

Council for American Private Education

# CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

## Private School Students More Likely to Succeed in College

If you graduated from a private high school this past June, you were significantly more likely than graduates of other schools to be ready for college coursework, according to data compiled by ACT, the college admission testing company.

Eighty-three percent of 2012 graduates of religious and independent schools who took the ACT met or surpassed the test's college readiness benchmark

score in English, compared to 64 percent of graduates from public schools. The share of students who met the benchmark scores in other subjects was also higher in private schools (reading – 68 percent vs. 50 percent; math – 60 vs. 44; science – 42 vs. 29).

According to the ACT, college readiness benchmarks “are the minimum scores needed on the ACT subject area tests to indicate a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses.”

The ACT released a report August 22 titled *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2012*, which summarizes the national performance of ACT-tested students. At CAPE's request, the company compiled comparable data for private school graduates.

Average actual ACT scores for 2012 graduates of private schools were significantly above the national average. The ACT mean composite score for 2012 private school graduates was 23.2, compared to 20.8 for public school graduates, and

the private school advantage remained steady across all subject areas: English – 23.5 vs. 20.1, reading – 23.5 vs. 21.0, math – 22.8 vs. 20.9, and science – 22.5 vs. 20.7.

The ACT scoring scale ranges from 1 to 36, and seemingly small differences in the scale score can represent significant percentile shifts. For example, an ACT English score of 20 has a

national percentile rank of 50 among all ACT-tested students in the class of 2012, meaning that 50 percent of graduates who took the ACT English test scored a 20 or below. But an English scale score of 24 places a student at the 74th percentile. In other words, a four-point scale difference on the English test represents, at least in this example, a 24-point percentile difference.

A record 1,666,017 college-bound students from the class of 2012 took the ACT. Nearly 12 percent of ACT-takers, or 194,723 students, graduated from private schools.

In every racial and ethnic subgroup, ACT-tested students in private schools outscored their public school counterparts. Hispanic students in private schools had a composite score of 21.5, while Hispanic

students in public schools scored 18.6. Private school African American/Black students scored 18.6, compared to 16.9 for the same group in public schools. And the scores for White students in private schools (23.9) represented a 1.8-point advantage over those for the identical public school cohort (22.1).

One factor contributing to the higher ACT scores among private school students may be the number of students taking a “core or more” curriculum, defined as “four or more years of English AND three or more years each of math, social studies, and natural science.” Seventy-five percent of public school students and 81 percent of private school students met the “core or more” standard.

Private school students helped lift national average ACT scores. The average ACT composite score for 2012 graduates was 21.1. The average score for public school students (20.8) fell under the national average by three-tenths of a point, while the average score for private school

students (23.2) exceeded the national benchmark by 2.1 points.

Commenting on the overall national report, ACT Chief Executive Officer

Jon Whitmore said: “Far too many high school graduates are still falling short academically. We need to do more to ensure that our young people improve. The advanced global economy requires American students to perform at their highest level to compete in the future job market and maintain the long-term economic security of the U.S.”

### Percent of ACT-Tested Graduates Ready for College-Level Work, 2012

	Public	Private
English	64%	83%
Reading	50%	68%
Mathematics	44%	60%
Science	29%	42%

### Average ACT Composite Scores Class of 2012

	Public	Private
All Students	20.8	23.2
Black/African Am.	16.9	18.6
Hispanic/Latino	18.6	21.5

# CAPE

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

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

33 Affiliated State Organizations

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**

13017 Wisteria Drive #457

Germantown, MD 20874

(tel) 301-916-8460

(fax) 301-916-8485

(email) [cape@capenet.org](mailto:cape@capenet.org)

[www.capenet.org](http://www.capenet.org)



## Vouchers Improve College-Going Rate for Black Students

In the first randomized experiment of its kind, a study out of Harvard University and the Brookings Institution has found that African American students who used vouchers to attend private elementary schools were 24 percent more likely to attend college.

The study tracked low-income students who in the 1990s were offered scholarships of up to \$1,400 through a privately funded program in New York City called the New York School Choice Scholarships Foundation Program (SCSF).

In an article about the report in *The Wall Street Journal* on August 23, authors Matthew M. Chingos, research director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, and Paul E. Peterson, director of the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University, suggested that the study should inform national efforts to increase college enrollment by black students.

The study employed what is regarded as the gold standard in research by comparing outcomes for students in the same selection pool, namely, participants in a lottery to receive the scholarships. Students who randomly won the lottery (the treatment group) were compared to students who weren't as lucky (the control group). Most randomized studies of voucher students have focused on short-term effects; none before this one has looked at impacts beyond high school. The authors describe the study as the first to use "a randomized experiment to measure the impact of school vouchers on college enrollment."

### Swift Reaction

Reaction to the study from the school choice community was positive and swift. "Once again what we are seeing is that when the most rigorous, randomized studies are conducted, the evidence is loud and clear," said Robert Enlow, president and CEO of the Friedman Foundation. "Students win and have a better shot at not only getting a good K-12 education, but now we see a chance that it translates to the possibility of a great college education." Enlow went on to say, "Pundits may dismiss vouchers, but African American parents know they work and strong scientific data prove they work."

