

Council for American Private Education

# CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

## Study Finds Significant Differences in Ninth-Grade Achievement

The first look at findings from a study following ninth graders through high school and into higher education and early work shows significant differences in achievement and expectations between the students in private schools and their counterparts in public schools.

Two reports, released in June and September by the National Center for Education Statistics, examine select characteristics from the base year of the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09), a massive project tracking a cohort of roughly 20,000 ninth graders in 944 public and private schools.

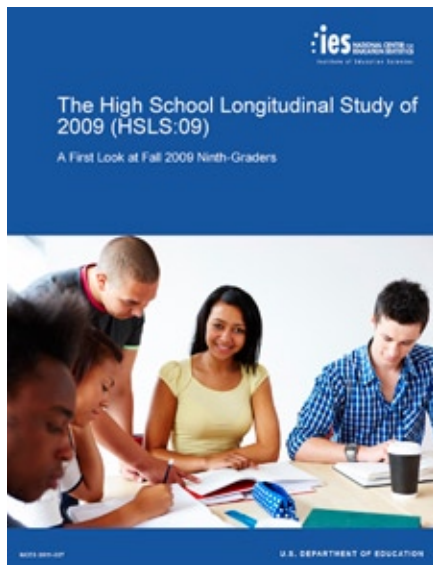
The companion reports focus on the results of mathematics assessments, exposure to math and science courses, and students' long-term educational expectations, while also offering contextual data provided by parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators. Both reports deal only with the cohort when they were in ninth grade in 2009.

### Achievement, Courses

Mathematics achievement among ninth graders varied considerably by type of school, with 59.2 percent of private school students scoring in the top two quintiles of performance compared to 38.5 percent of public school students.

Not surprisingly, course-taking patterns varied as well. In private schools, 91.3 percent of ninth graders were enrolled in algebra I, algebra II, or geometry, while only 78.8 percent of public school students took the same courses. Private school stu-

dents also took more challenging science courses, with 76.2 percent of ninth graders enrolled in biology or physics, compared to 57.0 percent of students in public schools.



### Expectations

If expectations tend to be self-fulfilling, private school students seem headed toward a promising future. For 53.1 percent of private school students, educational expectations included a graduate or professional degree after college, a hope shared by 38.0 percent of public school students.

The high expectations students have for themselves likely reflect the expectations

their parents have for them. For 86.5 percent of private school parents, the expectation was that their children would complete a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, a Ph.D., law degree, or other high-level professional degree. The same held true for 68.2 percent of public school parents.

### Experience

To the extent experienced teachers are a factor in student success, private school students have a considerable edge in mathematics and a slight edge in science. Among mathematics teachers, 48.5 percent of private school teachers had more than 10 years experience, in contrast to 33.7 percent of public school teachers. In science, the difference was much less dramatic, with 37.2 percent of private school teachers and 36.4 percent of public school teachers having experience exceeding 10 years.

With all courses, it helps when students come with the prerequisite skills to handle the material being covered. Asked what percentage of students were not prepared for the course at hand, 44.9 percent of math teachers and 40.2 percent of science teachers in public schools indicated that 26 percent or more of their students were not adequately prepared to tackle the material. The same response was given by 13.4 percent of math teachers and 17.4 percent of science teachers in private schools.

### Counseling Goals

At the high school level, counseling plays an important role in steering students to the next step in their education. Asked to identify the goal that the school's counseling program emphasized the most, 73.4 percent of private school counselors identified "helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary schooling," compared to 46.6 percent of public school counselors.

### Absenteeism and Tardiness

Teachers' commitment to the school and dedication to their vocation is demonstrated in a variety of ways, one being the number of absences during the course of a year. Administrators were asked to what degree teacher absenteeism was a problem in their school. In private schools, 1.1 percent of administrators said it was a moderate or serious problem, compared to 11.5 percent of administrators in public schools. Similarly, 1.5 percent of private school administrators and 9.1 percent of public school administrators identified student absenteeism as a serious problem. Student tardiness was labeled a serious problem by 0.6 percent of administrators in private schools and 8.1 percent of administrators in public schools.

