

By Rachel White and Ben DeGrow

A SURVEY OF MICHIGAN'S PRIVATE EDUCATION SECTOR



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The Mackinac Center for Public Policy

A Survey of Michigan's Private Education Sector

By Rachel White and Ben DeGrow

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Executive Summary

According to data collected by the state, Michigan has 601 private schools that enroll about 113,000 students — about 7 percent of all students in the state. All but 14 of Michigan's 84 counties have at least one private school operating within their boundaries. Despite the fact that private schools in Michigan are widespread, there is very little publicly available information about them. In response to this need, the Mackinac Center, with the help of the Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools, conducted a survey of private school administrators from all across the state.

The survey obtained unique responses from 334 private schools, just over 50 percent of all private schools in the state. The information provided in this report is based off of this survey, but also includes information from the small amount of data that is collected by the state's Center for Educational Performance and Information. Below are some selected results:

- ◆ Because private school students obtain their education primarily without the use of public funds, Michigan's annual per-pupil foundation allowance appropriation is about \$750 million less than it would have to be if those students attended public schools instead.
- ◆ The average tuition rate for private schools in Michigan is about \$4,700 per year for elementary and middle school students and about \$7,800 per year for high school students.
- ◆ If Michigan created a voucher or tuition tax credit program to make private schools affordable for more families, 71 percent of schools said that they would likely participate.
- ◆ Michigan's private schools have capacity right now to serve approximately 21,000 more students than they currently do.
- ◆ Enrollment in private schools fell by about 9 percent from 2010 to 2015.
- ◆ About 82 percent of private school teachers hold a valid Michigan teaching certificate, and 98 percent of private school teachers have either a teaching certificate or bachelor's degree.

In addition to providing more detailed data about the results just presented, this report contains information about private schools with regards to their student demographics, geographic locations, religious affiliations, accreditation and use of "shared-time" programs (partnering with public school districts) and dual enrollment, among other things. These survey results should be of interest to policymakers, school administrators, taxpayers and families considering enrolling their children in private schools.

Introduction

Data about the characteristics, finances and performance of Michigan's public schools is more readily available today than ever before. There are both federal and state agencies charged with collecting and making this data available to the public.* Plus, in the interest of additional transparency, Michigan law requires public school districts post even more information about their operations on their websites.¹ But there is far less information available about private schools in Michigan, which educate about 7 percent of the school-age children in this state. This survey is an attempt to provide policymakers and the public with more detailed information about private and independent schools in Michigan.

Perhaps in part because of the lack of information available about private schools, they are sometimes been discredited, accused of plucking the most advantaged and easiest students to teach from the school-age population. Moreover, private schools are considered by some to have less-qualified teaching staff, less accountability and committed to only serving wealthy families. Numerous scholars have recently expounded these negative views of private schools.²

Even as they face criticism from some academics, private schools are nevertheless relatively well received by the general public. The 2015 Harris Poll found that while fewer than two in 10 Americans believe that public schools in general provide an excellent or very good education, four in 10 think private schools provide an excellent or very good education. Further, Americans, on average, believe that private schools, when compared to public schools, are better at preparing students for employment and college, teaching good citizenship and educating special needs children.³

This survey and analysis is meant to provide a better understanding of Michigan's private and independent schools and the students and families they serve. It does not, however, ascertain any indicators of private school academic performance or quality. The goal of this report is to explore the private school landscape in Michigan and provide students, families and taxpayers with a better understanding of this form of education.

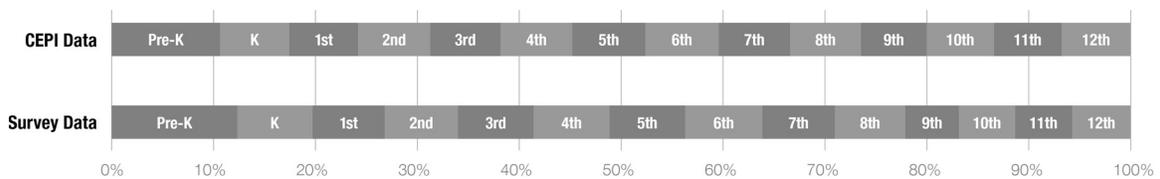
* At the federal level, there is the Institute of Education Sciences, which includes the National Center for Education Research, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance and the National Center for Special Education Research. At the state level, data about public schools is made publicly available by the Michigan Department of Education, the Center for Educational Performance and Information and the Michigan Department of Treasury.

Data and Methods

This study analyzes private school data from two primary sources: a recently conducted survey of private school leaders and data from Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information. The survey was distributed by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in partnership with Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools in March and April of 2016. CEPI data includes private school contact information and enrollment statistics collected annually by the state.

