondary institution had a bachelor's degree by 2012, and 6.9 percent had a master's or more. Exactly what factors account for the difference is hard to say since the study presents only correlations between variables, not causal connections.

The full report is available on the NCES Web site at <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubinfo.asp?pubid=2014363>>.

Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002): A First Look at 2002 High School Sophomores 10 Years Later



Percentage of 2002 Sophomores Who Attained a Bachelor's Degree or Higher by 2012

Type of High School	Percentage
Public	31.1%
Catholic	61.9%
Other Private	57.1%

CAPE member organizations:

- Agudath Israel of America
- American Montessori Society
- Association Montessori International—USA
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Association of Christian Teachers and Schools
- Association of Waldorf Schools of N.A.
- Christian Schools International
- Council on Educational Standards and Accountability
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Friends Council on Education
- Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
- National Association of Episcopal Schools
- National Association of Independent Schools
- National Catholic Educational Association
- National Christian School Association
- Oral Roberts University Educational Fellowship
- Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Schools
- 35 Affiliated State Organizations

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12
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Senators Use School Choice Week to Unveil Legislation

U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) used the backdrop of National School Choice Week (see related story) to roll out legislation that would substantially advance school choice. His Scholarships for Kids Act would provide states the option of using federal education funds to establish scholarship programs allowing low-income students to attend any accredited school, public or private, that their parents select. *The New York Times* described the move as “another sign that Republicans are staking out school choice as a significant rallying point in an election year.”

The senator, who once served as education secretary to President George H.W. Bush and is now the top Republican on the Senate committee that deals with education, unveiled his plan January 28 at the American Enterprise Institute.

“Central to our country is the principle of equal opportunity and creating an environment where as many Americans as possible can be at the same starting line,” Senator Alexander said. “I believe this scholarship is a real answer to income equality, to giving more people a chance to seek the American dream because it gives more children more opportunity to attend a better school.”

The program would offer states the opportunity to use a substantial share of their federal education dollars (roughly 41 percent, or \$24 billion nationally) to establish a scholarship program that would relieve them of many current federal requirements. States could limit scholarships for attendance at public schools or expand them to include accredited or otherwise state-approved private schools.

Although current federal education dollars often flow to wealthy schools, funds used for scholarship programs would be earmarked only for low-income students.

“The idea of allowing federal dollars to follow students to schools has been a successful strategy in American education for 70 years,” said the senator. “Last year, \$33 billion in federal Pell Grants and \$106 billion in loans followed students to public and private colleges. Since the GI Bill began in 1944, these vouchers,

which is what they are, have helped create a marketplace of 6,000 autonomous higher education institutions, usually described as the best higher education system in the world.”

By contrast, U.S. elementary and secondary schools are “not the best in the world,” said Senator Alexander. “I believe one reason for this is while more than 93 percent of federal dollars spent for higher

education follow students through colleges of their choice through grants and loans, federal dollars do not automatically follow elementary and secondary students to schools of their choice. Instead, the money is sent directly to the

schools. Local government monopolies run most of the schools and tell the students which school to attend. There is little choice and there’s no K-12 marketplace as there is in higher education.”

Also at the AEI forum, Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) talked about his new proposal to expand educational opportunities for students with disabilities, children living on military bases, and children living in

the District of Columbia.

Describing his *Creating Hope and Opportunity for Individuals and Communities Through Education (CHOICE) Act*, Scott said, “Here’s an opportunity for us for fewer dollars to get a better outcome and to see kids maximize their potential, because what government should do is get out of the way when necessary and let the private sector and competition drive better results at lower prices and create a path for a higher quality of life.”



U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) speaking at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC, January 28, 2014. (Photo captured from AEI video.)



U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) speaking at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC, January 28, 2014. (Photo captured from AEI video.)

5,500 Events Mark National School Choice Week

Students, families, and elected officials across the U.S. celebrated the spreading reality of educational opportunity at an estimated 5,500 separate events during National School Choice Week 2014, from January 26 to February 1.

Forty-nine mayors and 21 governors officially proclaimed the week in their cities and states, including Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal (R), Ohio Gov. John Kasich (R), Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D), and Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley (D).

"This bipartisan show of support underscores the growth, the breadth, and the unity of the school choice movement," said National School Choice Week President Andrew Campanella. "Americans of all political and socio-economic backgrounds are coming together to demand educational options for their children."

The week's official kick-off took place at a rally in Houston, Texas, where U.S. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (D) and U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R) shared the stage.

"If one child in America is not given the right to an education—a quality education—to choose public or private, or charter, that's an injustice, and I'm going to fight that injustice," said Representative Lee.

"School choice is the civil rights issue of the 21st century," said Senator Cruz.

In Washington, DC, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) addressed students and supporters January 29 in the packed auditorium of Friendship Chamberlain Elementary School, where a rally originally scheduled for Capitol Hill was moved indoors because of bitter cold.

"School choice is about saying to all of you and your parents, if you don't fit in the school you have, if that school is not meeting your needs, you and your family should have the right to choose one that does, regardless of who you are or where you come from," said Cantor.

Following the rally, participants visited legislators on Capitol Hill to make the case for school choice.

As part of a statement issued to recognize

School Choice Week, House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) said, "When parents are empowered to select the best schools, students have a better shot at an education that will help them succeed and pursue their dreams."

Perhaps the most notable Washington-based activity to mark the week was the establishment of the Congressional School Choice Caucus. According to a news release, caucus members "will be dedicated to expanding educational freedom and promoting policies that increase high-quality education for all children."

