

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools



Private School Students More Likely to Take Tough Courses

At a time when high-level studies are sounding dire warnings about the national risks posed by poorly prepared students, a new government report shows that private school students are far more likely than their counterparts to take tough courses in high school that set the stage for success in college.

cent chance of receiving a degree. In contrast, students who fall short have only a 14 percent chance of completing college.”

Examining the connection between academic achievement and global competitiveness, the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce issued in December a widely publicized report

identifying the threat to American prosperity of an ill-prepared workforce.

Tough Choices or Tough Times points out that if America is to remain competitive globally, its schools cannot

produce so-so results. Warning that American students are losing ground on international comparisons because students in competitive countries are getting more and better education, the commission notes that the country has “failed to motivate most of our students to take tough courses and work hard, thus missing one of the most important drivers of success in the best-performing nations.”

Having students take tough courses is a hallmark of private education. When it comes to coursework in mathematics, for example, the NCES report reveals that 75 percent of private high school graduates, compared to 48 percent of public high school graduates, took high-level mathematics courses such as trigonometry, statistics, pre-calculus, or calculus. Not surprisingly, students who

took advanced math courses tended to have higher grade-point averages as well as higher post-secondary educational expectations than students taking lower-level math courses.

In science, more than 51 percent of private secondary school students and 34 percent of public school students took both chemistry I and physics I, and/or chemistry II, physics II, or advanced biology.

Greater numbers of private school students than public school students participated in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.

Thirty-eight percent of Catholic school students, 42 percent of other private school students, and 29 percent of public school students graduating in 2003-04 earned some credit in AP/IB courses. For one such course, calculus, 8.8 percent of public school students earned AP or IB credit, as did 13 percent of Catholic school students and 16.7 percent of other private school students.

Private school students were more likely than public school students to have a high school curriculum with an academic concentration rather than an occupational

Percentage distribution of 2003-04 high school graduates in academic and occupational programs

Program Type	Public	Catholic	Other Private
Academic concentration	23.5	54.0	46.5
Occupational concentration	16.4	2.8	1.0

The report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) examines high school transcript data for the graduating class of 2003-04 to determine course-taking patterns and levels of academic preparation. According to the report, “research shows that students who take less rigorous courses are less likely to attain a college degree and do not do as well in the workforce as students who take more rigorous courses.”

That claim was reinforced in a report issued this past fall by the Bridgespan Group, working in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The report, titled *Reclaiming the American Dream*, found that academic preparation “is by far the most effective means of increasing the odds that students will graduate from high school ready for college and eventually receive their degrees.” The Bridgespan report illustrated that finding with the following statistics: “A student who graduates from high school having met even a very lenient definition of academic preparedness has an 85 percent chance of entering college and a 50 per-

Percentage distribution of 2003-04 high school graduates completing courses in trigonometry, statistics, pre-calculus, or calculus

Course Description	Public	Catholic	Other Private
Trig, statistics, or pre-calc	34.9	52.4	45.4
Calculus	12.8	22.4	30.4

concentration. Fifty-four percent of Catholic school graduates, 46.5 percent of other private school graduates, and 23.5 percent of public school graduates had an academic concentration, while only 2.8 percent of Catholic school graduates, 1 percent of

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CAPE member organizations:

- Agudath Israel of America
- 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
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- 28 Affiliated State Organizations

