

2010-11 Statewide Census of Private Education (SCOPE) **Summary of a study of private K-12 schools in Minnesota**

To better understand the reach and impact of private education in Minnesota, the Minnesota Independent School Forum contracted with Wilder Research to conduct a study of private schools throughout the state. The results of the study provide a comprehensive portrait of private K-12 schools including private school characteristics and programs, school enrollment and capacity, student characteristics, potential interest of private schools in participating in a school choice program, high school graduation requirements and graduation rates, school staffing, and school finances. It also provides comparisons with Minnesota public schools. A report and this summary were developed for use by the Minnesota Legislature, other policymakers, funders, educators, advocacy organizations, and others interested in the education of children in Minnesota. Similar surveys were conducted by the Minnesota Independent School Forum in 2000, 2002, and 2003.

About the study

Development of the study was guided by an advisory committee of representatives from private schools, the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Catholic Education Association, the Minnesota Legislature, and the Minnesota Independent School Forum.

The study included a statewide survey of private schools. The survey was conducted during February and March of 2012, and primarily gathered data on the 2010-11 school year. Survey data were supplemented with data from the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Catholic Education Association.

For purposes of the study, private schools were defined as religiously-affiliated and/or independent schools in Minnesota that serve one or more grades from kindergarten through 12. Only schools with at least 15 students enrolled in fall 2010 were included. A total of 443 schools were eligible to participate in the study. Of these, 226 schools completed the survey (51% response rate). Selected information on all 443 schools (e.g., enrollment, staffing, and some student services) was available from the Minnesota Department of Education and is included in the study. Analysis of schools that completed compared with those that did not complete the survey indicates that the survey is representative of private schools in Minnesota.

Private Education in Minnesota

A profile of schools

Characteristics

Most private schools have a religious orientation or purpose and are affiliated with a religious organization or institution. The most frequent affiliation is with the Roman Catholic Church (42%), followed by Lutheran church denominations (27%).

Almost half of private schools serve kindergarten through 8th grade (43%). About a quarter (24%) of schools serve kindergarten through grades 5 or 6. Fifteen percent serve kindergarten through grade 12. Just 5 percent of private schools serve high school only (grades 9-12).

Seventy percent of private schools are accredited. The larger the school, the more likely it is accredited – 97 percent of the schools with enrollments of 300 or more students are accredited, compared with 35 percent of the schools with enrollments below 50 students.

Two-thirds of private schools have no special admission requirements beyond proof of immunization, age, and residence. Of those that do, the most frequent requirements are the applicant's commitment to the school's mission, results from a personal interview, record of private behavior, and academic record. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Characteristics of private schools that participated in the 2010 SCOPE survey (N=226)

Accredited	70%
Religious orientation	92%
Affiliated with religious organization	83%
Kindergarten only	5%
K-5 or 6 only	24%
K-8 only	43%
K-12	15%
7-12 only	5%
9-12 only	5%
No special admission requirements	68%
Requirement: commitment to school mission	27%
Requirement: personal interview	25%
Requirement: record of prior behavior	23%
Requirement: academic record	20%
Requirement: recommendations	17%
Requirement: academic test or entrance exam	14%

Enrollment and capacity

In Minnesota, 75,406 students attended private schools during the 2010-11 school year, accounting for 8 percent of all students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade in the state. This figure excludes home schooled students (17,247) and students attending private schools with enrollments of fewer than 15 students (338).

Enrollment in private schools is highest in kindergarten with about 7,000 students statewide. Enrollment decreases in higher grades, with about 4,000-5,000 students each in grades 9 through 12 in private schools. See Figure 2.

Private schools, especially those serving only elementary grades, tend to be small. Half of private schools have fewer than 100 students enrolled, whereas 7 percent have 500 or more students enrolled. The average (mean) enrollment in private schools in 2010-11 was 170 students, which was less than half of the average enrollment in public schools (419 students).