The survey was distributed via email to 659 private school administrators.* In total, 334 unique, complete responses were received, representing a survey response of just over 50 percent. Inasmuch as public data is available to compare the survey sample and the general private school population, the survey sample is generally representative of Michigan's private school population. As shown in Graphic 1, the survey sample has a relatively similar grade-level distribution as that of all Michigan private schools. Additional information related to the survey sample are available in an appendix.

Graphic 1: Students Enrolled by Grade in Michigan's Private School Population and 2016 Survey Sample



In the discussions that follow, both CEPI and survey data are used and are at times supplemented with data from other sources, such as the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Education.

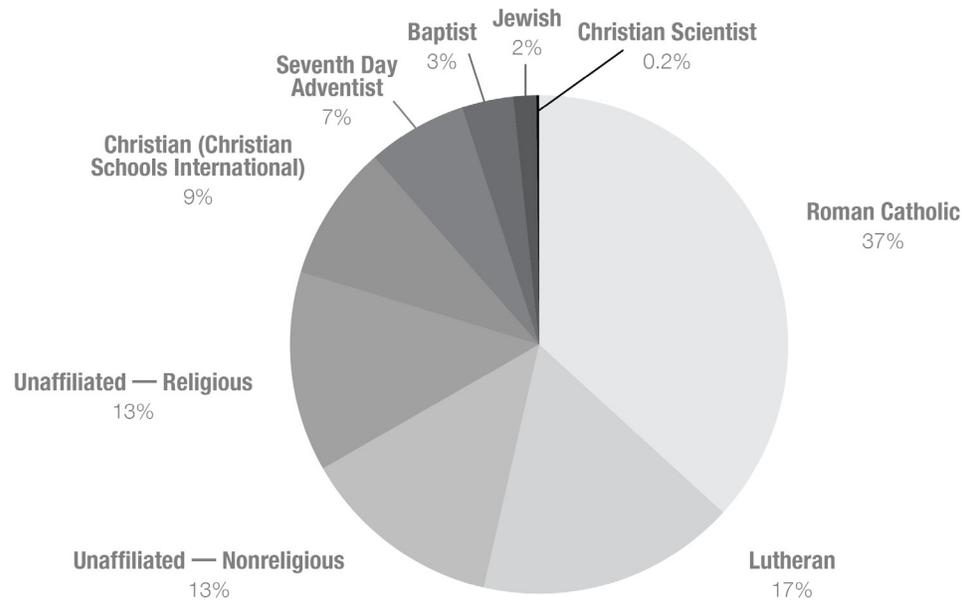
Private School Characteristics

Affiliations

Michigan's private schools embody a wide variety of religious affiliations. As shown in Graphic 2, while over one-third of Michigan private schools are Roman Catholic, many other religious denominations are represented, including Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, Jewish, Christian Scientist and others. Roman Catholic and Lutheran schools make up over half of all the private schools in the state, but another quarter of schools have either no specific religious affiliation or are nonreligious.

* In some cases, the survey may have been sent to more than one private school administrator at the same school. Survey responses were filtered so that only one response from each school was included in the results.

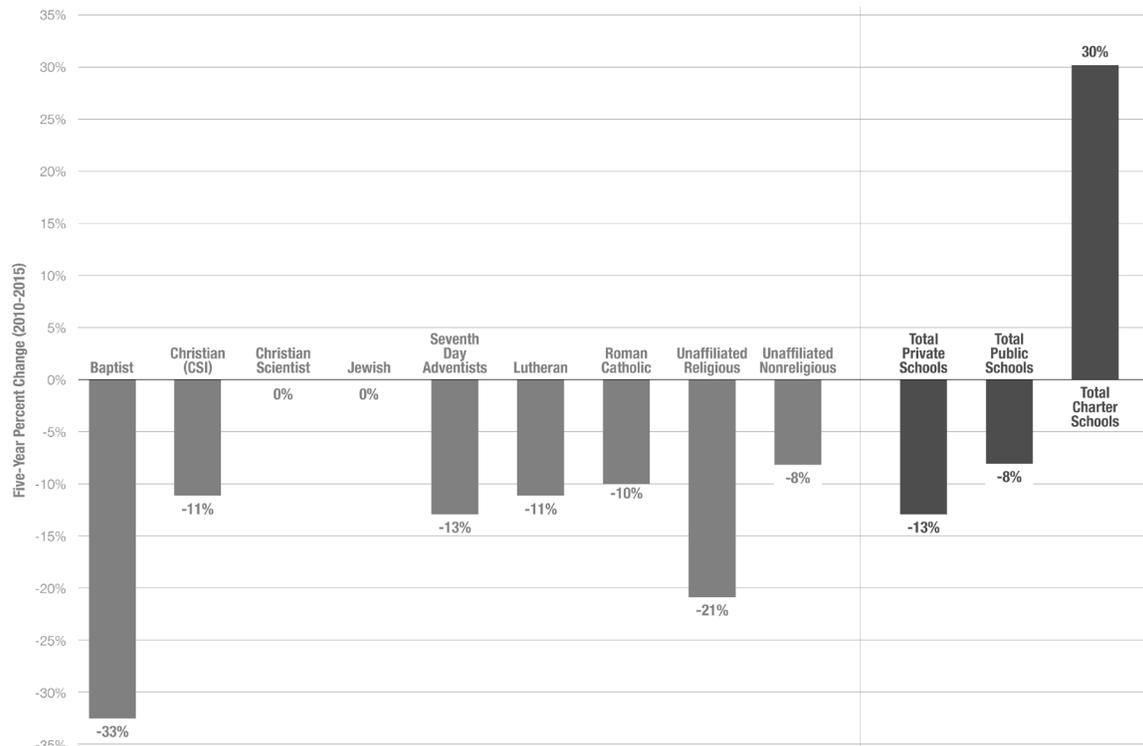
Graphic 2: Affiliations of Michigan's Private Schools, 2015