Kevin P. Chavous, a senior advisor to the

American Federation for Children, said: "Once again, the evidence clearly shows that putting all educational options on the table pays dividends for the students, both now and in the long-term. This research makes clear the life-changing effect receiving a voucher can have on a child, and should be a signal to folks across the country that we need to bring more choice to the communities most in need. It is both a moral and an economic imperative that we do so."

According to the report, the SCSF in the spring of 1997 offered three-year scholarships "to as many as 1,000 low-income families with children who were either entering first grade or were public school students about to enter grades two through five." The impetus of the program "was an invitation issued by Cardinal John J. O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, to Rudy Crew, Chancellor of the New York City public school system, to 'send the city's most troubled public school students to Catholic schools' and he would see that they were given an education."

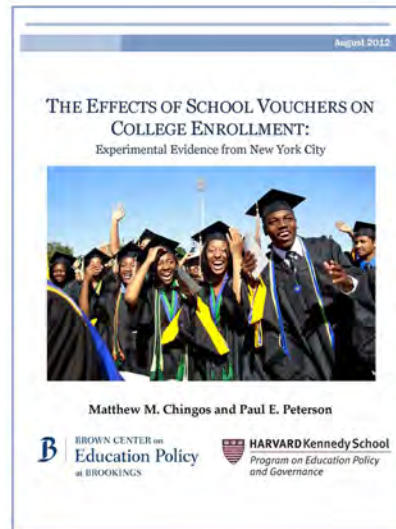
Now, some 15 years later, the study finds that African American students who received a scholarship and actually attended private schools enjoyed a 24 percent advantage in attending any college and a 31 percent advantage in full-time college enrollment.

The report calls the size of the voucher impact "unusually large given the modest nature of the intervention—a half-tuition scholarship of no more than \$1,400 annually. Among all those offered a voucher, the average length of time a voucher was used was only 2.6 years."

### Miraculous?

In their WSJ article, the authors quoted the mother of one of the voucher students in 1999: "I have an 8-year-old in third grade, and she's doing great. It's miraculous the way she has changed." But according to Chingos and Peterson: "The cause of the change was clear. It came from the power of parental choice in education. It wasn't 'miraculous'—unless you happen to be one of the parents directly involved."

The report, titled *The Effects of School Vouchers on College Enrollment: Experimental Evidence from New York City*, is available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/08/23-school-vouchers-harvard-chingos>.



## Charter Schools Impact Private Schools

Charter schools are drawing a large share of students from private schools, presenting “a potentially devastating impact on the private education market, as well as a serious increase in the financial burden on taxpayers,” according to a new study published by the Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom. The center commissioned Richard Buddin, adjunct senior economist with the RAND Corporation, to look at the effects of charter schools on other schools. The findings are alarming.

Buddin’s report, titled *The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments*, found that “about 8 percent of charter elementary students and 11 percent of middle and high school students are drawn from private schools.” But the charter impact on private schools in highly urban areas is much greater in that “private schools contribute 32, 23, and 15 percent of charter elementary, middle, and high school enrollments, respectively.”

### Shift in Financial Burden

The report notes that when students move from private schools to public charter schools, the government must either decrease services or increase education spending, which means raising tax revenues or decreasing spending elsewhere. As the study succinctly puts it, “The shift of students from private to public schools represents a significant shift in the financial burdens for education from the private to the public sector.”

### Varied Impact

The impact of charter schools on private schools varies by the level of education (elementary school, middle school, and high school) and the type of district (non-urban areas, some urban areas, highly urban). For example, at the elementary school level in highly urban districts, about 32 percent of charter students come from private schools, though the same is true for only 7 percent of charter students in non-urban districts and 9 percent for districts with some urban students.

Buddin estimates that overall, “about 183,000 charter students were drawn from private schools in 2011.” He writes, “If these students had attended private schools instead of charters, the private enrollment would increase by about 4 percent.”

In a companion piece to the Buddin study, Adam Schaeffer, a policy analyst with the Center for Educational Freedom, argues that charter schools “take a significant portion of their students from private schools, causing a drop in private enrollment, driving some schools entirely out of business, and thereby raising public costs while potentially diminishing competition and diversity in our education system overall.”

### Charter School Paradox

Schaeffer’s paper, “The Charter School Paradox,” points out the “unintended consequences of inadequate, public-sector-only reform.”

He asks and answers a series of questions on the charter/private interplay and the policy implications thereof. For starters, “What is the impact on overall competition and achievement if charter schools are driving private schools out of business?” Schaeffer responds that charter schools increase internal

competition within the public school sector but decrease outside competitive pressures from private schools, which is “vital for innovation.” He writes, “More research needs to be conducted to determine whether or not there is a net increase in competition and achievement when considering these substantial, if unintended, consequences of charter schools for the private education market.”

