

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Students' Views of High School Vary by Type of School

High school years are a mixture of complex and changing forces. Academic demands, interpersonal relationships, a school's cultural and moral milieu—all are part of the swirl of elements that help shape a student's future.

A good deal of research focuses on the academic component of high school—how students perform in school—but not as much attention is paid to how students think or feel about school, even though such attitudes and perceptions may influence performance.

CAPE examined data from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002) to see how private secondary school students regard their schools, including peers, teachers, rules, culture, and spirit. ELS:2002 is a project of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) that follows a nationally representative sample of high school students from 10th grade in 2002 through secondary school and on to postsecondary education and the workforce. Base-year data were recently released by NCES and provide a wealth of information about schools and

students. CAPE looked at a particular component of the data: responses by 10th graders to questions dealing with school experiences and activities. The findings show private school sophomores often have significantly different views of their schools than their peers in public schools.

Teachers and Teaching

Private school students, for example, are more likely to report that teaching is good in their schools, that students get along well with teachers, and that teachers are interested in students. Ninety-one percent of private school sophomores and 80 percent of public school sophomores agree or strongly agree that the teaching is good at their schools. Eighty-six percent of private school students report that stu-

dents at their schools get along well with teachers, compared to 73 percent of public school students. And 87 percent of private school students, against 73 percent of public school students, say teachers in their schools are interested in students.

ELS:2002 data also reveal differences in students' perceptions of school spirit. More private school students (76 percent) than public school students (69 percent) say their schools have "real school spirit."

But while seeing their schools as spirited environments, private school students also see them as well-regulated environments. About three-fourths of private school students agree that school rules are strictly enforced, compared to two-thirds of public school students.

Race Relations

On the issue of race relations, the ELS data show that high percentages of 10th graders in private schools (93 percent) and public schools (90 percent) report that students make friends with students of other racial/ethnic groups. But all is by no means rosy on the racial front in that 6 percent of private school students and 28 percent of public school students say fights often occur between different racial/ethnic groups.

School Safety

When it comes to school safety, 3 percent of private school students and 13 percent of public school students agree or strongly agree with the statement "I don't feel safe at this school." Moreover, private

Continued on page 2



Action Needed Now on Title V

The House Appropriations Committee voted July 14 to eliminate all funding for Title V, Part A, the Innovative Programs section of the No Child Left Behind Act. The cut was part of the FY 2005 appropriations bill for education and other programs.

Title V is a hugely popular program that serves children in public and private schools. It gives local educators the flexibility to address local needs. Within the private school community, the program enjoys a long history of support because it provides for the equitable participation of private school students based on their share of a district's enrollment. The program also carries considerable legal significance. It was the focus of *Mitchell v. Helms*, the 1999 landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court upholding the participation of religious school students in what was then called Chapter 2. If Congress votes to sustain the action of the Appropriations Committee, it would undo in one fell swoop a legal milestone that took years to attain.

Please send an e-mail message now to your representatives in the House and Senate urging them to reinstate funding for Title V, Part A. You can do so in no time at all by visiting CAPE's Legislative Action Center at www.capanet.org/new.html.



CAPE member organizations:

- American Montessori Society
- Association Montessori International—USA
- Association of Christian Schools International
- 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
- Solomon Schechter Day School Association
- Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- 28 Affiliated State Organizations

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12
Executive Director: Joe McTighe

Outlook is published monthly (September to June) by CAPE using an Apple Power Mac G4. An annual subscription is \$15. ISSN 0271-1451

13017 Wisteria Drive #457
Germantown, MD 20874
(tel) 301-916-8460
(fax) 301-916-8485
(email) cape@capenet.org

www.capenet.org



Survey Looks at Teens—Online and Off

With their e-mail boxes bulging and their keyboards worn from instant messaging, high school students nowadays are online, hard-wired, and well connected. A national survey of young people between the ages of 13 and 19 shows that the Internet permeates the world of teens. Fully 96 percent of teenagers use the Internet, and two-thirds of those students do so at least once a day.

Not surprisingly, teens typically use the Internet to socialize. Among those with online access, 48 percent send instant messages daily, 30 percent send e-mail every day, and 17 percent go online each day to make plans to get together with friends. But the Internet is not just the path to a better social life. Fully 82 percent of online young people say cyberspace is their first stop for information on a school assignment—a sure sign that Google has replaced the local library as the go-to place for research. Further, 16 percent use the Internet daily to get help with homework.

The Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans released the results of its annual survey of teens last month. The survey catalogues opinions, attitudes, and activities in a host of areas, not just Internet access. Readers can discover, for example, the pressures students face, what they think about the 2004 election, and how much time they spend on homework.

Breakout of Private School Data

In exploring the thoughts and acts of teens, the report sometimes provides breakout data for students enrolled in private schools. Of the students surveyed, 6 percent were in private schools and 2 percent were homeschooled.