It is estimated that private schools have the capacity to serve about 25,000 more students statewide (based on their self-reported capacity versus current student population). The most additional capacity is in the Twin Cities 7-county metropolitan area, followed by the Southern region. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Seats available in private schools by region (actual numbers reported)

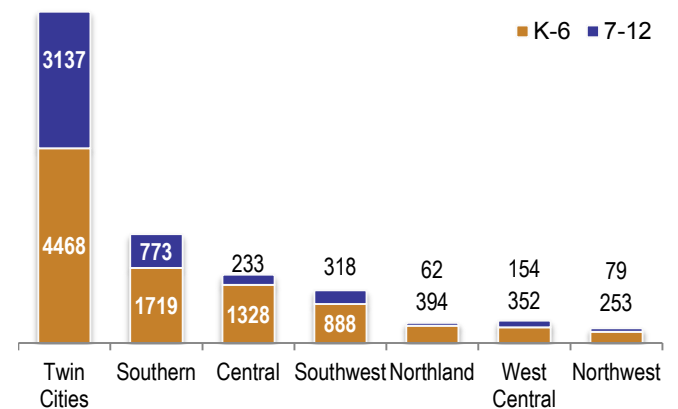
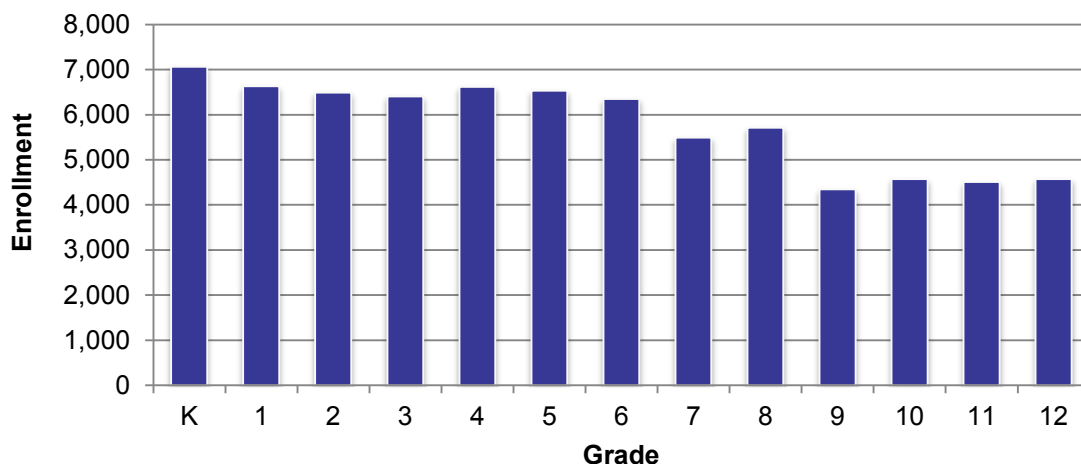


Figure 2. Enrollment in all Minnesota private schools by grade (2010-11 school year)



Teachers and administrators

On average, private schools have a lower student per teacher ratio than public schools: 13 students per teacher in the elementary grades and 12 students per teacher in secondary grades, compared with the public school ratio of 16 students per teacher in elementary grades and 18 students per teacher in secondary grades.

This analysis includes regular classroom teachers as well as those who teach subjects such as art, music, physical education, or special education. Overall, 79 percent of private school teachers held valid teaching licenses for the grades that they taught.

Professional staff characteristics

The racial/ethnic characteristics of private and public school professional staff (teachers and administrators) are similar -- the vast majority (96%) are white.

In private schools, 58 percent of professional staff have bachelor's degrees and 38 percent have master's degrees. Public school professional staff are more likely to have master's degrees (57%).

Staff salaries and benefits

The average salary of private school teachers is estimated to be in the range of \$37,000 to \$39,000. This is roughly \$15,000 less than the average salary for public school teachers in Minnesota (\$53,680).

Statewide, the average annual salary for private school principals was about \$56,000, with principals' salaries being higher in the Twin Cities area than in greater Minnesota (average of \$65,000 vs. \$47,000). Average salaries for public school principals were considerably higher, falling in the \$90,000 to \$100,000 range. A small number of private schools that participated in this survey reported having presidents or headmasters. The average salary for these positions was about \$90,000.

In addition to salary, most private schools offer benefits including covering some or all of their employees' health insurance costs, although many did not cover family health insurance costs nor any dental insurance costs. Two-thirds or more of the schools contribute to employee retirement programs or pensions, continuing education, and life insurance coverage. About half provide paid leave to employees.