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

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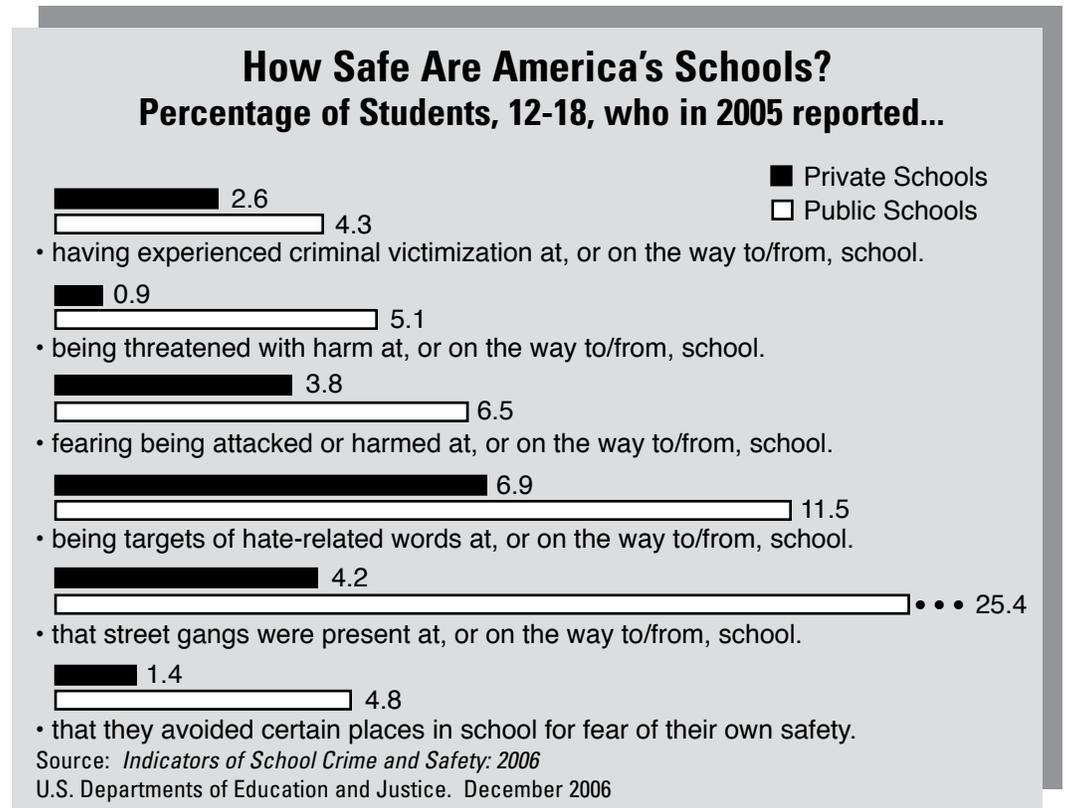
Report Released on School Safety

The latest government figures on school crime and student safety show progress in some areas but setbacks in others. According to a report issued in December by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education, the rate of students ages 12 to 18 victimized by theft, serious crime, or violent crime dropped from 73 per 1,000 students in 2003 to 55 per 1,000 students in 2004. On the other hand, “The number of homicides of school-age youth ages 5–18 at school was higher in 2004–05 than in 2000–01 (21 vs. 11 homicides), but remained below the number of homicides of school-age youth for most years in the 1990’s.” The report also noted that “violence, theft, drugs, and

weapons continue to pose problems in schools. In 2005, 25 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported that drugs were made available to them on school property and 8 percent of students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the previous 12 months.”

The 2006 edition of *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* breaks out some of the data by school type—public or private. As might be expected, private schools tend to be safer environments for students, with lower rates of criminal victimization, threats of harm, and student fear of being attacked. Private schools are also less likely to be hangouts for street gangs. The chart below offers illustrative statistics.

The report is available at <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007003>>.



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other private school graduates, and 16.4 percent of public school graduates had an occupational concentration. An academic concentration involved specified credits in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign language. An occupational concentration involved at least three credits in an area of preparation for the labor market.

Even the mean number of overall course credits earned by students in academic subjects was greater for graduates from private schools (just

over 20.3) than for their peers in public schools (18.9).

The NCES report, entitled *Academic Pathways, Preparation, and Performance: A Descriptive Overview of the Transcripts from the High School Graduating Class of 2003–04*, relies on transcript data from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), which is the most recent secondary school longitudinal study conducted by NCES. The report was published November 2006 and is available online at <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007316>>.

Private School Title I Toolkit Published

For anyone awaiting valuable assistance in implementing Title I services to students in private schools, the wait is over. The U.S. Department of Education has just released a first-rate toolkit to help public and private school officials carry out the provisions of the program that help ensure equitable services to children in private schools.

