

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Survey Reveals Public's Preference for Private Schools

If they were given the opportunity to select whatever school they could for their child, more Americans would prefer a private school than any other option, according to a national poll released this summer by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and Braun Research, Inc.

Asked "If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?" 41 percent of Americans said they would

select a private school; 36 percent chose a regular public school; 12 percent, a charter school; and 9 percent said they would homeschool their child.

The report noted a "glaring disconnect" between school preferences and actual school enrollment in the United States. Even though 41 percent of adults would prefer their child to attend a private school, only about 10 percent of children in grades PK-12 actually do so.

Asked to identify the most important characteristic that would cause them to choose a private school for their child, 24 percent of respondents identified factors that fell into the category of "better education/quality," 17 percent indicated attributes classified as "individual attention/one-on-one," and 13 percent gave responses coded as "class size/student-teacher ratio."

School Report Card

The preference for private schools was also reflected in how Americans rated different types of schools. Respondents were asked to give a grade of A through F to the schools in their area. The report provided

results for all respondents as well as for those who actually gave a grade to each school type. As the report put it: "When examining only those responses giving grades to different school types in their communities, we observed approximately 46% of the national sample gave an A or

B to local public schools; 83% graded an A or B to local private/parochial schools; and 63% gave an A or B to charter schools [see graph]. Only 4% of respondents gave a D or F grade to private schools; 14% gave low grades to charter schools; and 10% assigned poor grades to area public schools."

Looking at all respondents, 44 percent gave an A or B to public schools; 58 percent gave an A or B to private schools; and 36 percent gave similar grades to public charter schools. On the low grade side of the spectrum, 4 percent gave private schools a D or F, while 19 percent did so for public schools and 8 percent for charter schools.

The survey involved telephone interviews of a statistically representative sample of 1,002 adults between April 22 and May 12. Results from the *Schooling in America Survey* were released June 30 in a report that covered a host of education issues.

Americans Want Choice

Preferences for various school choice options was a prominent feature in the

report. Sixty-two percent of Americans said they supported an "education savings account" (ESA) system, described as providing funds "to pay for private school tuition, virtual education programs, private tutoring, or saving for future college expenses." Only 28 percent of respondents said they opposed the measure. The level of support has jumped six points since last year. Five states currently have ESA programs of one type or another.

"ESAs are the new go-to program that allows dollars to follow children to the educational setting of their choice," said Robert Enlow, president and CEO of the Friedman Foundation. "This poll shows Americans welcome a tool that will give parents and children lots of choice when it comes to providing them the best education possible."

Other school choice measures also fared well. On vouchers, the report notes, "Approximately six out of 10 Americans (61%) say they support school vouchers, compared with 33% who said they oppose such a school choice system." And when

it comes to tax-credit scholarship programs, which offer tax incentives for contributions to scholarship funds that offer families more school choice, the report has this to say: "Americans are more than twice as likely to support a tax-credit scholarship

program than they are to oppose one. Six out of 10 respondents (60%) said they supported the reform, whereas 29 percent said they oppose tax-credit scholarships."

The complete report is available for download at edchoice.org/research/2015-schooling-in-america-survey/.

[Image: © goir/Dollar Photo Club]

What school would you select to obtain the best education for your child?

Private School - 41%

Regular Public School - 36%

Charter School - 12%

Home School - 9%

Percentage of Americans Who Give an A or B Grade to Schools in Their Area

Public Schools - 46%

Charter Schools - 63%

Private Schools - 83%

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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Summer Expands Parent Choice in Education

Let's just call it the summer of school choice. Significant developments in several states have appreciably advanced the right of parents to choose their child's school over the past several months.

Nevada

At the top of the list is Nevada's expansive education savings account (ESA) program. Signed into law by Governor Brian Sandoval in June, the program provides parents with children in public schools funds to be used for a variety of education services, including enrollment in private schools. The state treasurer's office, which is administering the program, posted an early enrollment application in July and expects to start funding the accounts at about \$5,100 per student in early April. As of mid-August, the state had received over 2,200 applications. The filing deadline is November 30.

A survey released in August by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice found that private schools in the state, which currently enroll roughly 20,200 students, have room for about 6,600 additional students. Moreover, 79 percent of schools responding to the survey said they would participate in an ESA program. The report, titled *Exploring Nevada's Private Education Sector*, also found that the median tuition is \$6,375 in the state's private elementary schools; \$7,180 in middle schools, and \$8,100 in high schools.

