

Council for American Private Education

# CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools



## Report Examines Charter School / Catholic School Interplay

The story of a single school exemplifies the findings of a new study on the interplay between charter schools and Catholic schools. For 112 years, Saint Casimir Catholic School in Albany, NY, was a neighborhood anchor—until it closed in 2009. As reported by Abraham M. Lackman, a scholar-in-residence at Albany Law School's Government Law Center, "Saint Casimir was located in a poor neighborhood with a median family income of \$25,800, less than half of the statewide average of \$55,600." Eighty-nine percent of the school's students were African American and 5 percent were Hispanic.

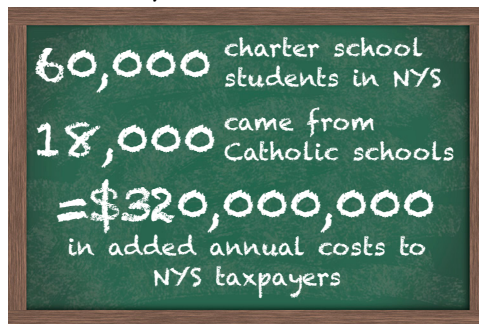
But as Lackman notes in a draft version of "The Collapse of Catholic School Enrollment: The Unintended Consequence of the Charter School Movement," slated for publication in the next issue of the *Albany Government Law Review*, three charter schools opened in the immediate neighborhood of Saint Casimir, draining the school's enrollment and forcing it to close.

In a sad irony, the state has since shuttered one of the charter schools "for failing to provide an adequate education," and another announced plans to close at the end of the 2012-13 school year because of "poor academic performance." As Lackman puts it, "It is tragic when a 112-year-old Catholic school providing a solid education and a disciplined learning environment is forced to shut down by the competitive pressures of substandard charter schools providing little education and a tumultuous environment."

### Not Alone

Saint Casimir School is not alone. Lackman reports that "of the 2,400 stu-

dents in the Albany charter schools, approximately 1,000 students were siphoned from the Catholic school system." Statewide, he estimates that about one-third of the current 60,000 students in charter schools in New York State come from Catholic schools. The results have been a slew of Catholic school closings, a drain on



government budgets, and an enormous cost to taxpayers.

### Tipping Point

Lackman says charter schools affect Catholic schools in stages. The first stage involves the siphoning off of an

initial set of students to the tuition-free charters. But then the effect is amplified when the Catholic school's declining enrollment reaches a tipping point that forces the school to shut down and the remaining students to seek alternatives.

The study found that between 2000 and 2010, Catholic school enrollment in New York State fell 34.8 percent, from 275,175 students to 179,310. Just under one-third of the decline in grades K-8 reflects transfers to charter schools.

Although some observers of charter schools charge that they weaken traditional public schools, few people, writes Lackman, have pointed out "that charters also undermine private schools—especially Catholic schools." In fact, "in New York the charter school movement has affected the traditional public schools far less than it has Catholic schools—whose enrollment has been devastated." Starkly put, in the

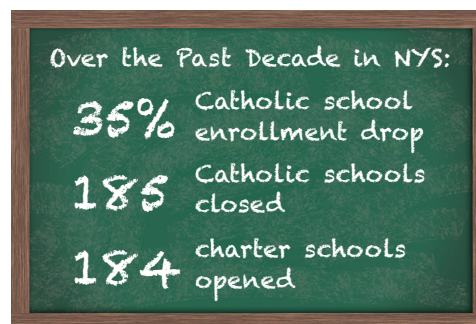
past 10 years (from 2000 to 2010), "One Catholic school has closed for every charter school that has opened." In hard counts, "185 Catholic schools closed in New York while 184 charter schools opened."

### Cost to Taxpayers

When students move from Catholic schools to charter schools, "the cost of their education is now borne by the taxpayer." Lackman estimates the added cost to taxpayers of the migration of students from Catholic schools to charter schools in New York State is \$320 million per year. But that's not the half of it. "As more charter schools continue to open, it is estimated that by 2025 the fiscal burden to New York's taxpayers will increase to \$875 million per year."

### National Picture

Offering a national perspective, Lackman reports that Catholic school enrollment went from 2.5 million students in 1990 to 1.9 million in 2010. By way of



contrast, charter school enrollment grew from zero students in 1990 (the first charter school opened in 1992) to over two million students today, "exceeding Catholic school enrollment."