Just how good is the new resource? In a recent conference call to introduce it, the toolkit was described by department officials as a “gold mine” and a “one-stop shop” for useful information, and was hailed by private school officials as probably the most valuable resource on Title I services for their students that the department has ever developed.

Under Title I, students who live in designated low-income areas and fall below certain achievement levels may be eligible for special academic help, including in-school tutoring, computer-assisted instruction, and a host of alternative arrangements, such as after-school, weekend, or summer programs.

The toolkit is designed as a companion to statutes, regulations, and nonregulatory guidance relating to Title I services for eligible children attending private schools. It contains examples of how officials from school districts and the private sector have actually addressed various requirements of the program, ranging from consultation, to counting students, to assessing progress. And because Title I also provides for services to teachers and families, the toolkit includes sections on extending those services to teachers and families from private schools.

The toolkit devotes an entire section to the practice that probably contributes most to guaranteeing the program’s success: timely and meaningful consultation between school district officials and private school officials. Both parties are supposed to discuss how students will be identified; what services will be provided to them; how, when, where, and by whom the services will be provided; how services will be assessed, and several other program details. The tools in the kit include a checklist of consultation topics, a calendar of Title I activities, an actual agenda for a consultation meeting, and even a sample form for getting the required affirmation from private school officials that consultation has taken place.

Another section of the toolkit deals with the

sometimes thorny issues of actually determining the funding allocations for equitable services and deciding how those funds will be spent. The kit offers a survey form that private school officials can use with families to figure out how many students meet the poverty criteria—one of the

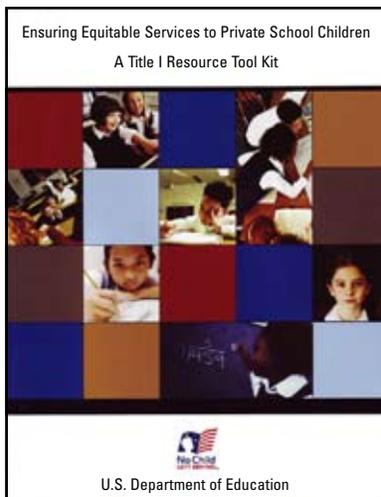
ways to determine the share of low-income children from private schools. There are also worksheets and detailed examples that school district officials can use to maneuver the complicated calculations involved in allocating funds for services either on a school-by-school basis or through a pooling option for serving students from multiple schools. Forms that teachers can use to identify the most needy students and forms to facilitate communication between private school teachers and Title I teachers are also provided.

Title I requires school districts to set aside at least five percent of its allocation to provide professional development to teachers. The amount earmarked for this purpose must also be shared for services to the regular classroom teachers of Title I students in private schools based on the proportion of low-income private school children who reside in designated attendance areas. The toolkit includes a worksheet for assessing the professional development needs of eligible private school teachers.

Districts are also required to set aside a proportionate share of funds slated for activities to enhance the involvement of parents in their children’s schooling. The toolkit provides sample letters and notices to parents to advise them of, and to gain their consent for, their children’s participation in Title I; to invite them to an information night about the program; to engage them in a child/parent night of learning activities, and to advise them of the progress their children are making. Sample agendas for parent-involvement meetings are also provided.

Finally, the kit offers a host of tools to help officials assess the progress that students are making, to determine the program’s effectiveness in meeting its goals, and to modify the next year’s program based on assessment feedback.

The toolkit, entitled *Ensuring Equitable Services to Private School Students: A Title I Resource Tool Kit*, is currently available as a PDF document and will soon be available in an interactive format. For more information, visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/ps.html>.



2-4-5 Kept Alive

The private school community’s campaign to “Keep 2-4-5 Alive” saw some progress last month when President Bush signed a continuing resolution (CR) that, among other things, temporarily funds federal education programs at last fiscal year’s levels.