According to the report, private school stu-

dents spend more time doing homework than their public school counterparts. Fifty-two percent of private school students do schoolwork at home more than five hours per week, compared to 38 percent of public school students. Private school students (63 percent) are also more likely than public school students (54 percent) to do community service or volunteer work.

Like older citizens, secondary school students have sharply different views on the war in Iraq. But attitudes vary by school attendance. Sixty percent of students in private schools favor the decision to go to war, compared to 43 percent of students in public schools.

Stress and Families

Pressure to get good grades presents a major problem for 44 percent of public high school students and 35 percent of private high school students. After grades, the second greatest source of pressure for teens falls under the category “family problems and getting along with parents.”

But while families may be a font of stress, they are also a source of comfort and inspiration. More than three-fourths (77 percent) of teens say they get along with parents extremely well or very well. And when asked to pick one person as a role model, 51 percent select a family member (12 percent pick a friend or family friend, 10 percent an entertainer, 8 percent a teacher, 6 percent a sports figure, and 6 percent a religious leader). More private school students (58 percent) choose a family member as a role model than public school students (50 percent).

The 2004-2005 *State of Our Nation's Youth* report is available online at <http://www.horatioalger.com/pubmat/surpro.cfm>.

Continued from page 1

school students (6.4 percent) are much less likely than public school students (36 percent) to say there are gangs in school.

Besides surveying students on the above issues and a host of others, ELS:2002 has also collected data from administrators, parents, teachers, and librarians at the schools the students attend. The result is a wealth of data.

More information about the project is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/els2002/>.

% of 10th graders who agree with these statements about their schools

	Public	Private
Students get along well with teachers.	73.1	86.3
There is real school spirit.	69.0	76.3
The school rules are strictly enforced.	66.1	76.1
The teaching is good.	79.8	90.6
Teachers are interested in students.	73.2	86.8
I don't feel safe at this school.	12.6	3.4
There are gangs in school.	35.7	6.4
Fights often occur between different racial/ethnic groups.	28.0	6.2
Students make friends with students of other racial/ethnic groups.	89.6	93.3

Report Examines Teacher Turnover

The topic of teacher turnover can be tricky in that different instances of the phenomenon can prompt dramatically different responses. A community might welcome the transfer of a teacher who has failed to meet school standards or student needs, while the retirement of a much-loved Mr. Chips can cause tearful good-byes and laments for a lost master. But either way, the school administrator must go about the business of finding a skilled, committed, and caring replacement who connects with students and supports the school's values—a task often easier said than done.

A new report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) offers

insights into teacher turnover: what teachers are likely to leave, why they do so, and where they go. An understanding of these issues can help administrators hire effective teachers and set the conditions that extend their stay.

The most recent Teacher Follow-up Survey looks at teacher mobility and attrition in public and private schools. Between 1999-2000 and 2000-01, the turnover rate for private school teachers was 20.9 percent, with 8.4 percent of teachers moving to another school (movers) and 12.5 percent leaving the classroom for other pursuits (leavers). During the same period, the turnover rate for public school teachers was 15.1 percent, including 7.7 percent movers and 7.4 percent leavers.

Who moves or leaves?

Not surprisingly, younger and less experienced teachers are the most mobile. For private school teachers (the exclusive focus of the rest of this article) those with 1-3 years of teaching experience had a turnover rate during the target period of 33.2 percent (12.0 percent movers, 21.2 percent leavers), but teachers with 20-24 years of experience had a turnover rate of only 11.9 percent (5.7 percent movers, 6.2 percent leavers).

Looked at by race and ethnicity, black teachers had the highest stability rate among private school teachers (83.2 percent), while Asians or Pacific Islanders had the lowest (68.6 percent). Examined by salary, teachers earning less than \$30,000 in annual income made up more than

two-thirds of teachers who moved or left.

Why do they move or leave?

Movers and leavers were asked to identify the reasons that motivated their decision. Forty-eight percent of private school movers said a better salary or benefits was a “very important” or “extremely important” reason. After salary, the top-three motivators for movers were the opportunity for a better teaching assignment (41.6

percent), dissatisfaction with support from administrators (41.2 percent), and dissatisfaction with working conditions (26.8 percent). For private school leavers, the top-four reasons for their decision were

pursuit of another career (31.2 percent), better salary/benefits (27.7 percent), pregnancy/child rearing (23.7 percent), and a desire to take courses to improve career opportunities (17.9 percent). A change in residence prompted 14.1 percent of movers and 15.8 percent of leavers.

Where do they go?