### Disruptive

Drawing on a concept from Clayton Christensen, Lackman describes charter schools as a "disruptive innovation," providing "a cheaper and, in many cases, less effective educational alternative to Catholic schools."

The paper cites other studies on the impact of charter schools, the first being a 2006 econometric analysis by University

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# Scholars Explore U.S. Faith-Based Schools

## 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 McTighe

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In the preface to their scholarly and impressive two-volume tome on religious schools, editors Thomas Hunt and James Carper note that such schools “have endured periods of open hostility in the past” and even today “remain the object of suspicion and criticism in some quarters.” Their hope is that *The Praeger Handbook of Faith-Based Schools* will help readers “arrive at a better understanding of these schools and their contribution to the common good.”

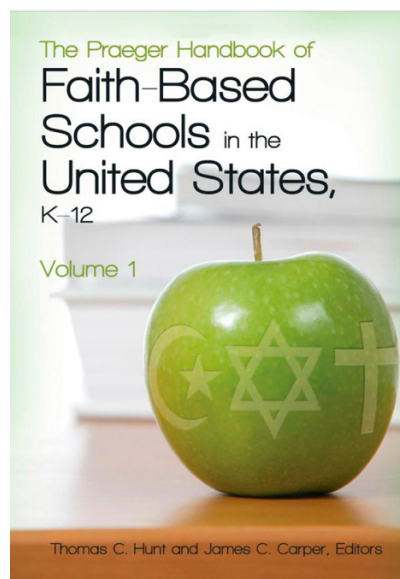
The challenge of covering faith-based schools in the United States is daunting, given their extensive history and breadth of influence. From colonial times, when all schools were “to a varying degree, faith-based institutions, regardless of sponsorship,” to the most recent court decisions affecting religious schools, the journey has been dramatic and fascinating. The handbook covers it all: Bible-based schools after the American Revolution, conflicts over “sectarian” schools in New York and Pennsylvania, Horace Mann and the common school movement, the Ku Klux Klan’s war against religious schools, and even the Supreme Court’s 2011 decision on the status of teachers in Lutheran schools.

Essays by various experts explore the rich array of religious schools, including the many types of schools represented by members of CAPE. A

chapter on Calvinist Christian schools, for example, talks about the grand themes of scripture, particularly *covenant* and *kingdom* that carry special significance within the community. In a chapter on the National Association of Episcopal Schools, Rev. Daniel Heischman, a member of CAPE’s board, explains that Episcopal schools “seek to be diverse...take the life of the mind seriously...and emphasize service to others.” Irene

McHenry, CAPE’s president, reports that Quaker schools reflect a “core belief that each person is imbued with a divine essence.” Chapters on Jewish day schools, Seventh-day Adventist schools, Lutheran schools, Catholic schools, Evangelical Christian schools, and others help round out the picture.

Materials from the publisher say that the book “offers the first current, definitive work on the intricacies and issues relative to America’s faith-based schools.” By covering “30 major faith-based school groups and the denominational or ecumenical associations that govern or support them, and by highlighting “the incredible diversity of faith-based schools in the nation, including the growing Islamic school movement,” the book provides “the first comprehensive, systematic guide to the entire spectrum of faith-based schools in the United States today.”



### **continued from page 1**

of Kentucky professor Eugenia F. Toma and others on charter schools in Michigan. That study, writes Lackman, found that “Michigan’s Catholic schools lost one student for every three students gained by the charter schools.”

In a similar vein, Lackman’s paper notes that a recent study by the Cato Institute estimated that “between 2002 and 2007, 27 percent of the students who left Catholic schools enrolled in nearby charters.”

In his own study, Lackman estimates that 30 percent of the K-8 Catholic school enrollment decline in New York State over the past decade came from students migrating to charter schools.

In a special focus on Albany, NY, which the report calls “the epicenter of the charter school movement in New York” because it has “far more charter schools per pupil than any other city in the state,” Lackman reports that Catholic school enrollment in the city dropped 64 percent

between 2000 and 2010. Before the advent of charter schools, there were eight Catholic schools in Albany, enrolling slightly more than 1,800 students. But by the 2011 school year, four schools had closed and enrollment had dropped to only 575 students. By contrast, charter school enrollment in the city climbed from zero students in 1998 to 2,421 in 2010.