Representative Luke Messer (R-IN) established the caucus. "No child should be forced to go to a school where they won't

have a meaningful chance to learn," he said. Speaker Boehner said he believed the caucus would "draw greater attention to the value and importance of school choice."

The impact of School Choice Week will likely

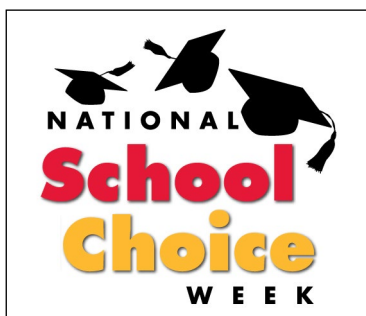
last for a long time to come thanks in part to a new public service announcement released January 30 by the American Federation for Children and the Alliance for School Choice. The PSA, titled "Educational Choice Now," features Hall of Fame football player Deion Sanders and retired WNBA star and Olympic gold medal winner Lisa Leslie, along with an impressive list of other athletes and celebrities.

According to the AFC, the PSA will begin airing nationally through a digital media buy.

At a news conference in New York City to unveil the PSA in connection with Super Bowl festivities, Kevin P. Chavous, executive counsel to the American Federation for Children, said "Together, we must break down the barriers to educational options so every child has access to every available educational option."



U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), wearing a School Choice Week scarf, meets in her office January 29 with a student currently benefiting from the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. (Photo: NSCW Web Site.)



Abandoned Hopes

Henry Tyson, the smart and dynamic superintendent of St. Marcus Lutheran School in Milwaukee, wowed state CAPE representatives at their meeting in 2012 when he described the remarkable work the school was doing with impoverished students from the inner-city. Affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, a member of CAPE, St. Marcus is unswervingly religious, focuses on values and character formation, and sets no-excuse standards for academic performance.

The school participates in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program and is already educating over 700 students. But in an effort to expand its quality program to another 600 students, the school has sought to purchase from the city one of its abandoned public school buildings. Writing in *The Wall Street Journal* last month, C. J. Szafir, the education policy director at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, explains that city officials "are working together to block high-performing private and charter schools from buying the vacant, unused school buildings that the city owns." He says their "stubborn negligence is costly for the taxpayers" and "even more costly for the city's children."

According to Szafir, "the city currently owns at least 15 unused school buildings." But the city "prohibits private schools in the choice program and for-profit public charters from purchasing or leasing empty school buildings." Even when it sells buildings to third parties, it slaps on a restrictive deed "to prevent the buyer from ever selling them to a choice school."

"Education is the great driver of upward social mobility, and school choice gives children the freedom to leave failing schools," writes Szafir. "It's a shame that local officials in Milwaukee don't see it that way."

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ Teachers and parents looking to discover the essence of Montessori education and how it plays out in practice now have a unique online resource tool from the Association Montessori International/USA (AMI/USA). *Montessori Guide* is described as a “visionary project” offering an innovative and unique way to support Montessori educators in their daily work.

According to Virginia McHugh Goodwin, executive director of AMI/USA and a member of CAPE’s board, the tool is designed “to demonstrate what quality Montessori looks like.” In an effort to “capture authentic Montessori practice on film,” the focus is to show “the work of children in their classroom environments,” she writes. “We decided to seek the child who emerges under the conditions described by Dr. Montessori in her writings in order to illustrate the concepts to be explored.”

Filmed in a variety of Montessori settings by a creative team that has been travelling across the country since 2012, the guide captures the everyday activities of AMI-trained teachers. “We wanted to follow a new level of inquiry and to essentially begin delving deeper into our craft,” says Goodwin.

Montessori Guide is available online at <montessoriguide.org>.

★ The Thomas B. Fordham Institute last month published what it called a “policy toolkit” on how to hold private schools that participate in choice programs publicly accountable. The document calls

on states that sponsor choice programs to:

- “require that all students who receive a voucher or tax-credit scholarship participate in state assessments;
- mandate public disclosure of those assessment results, school by school, save for schools that enroll fewer than ten voucher or scholarship students in grades that are tested; and
- use a sliding scale when it comes to acting on the test results: Private schools that derive little of their revenue from programs of this kind should be largely left alone, while those that receive more of their dollars from state initiatives should be held more accountable.”

The paper caused a stir among certain school choice advocates. Some argued that with state tests inescapably linked to state standards, forcing private schools to administer the tests would essentially compel them to adopt the same standards as public schools, thus diminishing educational pluralism. Others wondered why a school should have its quality judged solely on the basis of the math and reading performance of what could be a relatively small number of recent transfer students from poor-performing schools. Fordham’s proposal is available at <www.edexcellence.net>

★ More children than ever before are attending private schools using state scholarships and tax credit programs, according to a new report released by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

The 2014 edition of *The ABCs of School*

Choice provides a comprehensive look at the choice programs currently underway in 23 states and the District of Columbia, reporting for each the number of students and schools participating.

In the current school year, more than 301,000 students are being served by publicly funded school choice programs across the country, up from 260,000 last year.

Florida’s tax-credit scholarship program served more students (59,674) than any other choice program, but a similar initiative in Pennsylvania was a close second, reaching 59,218 students.

“School choice has grown from small, urban-based programs to broader plans now impacting suburban and even rural communities,” said Robert Enlow, president and CEO of the Friedman Foundation. “This year we could see school choice continue to grow in states like Arizona, Iowa, and Mississippi.”

The report is available at <www.ed-choice.org>.

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