### True Cost of Charter Schools

Schaeffer also examines the “true cost of expanding public charter schools when the formerly private school students are properly counted as a new expenditure.” He draws from Buddin’s data to report that “the direct public cost of charter students who migrated from private schools is about \$1.8 billion a year,” but goes on to note that the data are from 2008 and the figure is “likely much higher today.”

### School Choice Reform

Asking whether the “negative, unintended consequences of charter school reform” can be mitigated, Schaeffer concludes that indeed they can be “by enacting good private school choice reform, such as education tax credit programs.” Such reforms “will prevent the erosion of private educational options while driving greater competition across the board.”

Buddin’s report and Schaeffer’s companion piece are available at <[www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org)>.



## Choice in PA & NH

Pennsylvania and New Hampshire kept the momentum for school choice alive this summer with the enactment of legislation empowering parents to direct their child’s education.

Shortly before a midnight budget deadline on the last day of June, lawmakers in Pennsylvania approved an Educational Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit program designed to bring school choice to low- and middle-income students who live within the attendance areas of the state’s worst schools. Students must come from households that fall at or below an annual income threshold to receive scholarships worth a maximum of \$8,500. For students with disabilities, scholarships are worth up to \$15,000.

According to Merle Skinner, executive director of the Christian Family & Children’s Center and a leader of the Pennsylvania CAPE, early indications are that parents “are extremely interested” in the new program. Given the high level of interest, Skinner believes, “We are just beginning to touch the surface of the school choice movement in Pennsylvania.”

Meanwhile, lawmakers in New Hampshire approved a tax credit for businesses that contribute to organizations providing scholarships for students to attend private schools or home schools.

The bill provides scholarships averaging \$2,500 for private school students and not more than \$650 for home school students, with amounts adjusted after the first year based on the Consumer Price Index. Scholarships are limited to students from families with annual incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty line. Seventy percent of scholarships in the program’s first year must go to students enrolled in public schools, and 40 percent of those must go to students who qualify for the federal school meal program.

So far 11 states have enacted tax credit scholarship legislation.

Return service requested

## CAPE notes

★ Google celebrated the 142nd birthday of Maria Montessori August 31 with a **Google Doodle** made up of images of instructional materials commonly found in Montessori classrooms. Google often makes fanciful changes to its traditional logo to celebrate important events or to honor famous people.

Dr. Montessori, a physician and educator, was born in 1870 in Chiaravalle, Italy. The particular approach to education that carries her name has spread throughout the world. Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page attended Montessori schools and regard that education as an important factor in their success. In a 2004 interview with Barbara Walters, Page said, “I think it was part of that training of not following rules and orders, and being self-motivated, questioning what’s going on in the world, doing things a little bit differently.”

The Association Montessori International of the United States (AMI/USA), a member of CAPE, petitioned Google to deploy a doodle to honor the education pioneer and to raise awareness about her philosophy and pedagogy.

★ Seventy-eight percent of Americans describe the education that children receive in independent private schools as “excellent or good,” while only 37 percent say the same about traditional public schools. Results come from Gallup’s annual **Work**

and Education poll, which was conducted Aug. 9-12.

It’s the first time Gallup has asked the general public to rate the quality of education offered by different types of schools.

Sixty-nine percent of respondents believe students in parochial or church-related schools receive a quality (i.e., excellent or good) educa-

tion, and 60 percent say the same about charter schools.

★ The impressive list of medal winners on the U.S. Olympic team this year included an ample share of students from private schools. Of the 256 medals awarded U.S. athletes in 104 individual and team events, 14 percent went to private high school graduates or students. Counting only the 147 gold medals, the share jumps to 17 percent. Each medalist helped secure the country’s first-place international position in total-medal and gold-medal counts.

Medalists included individuals from a rich variety of sports and many types of schools. Paige McPherson, the bronze medal winner in taekwondo is a 2008 graduate of Spearfish Classical Christian School in South Dakota. Lindsey Berg, a member of the silver medal women’s indoor volleyball team, hails from Punahou School in Hawaii, where she graduated in

2001. Mary Whipple, a 1998 graduate from Sacramento Adventist Academy in California, earned gold as coxswain for the women’s eight-member rowing crew, a position she’s held for 11 of the past dozen years.

But perhaps the most famous private school students scoring medals in the London Games are swimmers Katie Ledecky and Missy Franklin. Fifteen-year-old Ledecky, the youngest member of the U.S. Olympic team and a sophomore at Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Maryland, took gold in the 800-meter freestyle. Franklin, a senior at Regis Jesuit High School in Colorado, earned a whopping five medals, including four golds.



★ Private school students are nearly twice as likely as students in general to give their schools a grade of “A,” according to a national survey re-

leased in August by the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans.

Asked “If you could give your current school a grade from A to F, what grade would you give it?” six out of every ten students in private high schools awarded their schools the highest grade possible, while one in three students overall did so.

The 2012-2013 *State of Our Nation’s Youth* report, which covers the perspectives of young people on a host of issues, is available at <<http://www.horatioalger.org/publications/2012SONYFinal.pdf>>.