### **Drain on Budgets**

The report states that the shift of Catholic school students to charter schools “imposes a drain on government budgets,” which now must cover the cost of an education previously covered by private funds. Multiplying the number of former Catholic school students who are now attending charter schools (an estimated 18,000) by an average per-pupil cost of \$17,850, Lackman estimates that taxpayers shell out an additional \$320 million each year to educate those students.

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## Report Finds Strong Support for School Choice

The American Federation for Children (AFC) published a report recently drawing on data from 15 different polls that demonstrate “strong support for school choice among the public.” Titled “What Public Opinion Says About School Choice: An Analysis of Attitudes Toward Educational Options in America,” the report covers more than a dozen states as well as the nation as a whole.

Summarizing the results, Kevin P. Chavous, senior advisor to the AFC, said, “More Americans support publicly-funded private school choice programs than ever before because these programs are transforming the lives of children most in need.” He attributed great momentum in the school choice movement to the fact that “Democratic and Republican policymakers around the country are recognizing what parents already know—that all options should be on the table to give kids who are trapped in perpetually underperforming schools an immediate path to a quality education.”

One poll covered in the report was commissioned by the AFC and the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (HCREO) and conducted this past spring by Beck Research. It polled likely voters in five states—Arizona, Florida, New Mexico, New Jersey, and Nevada—and found that 65 percent of voters

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What’s more, because the charter school cap was recently raised to 460, up from 200, Lackman estimates that charter enrollment will grow from 60,000 to 140,000 students by 2025 and that the added cost to taxpayers will jump from \$320 million to \$875 million each year.

Commenting on the added costs, Lackman writes, “When charter schools were first implemented in 1998, it was argued that no additional costs would be borne by government—at any level. In budget-speak, this meant charter schools were revenue-neutral. In hindsight, this assumption was clearly wrong.” It was wrong, he says, because the “analysis and debate in 1998 focused almost exclusively on the impact of charter schools on public school enrollment, ignoring the impact on private school enrollment.”

Although the charter school movement “promised increased school choice,” the report

supported tax credit scholarships, 60 percent endorsed education savings accounts, 57 percent backed vouchers, and 74 percent supported special needs scholarship programs. An astounding 85 percent of voters thought “voucher or scholarship tax credit programs should be available in some form.” Among Latino voters, the numbers were even higher, with 91 percent supporting some form of vouchers or scholarship tax credits, 71 percent backing scholarship tax credit programs, 70 percent getting behind education savings accounts, 69 percent supporting vouchers, and 80 percent supporting special needs scholarship programs.

The report also cites a national poll conducted by *Education Next*, a journal focusing on education reform. When participants were asked in the spring of 2011 “whether they would support or oppose a proposal allowing students to attend private schools

with tuition paid in part by the government, supporters outnumbered opponents by 20 points (47 percent to 27 percent).”

Not surprisingly, the report also found, “Communities already home to school choice programs have some of the strongest support for the expansion and introduction of additional educational options.”

*The AFC report is available at* <http://www.federationforchildren.org/articles/727>.

notes that in New York, “the number of schools hasn’t changed.” For every Catholic school that has shut down, a charter school has sprung up. “And there is a causal relationship at work.”

### Level the Playing Field

Lackman calls the decline in New York’s Catholic schools “unfortunate” in that they “have a long track record of superior educational outcomes, particularly in poor urban areas.” But absent a change in public policy, his forecast is not encouraging. If charter schools in the state do indeed grow from 184 schools to 460, “the outlook for Catholic schools is grim.” He predicts, “Many more Catholic schools will close unless laws change or the government provides financial support (to level the playing field), both of which seem unlikely.”

*A draft version of Lackman’s paper is available online at* <http://www.scribd.com/doc/106930920/Abe-Lackman-Draft>.

## Pro Pluralism

Charles Glenn, CAPE board member and professor of educational leadership at Boston University, posted a perceptive blog last month on [redefinedonline.org](http://redefinedonline.org) explaining why “school choice is good for democracy.”

Glenn counters the “persistent theme throughout the 19th and 20th centuries” that “a nation can be unified...by bringing its children together in common schools that express a lowest-common-denominator vision of national life.” That theme “has especially been evoked against schools created by immigrant groups to teach their children within their own religious tradition.”