More information about the reports and study is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/hsls09/>.

# 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

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## Jobs Bill Includes Private School Renovation Funds

The *American Jobs Act* that President Barack Obama sent to Congress last month in an effort to bolster the economy and bring down unemployment includes a provision to renovate and repair the nation's schools, both public and private.

"Every child deserves a great school, and we can give it to them," the president said at an event September 13 in Columbus, OH, to promote the bill.

The school modernization component of the president's proposal would provide \$25 billion for K-12 projects, which officials estimate would improve at least 35,000 schools while employing hundreds of thousands of workers to carry out the repairs and upgrades. Ten billion dollars would be earmarked for the 100 school districts with the highest number of children from low-income families and the remaining \$15 billion would go to states, which would then distribute to school districts half the funds by formula and the other half by an application process that directed funds to the most needed repair projects and that also favored rural districts.

### Services to Private Schools

Private nonprofit elementary or secondary schools with a rate of child poverty of at least 40 percent would receive services funded by amounts equal to the number of children enrolled in the school times the per-pupil expenditure of funds under the program for children in the public school district in which the school is located.

Although funds for public schools could be used to modernize facilities through a broad array of permissible improvements such as up-to-date science labs, energy efficient boilers, and Internet access in classrooms, private schools would have access to a narrower menu of upgrades. Services for private schools would be limited to renovations designed to meet the standards set for public schools by the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* or section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. One other allowable service would be the removal or abatement of asbestos or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in schools.

In a statement of support for the bill, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said: "Tragically, children in the nation's poorest school districts often attend schools with crumbling ceilings, overcrowded classrooms, and facilities that lack basic wiring infrastructure for computers, projectors, and other modern-day technology. This is not a partisan issue. The physical conditions at some aging schools today are shameful. They are no place for children to learn."

Since one goal of the program is to stimulate the economy quickly, funds for projects would have to be spent no later than 24 months after the bill's enactment.

### No Sure Thing

Of course, enactment is far from a sure thing. Reacting to the president's proposal, House Committee on Education and the Workforce Chairman John Kline (R-MN) said, "More stimulus spending is not the right solution to our nation's jobs crisis. Common sense tells us that putting the federal government in the business of school construction will only lead to higher costs and more regulations." In remarks to the Economic Club of Washington, DC, House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) said, "Some of the president's proposals offer opportunities for common ground," but then quickly suggested other policies were needed "to put America back to work." With even some Democrats expressing concern about certain components of the president's bill, it is unclear exactly what parts of the broad proposal could secure enough bipartisan support to make it through both chambers of Congress.

### Waterfront of Initiatives

The president's jobs package covers a waterfront of initiatives costing an estimated \$447 billion. One part of the bill authorizes \$30 billion to help school districts and state-funded early learning programs retain existing employees or rehire former employees. Nearly 90 percent of the funds would go to public school districts, but up to 10 percent would be available to employ early childhood educators.



President Barack Obama talks about the American Jobs Act at North Carolina State University, Sept. 14, 2011. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

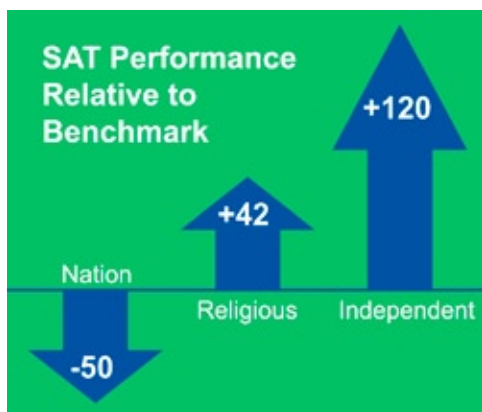
## Private School Scores Exceed SAT Benchmark

SAT scores for college-bound seniors in religious and independent schools this year were significantly higher than the national average in all three subjects tested (critical reading, mathematics, and writing), the College Board reported last month. Average national SAT scores were 497 in reading, 514 in math, and 489 in writing, while comparable scores for students in religious schools were 531, 533, and 528. Students in independent schools scored 541, 579, and 550.