"There is already incredible interest in this program from parents, students, and education providers," said Robert Enlow, president and CEO of the Friedman Foundation. "As with many school choice programs, we expect demand to outstrip supply quickly and new providers to fill the void with start-up private schools, online learning models, and schooling innovations that go beyond what we know today."

Putting a bit of a damper on the merriment, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the Nevada program. Tim Keller, senior attorney at the Institute for Justice (IJ), which plans to defend the program, called the lawsuit "baseless

and cynical." He said the program "was enacted to help parents and children whose needs are not being met in their current public schools, and we will work with them to intervene in this lawsuit and defeat it." IJ successfully defended an ESA program in Arizona, which served as the model for Nevada's program. "Just like Arizona's ESA program, Nevada's ESA program does not set aside a single dollar for religious purposes, but instead gives parents a genuine choice as to how to spend the money deposited in their child's education savings account," said Keller.

North Carolina

In another school choice battle, the Institute for Justice scored a huge victory when the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled July 23 that the state's Opportunity Scholarship Program is constitutional. The

long-awaited decision allows the program, which serves low-income children, to continue without question.

"When it enacted this scholarship program, the North Carolina legislature joined nearly 20 other states that have seen the wisdom of giving parents additional educational opportunities for their children," said IJ Senior Attorney Dick Komer, lead counsel for two families who intervened in the case. He added, "The great thing about school choice programs like North Carolina's is that school districts can no longer take low-income students' continued attendance for granted." Komer said the decision "means that families using scholarships not only get access to schools better able to meet their children's unique needs, but the districts now have an incentive to better serve their students. School choice benefits all students."

Arizona and Ohio

In other school choice developments this summer, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey travelled to the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, AZ, to sign legislation that would provide education savings accounts to families who live on tribal lands.

And in Ohio, Governor John Kasich signed legislation to increase scholarship amounts in several of the state's school choice programs.



Gov. Doug Ducey signs a bill in Window Rock, AZ, August 14, to provide families on tribal lands with education savings accounts. (Image from American Federation for Children video.)

Presidential Hopefuls Testify to the Power of Teachers

In a presidential race with more than its share of spotlight-grabbing razzle-dazzle, some 2016 candidates did something rather unusual this August. They engaged in a low-keyed, lengthy, substantive discussion about education.

In a forum in Londonderry, NH, on August 19, six Republican presidential hopefuls discussed issues like school choice, the Common Core, and the proper role of the federal government in education. They also talked—at times quite affectionately—about the remarkable teachers that had a memorable influence in their lives.

Sponsored by the American Federation for Children and The Seventy Four, an online news site devoted to education, the forum featured Governors Chris Christie of New Jersey, Bobby Jindal of Louisiana, John Kasich of Ohio, and Scott Walker of Wisconsin. Jeb Bush, former governor of Florida, and Carly Fiorina, former chief executive of Hewlett-Packard, also took part. Each candidate sat for a 45-minute interview with Campbell Brown, former CNN journalist and current editor-in-chief of The Seventy Four. A similar event for Democratic candidates is set to take place in Iowa in October.

The hard policy stories out of the New Hampshire forum were amply covered by a variety of news outlets, but precious little attention was paid to the candidates' moving remembrances of their teachers.

Asked by Ms. Brown to recall a teacher who had a huge influence on them, various candidates eagerly and fondly painted vivid images in remarkable detail.

Jeb Bush spoke about Angel Rubio, a tenth-grade Spanish teacher at Phillips Academy in Andover who required students to read the great works in Spanish. “We were reading Cervantes; we were reading *Don Quixote*; we were reading Unamuno and Borges from Argentina.... I couldn't believe it.” Bush said Mr. Rubio's approach was, “You're going to do it. You have to do it. You can do it.” Mr. Rubio “gave me a sense that high lofty expectations really matter.”

Ruth Manishin was Chris Christie's fifth-grade teacher. Christie, a straight-A student up to then, recalled an encounter after getting

a less-than-expected grade on an essay. “Mrs. Manishin, I have never gotten a C on anything in my life. You need to reread this because it's really good.” The teacher's was equally direct: “Mr. Christie, I know that you believe you're an A student, but if you want to be an A student in this classroom, you're going to have to stop talking and start working.”

“She taught me how to write,” said Christie. “She was tough, but she was really smart.”

Years later, Mrs. Manishin sent a note congratulating Christie on his election as governor. “I'm still very proud of you,” she wrote.

“Imagine that teacher,” said Christie. “She not only had an effect on me in that fifth grade classroom, but twenty-nine years after I graduated from high school, she reminded me about what a really great teacher is: someone who's really invested in their students.”