One effect of the CR is that programs such as Title II-D (Education Technology), Title IV-A (Safe & Drug-Free Schools), and Title V-A (Innovative Programs) have been spared some proposed funding cuts—at least for the time being. Title II-D would have gone from \$272 million in FY 2006 to zero funding in FY 2007 under a House proposal; Title V-A would have dropped from \$99 million to zero funding under a Senate proposal, and Title IV-A would have been reduced from \$347 million to \$310 million under both proposals. For now, all three programs will continue at FY 2006 levels. The stop-gap spending measure expires in mid-February.

The “2-4-5” programs are widely used by schools across the country, and all provide equitable services to eligible students in private schools.

On December 11, Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) and Representative Dave Obey (D-WI), who will lead the Senate and House appropriations committees in the 110th Congress, said they intend to deal with any unfinished appropriations bills by extending the continuing resolution for the rest of the fiscal year with some possible modifications. “We will do our best to make whatever limited adjustments are possible within the confines of the Republican budget to address the nation’s most important policy concerns,” they said.

Because many federal education programs, including Titles II, IV, and V, are forward funded, whatever funds are ultimately appropriated for FY 2007 will not affect schools until the 2007-08 school year.

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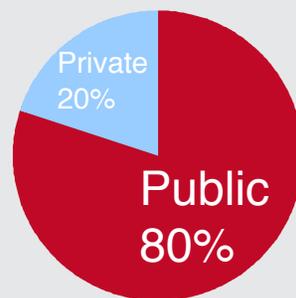
CAPE notes

★ **Fast Fact About Private Schools:** A significant share of students enrolled in private schools are students with disabilities. In 2003, 19 percent of students in grades 1-12 in religiously affiliated schools had a disability, as did 32 percent of students in private schools that were not religiously affiliated. This compares with 26 percent of students in assigned public schools and 28 percent of students in public schools chosen by their parents. Source: *Trends in the Use of School Choice: 1993 to 2003* (p. 20), U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2007045). The publication is available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007045>.

★ Where do the children of the wealthy go to school? The U.S. Census Bureau last month released data on the social and economic characteristics of students enrolled in the nation's schools in October 2005. It turns out that of the eight million youngsters in grades K-12 who come from families with annual incomes of \$100,000 or more, 80 percent (6.4 million) attend public schools and 20 percent (1.6 million) attend private schools.

Detailed tables for the report *School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 2005* are available on the U.S. Census Bureau Web site at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school/cps2005.html>.

Attendance by Type of School
for K-12 Students from
Families with Annual Incomes
of \$100,000 or More



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

★ A 15-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals voted 8-7 last month that the Kamehameha Schools, a private, non-profit educational institution in Hawaii and the largest independent PreK-12 school in the United States, does not violate federal civil rights laws by having an admissions policy that gives preference to students of Hawaiian ancestry. The Kamehameha Schools were established through a charitable trust created by Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, the great granddaughter and last royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. The princess, through her will, established the institution for the education and upbringing of native Hawaiians.

The court ruled that such a purpose did

not constitute unlawful race discrimination, pointing to Congressional policies favoring remedial measures, including remedial educational measures, for native Hawaiians. "It would be incongruous to conclude that while Congress was repeatedly enacting remedial measures aimed exclusively at native Hawaiians, at the same time Congress would reject such native Hawaiian preferences," the court reasoned. The court said the schools' admissions policy is "designed to counteract the significant, current educational deficits of native Hawaiian children" and is valid under U.S. civil rights laws.

★ The New Jersey State Bar Foundation and the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers invite qualifying high school students to compete against top mock trial finalists from all parts of the country in the second American Mock Trial Invitational (AMTI) for high school students May 2-4, 2007, at the New Jersey Law Center on the Cook/ Douglass campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ.

AMTI was established in order to permit high school mock trial state champions with weekend religious obligations to compete in a national forum on weekdays, according to John J. Henschel, Esq., president of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation.

For more information, including an online form to request entry materials, visit <http://www.njsbf.org/njsbf/student/mokctrial/amti.cfm>.