Glenn aligns himself with those who consider pluralism to be “a positive social good” that “allows individuals freedom to shape their own lives in terms of real choices.” He finds support in this passage from political ethics professor Jeff Spinner-Halev: “A pluralistic society is not a place where every institution mirrors the ethnic, racial, and gender composition of society. ... A society that has different institutions with different audiences, customers, clientele, or students will be more pluralistic than a society where all the institutions are composed of the same people.”

Glenn argues that freedom and pluralism in education require “the flourishing of alternatives to the schools operated by government, but only if these alternative schools are not compelled—or seduced—into adopting a *pédagogie d’état*, which makes them essentially similar to government schools.”

Indeed, to preserve key elements of freedom itself, “no educational monopoly by the state can be justified within the democratic order. Freedom of conscience and expression are meaningless if children are subjected to mandatory indoctrination in a particular viewpoint selected by the state.”

### Percent of Likely Voters in Five States Who Support...

Scholarship Tax Credits - 65%

Ed Savings Accounts - 60%

Vouchers - 57%

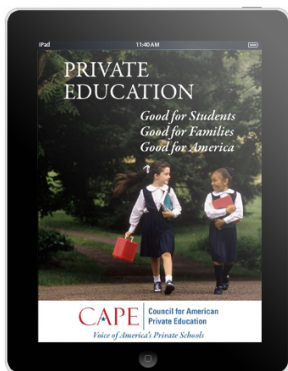
Special Needs Scholarships - 74%



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## CAPE notes

★ Hot off the electronic presses, CAPE's new mini ebook conveys the benefits of private schools through rich graphics and interactive charts. Available in iBook and PDF formats, *Private Education: Good for Students, Good for Families, and Good for America* compiles the latest facts, figures, and findings about religious and independent schools. Researchers and policymakers will find a convenient one-stop collection of data about the value of private education. Parents will find user-friendly information on how to choose a school. And the public at large will discover why private schools are a treasure worth preserving. Download this free and engaging resource at <<http://www.capenet.org/ibook.html>>.



★ In a [podcast interview](#) last month, Michael Guerra described the purpose and plans of the Commission on Faith-based Schools, which was recently established by the American Center for School Choice (ACSC). Former president of the National Catholic Educational Association and former member of CAPE's board of directors, Guerra, who chairs the new commission, said faith-based schools "are assets too precious to be lost."

"Faith-based schools go back to the very beginning of the country. There were faith-based schools before there were

public schools," Guerra said. "And they've done a terrific job of forming citizens—good citizens—for this country."

One emphasis of the commission will be a focus on school choice as a right of parents, rather than as a means toward educational reform and efficiencies, which Guerra called "collateral benefits." The commission's stance on choice has been a longstanding position of CAPE.

Still, even though school choice is an important value, it becomes, said Guerra, "a moot point if there are no schools from which to choose."

★ Teachers College at Columbia University is reaching out to private secondary schools to provide a "free, inquiry-based, non-partisan curriculum" to help students understand the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit.

Susan Fuhrman, president of the college, writes that the curriculum "connects students to the complex public policy choices that confront the United States and its citizens." It invites students to ask, "How should we address our nation's fiscal challenges now and in the future in a manner consistent with our values and traditions?"

Dr. Anand R. Marri, associate professor in the Department of Arts & Humanities and principal investigator for the project,

says the goal of the 24-lesson curriculum is "to have students understand the issues in all their complexities, be able to clarify their own thinking about these issues and, ultimately, care enough to become involved in debating these and other public policy questions as citizens."

To find out more about the project and to request a copy of "Understanding Fiscal Responsibility (UFR)" visit <<http://understandingfiscalresponsibility.org/request>>.

★ The Indiana Department of Education announced recently that more than 9,000 students are taking part in the "Choice Scholarships" program this school year, up from the program's 3,900 participants last year.

Responding to the announcement, Kevin P. Chavous, senior advisor to the American Federation for Children, said, "These numbers indicate what we've known all along—that parents want the option to send their child to the school that best fits their needs." He added, "Indiana is a great example of how educational choice empowers parents and provides hope for disadvantaged children. We look forward to the program expanding for years to come."

In its second year, Indiana's expansive school choice program provides assistance to low- and middle-income families to help their children attend private schools. Scholarships are available to families with annual incomes up to 150 percent of the qualifying amounts for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.