The students

Characteristics

Overall, the student population in private schools is less diverse, higher-income, and receives fewer special education services than the population of public school students:

- 14 percent of private school students are students of color, compared with 26 percent for public schools.
- 11 percent of private school students are low income, compared with 37 percent of public school students. (Low income is indicated by eligibility for free or reduced price meals.)
- 1 percent of students attending private schools have Limited English Proficiency (LEP), compared with 7 percent in public schools. (Slightly over half of the private school LEP students received English as a Second Language services from their school.)
- 3 percent of private school students received Special Education services, compared with 15 percent of public school students. (Half of private schools reported that they provided or paid for some or all Special Education services for their Special Education students.)
- Roughly 4 percent of private school students received Title I services for low-income students, most frequently reading and language arts, followed by mathematics, and then ESL. Over 90 percent of these students received Title I services at their school.

Notes: Many private schools (37%) did not participate in the free/reduced price meal program which may have resulted in the percentages of low-income students being under reported in private schools.

The difference in Special Education percentages between private and public schools should be interpreted with caution due to differences in identification and intervention with special needs students in the two types of schools.

High school graduation rates and ACT results

In terms of on-time graduation rates and college entrance test scores, private school students perform better, on average, when compared with public school students.

- 97 percent of students in private schools graduate on time (within four years after entering 9th grade), compared with 77 percent of public school students.

- There appears to be very little difference in graduation rates between white students and students of color attending private schools. Over 90 percent of students of color in private schools graduated on time. In public schools, 55 percent of students of color graduated on time (with considerable variation in percentages across racial/ethnic groups) and 84 percent of white students graduated on time.
- 88 percent of private school students took the ACT college readiness test compared with 72 percent of public school students and they tended to score higher (average composite ACT scores of 25.0 vs. 22.9). See Figure 4.

Note: Private school graduation rates are based on a relatively small number of schools reporting useable information for this survey, and small sample sizes of some racial groups, so these results should be interpreted with caution, as they may not represent all private schools granting diplomas.

Figure 4. ACT and SAT test-taking rates and scores: private schools compared with Minnesota overall

	Minnesota overall	Private schools (SCOPE survey)
Students taking ACT	72%	88%
Average ACT score	22.9	25.0
Students taking SAT	7%	31%
Average SAT English score	593	693
Average SAT math score	608	624

Source: Overall Minnesota data are from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Use of technology

Almost all private schools provided desktop computers for student classroom use, and some provide laptops. Among the schools that do provide computers, the average number of students per computer was about five. One-fifth of the schools had tablet computers such as iPads for student use. Fourteen schools (6%) reported providing each student with a laptop or tablet computer. Students participated in online learning or courses in 27 percent of the schools.

Programs and school choice

Many schools participate in public programs. However, this study suggests a need to increase awareness among private schools about the Shared-Time program, proposed school choice options, and requirements for participation.

Programs

- 94 percent of private schools participated in the Nonpublic Pupil Aid program, which provides counseling services, health services, and textbooks and instructional materials.
- 88 percent of private schools participated in school district-provided transportation.
- 63 percent of private schools participated in the free or reduced price meal program.

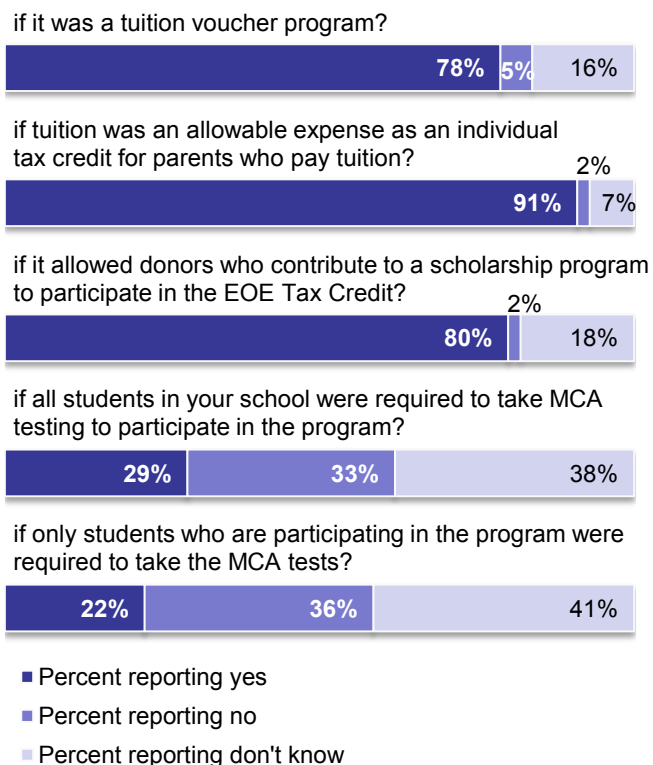
On the other hand, only about half of private schools were aware of the Shared-Time program, by which their students can attend public school classes for part of the school day. About one-quarter of private schools participated in the program through their resident school district.