Private school scores also surpassed the SAT “College and Career Readiness Benchmark,” a combined score of 1550 in the three subjects.

For all college-bound seniors across the nation, the combined average SAT score was 1500, 50 points shy of the benchmark, while the average for religious school students was 1592 (42 points above the benchmark) and that for independent school students was 1670, exceeding the benchmark by 120 points.

The College Board reported that 43 percent of all students from the class of 2011 who took



the SAT met or exceeded the benchmark, which represents “the level of academic preparedness associated with a high likelihood of college success and completion.” The company calls the benchmark “a very reliable tool for measuring the college and career readiness of groups of students.” It was developed after “rigorous research

analyzing the SAT scores and college performance of a nationally representative student sample at more than 100 colleges and universities.” The score indicates “a 65 percent likelihood of achieving a B- average or higher during the first year of college, which in turn is indicative of a high likelihood of college success and completion.”

“Students who meet the College Board’s college

readiness benchmark are more likely to enroll in, succeed and graduate from college,” said College Board President Gaston Caperton. “Ensuring that students are ready to attend and complete college provides them with the competitive advantage they need to successfully compete in the global economy, which is critical to the future of our nation.”

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The bill also offers benefits for employers, including nonprofit organizations, to promote job growth. Benefits include a temporary payroll tax cut on the first \$5 million in employee wages as well as tax credits of up to \$9,6000 for those who hire unemployed veterans and up to \$4,000 for those who hire the long-term unemployed. In the case of tax-exempt employers, the tax credits would apply to payroll taxes, rather than income taxes, and would be equal to 65 percent of the credit available to employers in the for-profit sector.

Independent Sector (IS), a coalition of nonprofits, praised the Obama administration for extending the payroll tax holiday to the nonprofit and philanthropic community, which, says IS, accounts for 10 percent of the nation’s employees. “Strengthening this workforce is a win-win opportunity to expand employment through nonprofit programs that are dedicated to improving life for others,” according to IS. At the same time, the coalition expressed concern that the tax incentives for nonprofits to hire veterans and unemployed individuals are only a portion of the credits provided to other

employers. It pledged to “work with Congress and the administration to make the full value of these tax credits available to nonprofit organizations,” claiming that “[w]ith more new workers, nonprofits will be able to do more good for more people in more communities.”

### Itemized Deductions

One way the president hopes to pay for his plan is by increasing taxes, and one of those increases is causing serious concern in the not-for-profit world. He called for a limitation on the value of certain itemized deductions, including charitable giving deductions, for wealthy taxpayers (e.g., those filing joint returns with annual adjusted gross incomes over \$250,000). The value of such deductions would drop from a maximum of 35 percent to 28 percent. Organizations that rely on charitable giving are worried that the cap would mean a loss of income, resulting in a reduction of their workforce and a diminishment in their ability to serve the public good.

*Additional information about the American Jobs Act is available on the White House Web site at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>>.*

## Deep Support

For House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH), support for school choice runs deep. In an interview last month with National Catholic Register, the speaker, who led the charge in Congress earlier this year to reinstate the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, said his support for private schools serving disadvantaged students in Washington started 10 years ago, when he first chaired the House Education and the Workforce Committee. He started by visiting one of the schools of a Catholic inner-city consortium and has since visited “every consortium school and classroom.”

“You see teachers and administrators who are committed to helping kids get an education,” the speaker said, “and you see students excited about school. The schools tend to get parents engaged in their child’s education, and that’s a key ingredient.”

Having attended a Catholic school as a child, Boehner said, “I thought it was time to give something back, and I got more and more involved with the consortium schools.”

As speaker, Boehner continues to visit the schools. According to one principal, he shows up with a security detail but no entourage.