Private school teachers who left the teaching profession after 1999-2000 took up a mixture of pursuits. Thirty percent worked in an occupation outside the field of education; 24.1 percent cared for a family member; 13.6 percent worked in an elementary or secondary school with an assignment other than teaching; 9.7 percent worked in an education occupation outside of elementary or secondary education, and 9.5 percent retired.

Among private school teachers who moved to another school, 53.1 percent moved to a public school and 46.9 percent moved to another private school. Looked at another way, between 1999-2000 and 2000-01, 4.5 percent of private school teachers, or about 20,000 teachers, transferred from private schools to public schools, and 3.9 percent, or about 17,600 teachers, transferred from private schools to private schools. Another 56,200 private school teachers left teaching for other pursuits, and fully 354,800 teachers, or 79 percent, elected to remain teaching in private schools.

The NCES report *Teacher Attrition and Mobility* is available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2004301>.

School Choice Setback in Florida

A state court dealt a setback to school choice this summer. The Florida Court of Appeals ruled that the state's Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) violates the state constitution. The court said that the OSP, which allows children at failing public schools to attend private schools with state financial assistance, runs afoul of article I, section 3 of the state constitution, which states that “[n]o revenue of the state . . . shall ever be taken from the public treasury directly or indirectly in aid . . . of any sectarian institution.”

Supporters of the program argued that the state's no-aid provision imposes no greater restrictions than the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution and that the program should be upheld on the basis of recent U.S. Supreme Court action. But the court ruled that the state constitutional language is not “substantively synonymous” with the Establishment Clause. It further found, citing the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Locke v. Davey*, that the state's aid prohibition does not violate the federal Free Exercise Clause.

The 2-1 decision will be appealed to the Florida Supreme Court. In the meantime, the OSP will continue to operate.

Responding to the decision, Clint Bolick, president and general counsel of the Alliance for School Choice, said, “This ruling is a devastating yet momentary blow to Florida families, and will not impede the momentum behind the movement to deliver high-quality educational opportunities to children who need them desperately.”

Chip Mellor, president and general counsel of the Institute for Justice, a law firm that represents families participating in the program, said IJ “will continue this fight for Florida's most-needy school children.”

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ Dissatisfaction with other schools and a desire to provide religious or moral instruction are the main reasons parents school their children at home. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, an estimated 1.1 million students are homeschooled in the United States in 2003, a 29 percent increase since a 1999 estimate of 850,000. Homeschoolers now account for 2.2 percent of the nation's school-age population.

The NCES report is based on data from the 2003 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI), which interviewed parents of nearly 12,000 K-12 students, including 239 homeschooled students. Using appropriate weights and formulas, statisticians developed their best assessment of the actual number of students schooled at home. The 1.1 million figure includes students (82 percent) taught exclusively at home as well as those (18 percent) taught part-time at home and part-time (25 hours or less per week) in public or private schools.

Although the reasons why parents elect to homeschool their children cover a wide set of particulars, they tend to cluster under a few main headings. When asked to identify their most important reason for homeschooling, parents of 31 percent of students cite concern about the environment of other schools. Sixteen percent give a related reason: dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools. Another 30 percent say they homeschool to provide religious or moral instruction,

and 14 percent do so because their child has a physical or mental health problem or other special needs.

The NCES issue brief on homeschooling is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2004115>.

★ Does peer-assisted learning work? Are there effective middle school math curricula? These are the kinds of research questions being addressed by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). Established by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the WWC is intended "to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education."

Although it neither endorses particular programs nor conducts its own field studies, the WWC reviews existing studies and measures them against certain evidence standards. Its rating system is designed to help readers assess the reliability of a particular research study. It will soon release reports on research in character education, dropout prevention, English language learning, reading, and other topics.

The WWC is located at <http://www.w-w-c.org/>.

★ Another helpful tool for evaluating the quality of education research is available from the Education Commission of the States (ECS). The online interactive Policymaker's Primer on Education Re-

search helps people answer three questions: "What does the research say? Is the research trustworthy? How can the research be used to guide policy?"

"We're trying to bridge what has too long been a gulf between education research and education policy," said ECS President Ted Sanders (who recently announced his retirement from the position effective January). "The primer is the most painless way I know for everyone who works in education to acquire a basic understanding of important concepts of statistics and research methods."

The primer's special Understanding Statistics Tutorial is a gem in its own right, with quick, readable explanations of t-tests, standard deviations, and other common statistical measures.

Funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Education, the primer is available online at www.ecs.org/ResearchPrimer.

★ On September 23, the U.S. Department of Education is expected to publish the application for the 2004-05 No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools recognition program. A school is eligible for the program if its standardized test scores are in the top 10 percent in the nation and state, or if students have shown dramatic improvement, as defined by the USDE. The application, nomination process, timeline, and detailed eligibility criteria will be posted on CAPE's Web site at <http://www.capanet.org/brs.html>.