Potential school choice options

Most private schools said they would participate in each of several potential school choice options that were described to them in the survey. These included a tuition voucher program, tuition tax credit for parents, and a tax credit for scholarship program donors. Many schools indicated that they would not participate or they didn't know if they would, if students were required to take state MCA tests to participate in such options. This indicates a need for more information among private schools about the specific requirements, testing expectations, and potential benefits of participation in school choice options. See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Private schools' willingness to participate in various school choice options

Would your school participate in a school choice program that provided financial help to children whose families [are low/moderate income] ...



Per student cost

In Minnesota, the average per student cost in 2010-11 was \$8,688 for private schools, compared with \$10,251 for public schools in 2009-10 (most recent data available). The median per-student cost for private schools of \$5,680 is much lower than the average cost of \$8,688 due to a fairly small number of schools that offer secondary grades at a higher cost and enroll a relatively large numbers of students. The average per student cost for private schools that offer kindergarten through grade 8 (just over \$5,000) is less than half the average per-student cost of private schools that offer grades 9 through 12.

Tuition

Almost all private schools charged tuition to students. Schools were asked to indicate the lowest and highest tuition they charged to any student in the 2010-11

school year. The average lowest tuition charged was \$2,848, and the average highest tuition charged was \$4,773. Schools serving secondary grades tended to charge higher tuition. However, there was great variability in the lowest and highest tuition charged by schools serving the same grades. Most schools reported that they offer discounted tuition rates based on financial need and for additional students from the same family. Over half of participating schools gave discounts to children of employees and church members. One-fifth gave discounts if students' family members volunteered at the school. Overall, 20 percent of private school students in kindergarten through 8th grade and 24 percent in 9th through 12 grades received need-based financial aid to help with tuition costs. See Figure 6.

Figure 6. Students receiving need-based financial aid in 2010-11 (SCOPE survey)

	Number of schools reporting	Students receiving need-based financial aid	
		Number	Percent
Grades K-8	147	5,348	20%
Grades 9-12	31	2,283	24%

Income, expenses, and endowments

Over 60 percent of private schools had both incomes and expenses of under \$1 million in 2010-11. Less than 10 percent of the schools had incomes or expenses of \$5 million or more. Across all the schools, tuition and fees combined accounted for 55 percent of income, followed by church investment at 23 percent, and then fundraising and donations at 16 percent.

Just over half of private schools reported having an endowment. The value of schools' endowments ranged widely. One-quarter of the schools had endowments valued at \$100,000 or less, while about one-fifth had endowments valued at \$1 million or more. Endowment income accounted for 2 percent of schools' total income.

Overall, private schools' personnel costs accounted for the bulk of their expenses (76%), followed by program expenses (10%), and building operations (9%).

Issues to consider

This Statewide Census of Private Education indicates that the impact of private schools is important to consider in terms of the overall academic outcomes of children in Minnesota, both because of the number of students being served by private education and because of the academic success experienced by these students.

The smaller schools and lower student per teacher ratios in private schools as compared with public schools in Minnesota may be beneficial to student achievement, especially for low-income and minority students.

High school graduation rates and college entrance exam (ACT/SAT) scores that private schools self-reported for this study indicate that, on average, private school students have better academic outcomes when compared with public school students. Caution should be used when interpreting these findings. Although we are confident in the representativeness of the study results overall, the response rate for the high school graduation questions was lower than the rest of the survey and some of the responses indicated that schools may not have been able to complete these items accurately.

More research is needed to assess the extent of differences in academic outcomes between private and public school students in Minnesota, taking into account differences in the characteristics of the students served.

Finally, it is important to make a note of private schools' awareness of and participation in two public policy initiatives. First, the private schools that participated in this study expressed strong interest in participating in school choice or voucher programs. It appears that schools would be cautious, however, and may need more information with regard to how this decision may impact the expectation of their participation in statewide testing (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment, or MCA).

Second, when asked about their participation in the Shared-Time program, only about one-quarter of schools said they participate and just over half were aware of the program. More information about this program and outreach to non-participating schools may help to increase participation in and garner more support for this initiative.



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For more information

This summary presents highlights of the 2010-11 Statewide Census of Private Education report. For more information about this report, contact Nicole MartinRogers at Wilder Research, 651-280-2682.

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