As for the speaker’s influence in securing legislation to reestablish the opportunity scholarship program, Vincent Burke, who chairs the board of the consortium, said the bill’s enactment “only happened because of the speaker, pure and simple.”

Boehner considers the program to be a model that could work in other cities. But he advises advocates to provide hard evidence of success. “I just want the scholarship program in Washington, D.C., and others around the country to demonstrate real progress. I know it is there, and I see it. But if we want to convince policymakers, we need data to back it up. I believe in facts, and the anecdotal data isn’t enough.”

Return service requested

## CAPE notes

★ U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced September 14 the names of 304 schools identified by the U.S. Department of Education as the National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2011. Schools were selected either because their standardized test scores in reading and math placed them among the top-performing schools in the nation or state, or because they improved the performance of disadvantaged students to high levels.

Forty-nine private schools were among the awardees this year. Each state's commissioner of education nominates public schools for the award, and CAPE nominates private schools. All winning schools will be honored at an awards ceremony November 14-15 in Washington, D.C.

"America's long-term economic prosperity and civic engagement depends on our children receiving a world-class education," Duncan said. "National Blue Ribbon Schools are committed to accelerating student achievement and preparing students for success in college and careers. Their success is an example for others to follow."

The department officially describes the program as honoring "public and private schools based on one of two criteria: 1) Schools whose students are high performing. These are schools ranked among each state's highest performing schools as measured by their performance on state assessments or, in the case of private schools, that score at the highest performance level on nationally normed tests; or 2) Schools

with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that improve student performance to high levels.

More information about the program is available at [www.capenet.org/brs.html](http://www.capenet.org/brs.html).

### Private School Awardees

(By State)

**Alabama** - Our Lady of the Valley Catholic School, Birmingham • **California** - Santa Fe Christian Schools, Solana Beach • **Connecticut** - St Gabriel School, Windsor • **Florida** - Christ the King Catholic School, Tampa • Queen of Peace Catholic Academy, Gainesville • St Martha Catholic School, Sarasota • St Paul's Catholic School, Jacksonville Beach • The Samuel Scheck Hillel Community Day School, North Miami Beach • **Georgia** - Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic, Atlanta • Savannah Christian Preparatory School, Savannah • **Iowa** - St Columbkille School, Dubuque • St Paul the Apostle Catholic School, Davenport • **Illinois** - Epiphany Catholic School, Normal • Mary, Seat of Wisdom Catholic School, Park Ridge • Queen of the Rosary, Elk Grove Village • St Emily School, Mount Prospect • St Joan of Arc School, Lisle • St Linus School, Oak Lawn • St Paul of the Cross School, Park Ridge • St

Therese Chinese Catholic School, Chicago • **Indiana** - St Joseph School, South Bend • **Kentucky** - Mary Queen of the Holy Rosary School, Lexington • **Maryland** - Mary of Nazareth Catholic School, Darnestown • St Bartholomew School, Bethesda • St Jane de Chantal School, Bethesda • St Mary's School, Rockville • **New Jersey** - Holy Trinity Interparochial School, Westfield • Our Lady of Mercy Academy, Park Ridge • Our Lady of the Lake School, Verona • St Elizabeth School, Wyckoff • St John the Apostle, Clark • St John's Academy, Hillsdale • St Joseph School, Oradell • **New York** - St Ignatius Loyola School, New York • Transfiguration School, New York • **North Carolina** - The Franciscan School, Raleigh • **Ohio** - All Saints School, Cincinnati • St Angela Merici School, Fairview Park • St Barnabas School, Northfield • St Columban School, Loveland • St Francis Xavier School, Medina • St Joan of Arc School, Chagrin Falls • **Pennsylvania** - Corpus Christi Catholic School, Lansdale • Nativity of Our Lord School, Warminster • **Virginia** - Our Lady of Lourdes School, Richmond • St Ann School, Arlington • St Matthew's School, Virginia Beach • St Thomas Aquinas Regional School, Woodbridge • Star of the Sea Catholic School, Virginia Beach