Without a hint of hesitation, Carly Fiorina recited the names of her grade school teachers at Channing School in London. “Think about how phenomenal that is. Think about how much impact those people had on me that I have no trouble remembering their names. I can't remember some of the people I met three days ago,” she said.

“The point is this, every single one of those teachers made me love to go to school every day,” she said. “I felt valued every morning when I walked in the classroom, and my bet is the other 25 or 30 students said the same. They were excited to be teaching me, so I was excited to be learning.”

Scott Walker talked about Betty Balsley, his third grade teacher in Plainfield, Iowa, who was also a member of the church where Walker's father was pastor. “I think for her, part of her living her faith was how she was a teacher. She really cared for me and for the other students,” Walker recalled.

“Part of your love, I think, for education... comes from the warmth that you feel from the teacher and the classroom,” observed Walker. He said Mrs. Balsley inspired her students “not just to want to do better in school but, in turn, to want to do better in life.”

View all interviews at <the74million.org>.



Campbell Brown interviewing a presidential candidate in New Hampshire, August 19. (Image from video at the74million.org.)

Clarity of Mission

“Faith-based schools should be clear and unapologetic about their mission.” That was a key message delivered by CAPE board member and Boston University professor Charles Glenn to state CAPE leaders at their recent summer institute in Boston. Glenn's talk focused on the importance of protecting the identity of religious schools in the face of pressure to conform to changes in society's sexual mores.

Having written extensively on preserving the identity of faith-based schools, Glenn believes that both religious and educational freedom are now “profoundly endangered” in America. He supported his claim with several portentous quotes from legal scholars and Supreme Court justices, most notable the observation by Chief Justice John Roberts in his dissenting opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that the decision “creates serious questions about religious liberty.”

Reading the “signs of the times,” Glenn said, “It seems to me obvious that we will have an intensified assault upon any individuals or institutions that seem to want to limit sexual freedom, or even to call it into question.”

Glenn exhorted faith-based schools to resist “all attempts to force them to abandon the public expression in action of their convictions.”

Noting that schools that choose to live out their beliefs could face several threats, including a loss of tax-exempt status, Glenn advised vigilance, steadfast adherence to mission, and practical steps in policy and practice to protect against legal challenges.

In the end, Glenn predicted “stormy weather ahead, but by no means grounds for despair,” reminding the group that “[f]irm and intelligent resistance to cultural trends has always been a hallmark of vital religious institutions” and that “complacency is their worst enemy.”

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ “Our nation’s schools should be safe havens for teaching and learning, free of crime and violence. Any instance of crime or violence at school not only affects the individuals involved, but also may disrupt the educational process and affect bystanders, the school itself, and the surrounding community.” So states the 2014 edition of *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, a report released over the summer by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Some of the findings:

“During the 2011–12 school year, a higher percentage of public than private school teachers reported being threatened with injury (10 vs. 3 percent) or being physically attacked (6 vs. 3 percent) by a student from their school.”

“A higher percentage of students attending public schools (13 percent) than of students attending private schools (2 percent) reported that gangs were present at their school in 2013.”

“A higher percentage of public school teachers (41 percent) than of private school teachers (22 percent) reported that student misbehavior interfered with their teaching in 2011–12. In addition, 38 percent of public school teachers reported that student tardiness and class cutting

interfered with their teaching, compared with 19 percent of private school teachers.”

“In addition, a higher percentage of public school students (4 percent) than of private school students (1 percent) reported avoiding one or more places in school [because they feared being attacked or harmed].”

The report is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015072.pdf>.

★ In August, the U.S. Department of Education won broad praise from school choice advocates by appointing Serving Our Children as the new administrator for the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) in the District

of Columbia, the only federally funded K-12 scholarship program in the country. The department describes the program as providing low-income parents “with expanded options for the education of their children.”

Serving Our Children reports that “97 percent of participating OSP children are African-American and Hispanic, and the average income for participating families is less than \$22,000 per year.” In addition, the program “receives a 95 percent parent satisfaction rate, and has been found in studies to increase graduation rates by 21 percent for students using a scholarship, as compared to those who sought but did not

receive a scholarship.”

House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) praised the department’s action: “Serving Our Children is the right organization to improve oversight and accountability in the Opportunity Scholarship Program, and ensure more students have access to the invaluable resources it provides.”

★ Schools with students who are learning to speak English will appreciate the latest guidance document from the Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE) at the U.S. Department of Education. The new guidance, in the form of clear questions and answers, deals with equitable services to English learners in private schools under Part A of Title III of ESEA. It covers just about anything one would need to know about how the program interacts with private schools.

The document is available for download at www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/nonpublic/titlethree.pdf.