Source: Author's calculations based on "Nonpublic Student Counts" (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/2A4M-8XK8>. Lutheran includes both Wisconsin and Missouri Synods.

Just as the number of traditional public schools in Michigan has declined recently, the number of private schools has declined in recent years, as shown in Graphic 3. The number of Baptist schools and unaffiliated religious schools have experienced the greatest percent decline over this period, dropping by 33 percent and 21 percent, respectively. Overall, the total number of private schools dropped by 13 percent from 2010 to 2015. The number of public charter schools has grown substantially over this same period, increasing by 30 percent.

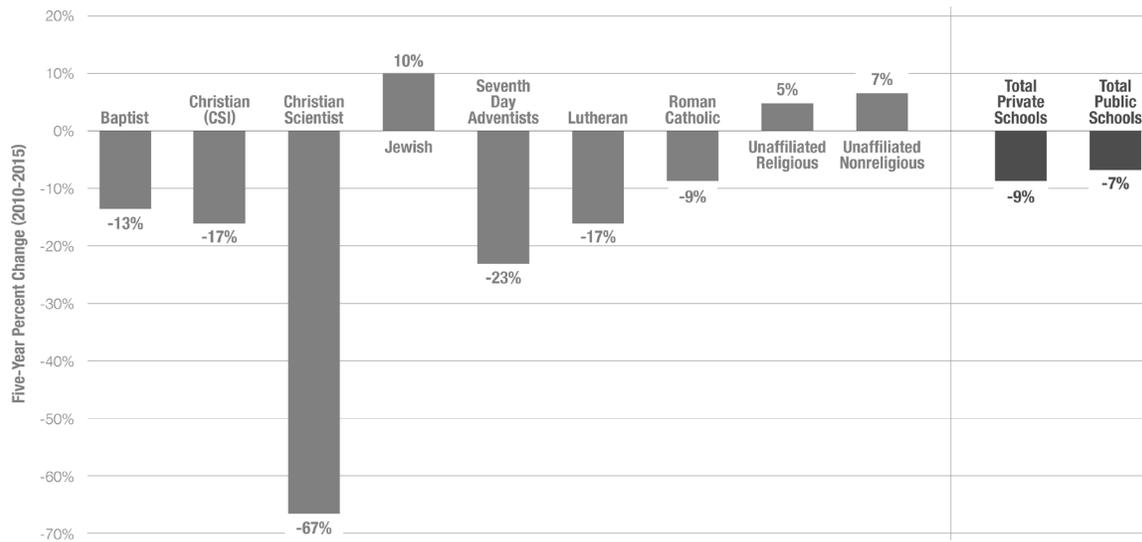
Graphic 3: Five-year Change in Number of Public and Private Schools, 2010-2015



Source: Author's calculations based on "Nonpublic Student Counts" (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/2A4M-8XK8>; "Student Count" (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/D8F9-GE2Y>.

While national trends indicate that Catholic school and nonreligious private school enrollments have experienced the greatest declines in recent years, this is not the case in Michigan.⁴ Catholic schools have experienced some enrollment decline in Michigan, but not to the extent of other religious private schools, as shown in Graphic 4. And some types of private schools in Michigan have seen enrollment growth over the last five years, namely Jewish, unaffiliated religious schools and independent nonreligious schools.

Graphic 4: Five-year Change in K-12 Student Enrollment in Public and Private Schools, 2010-2015

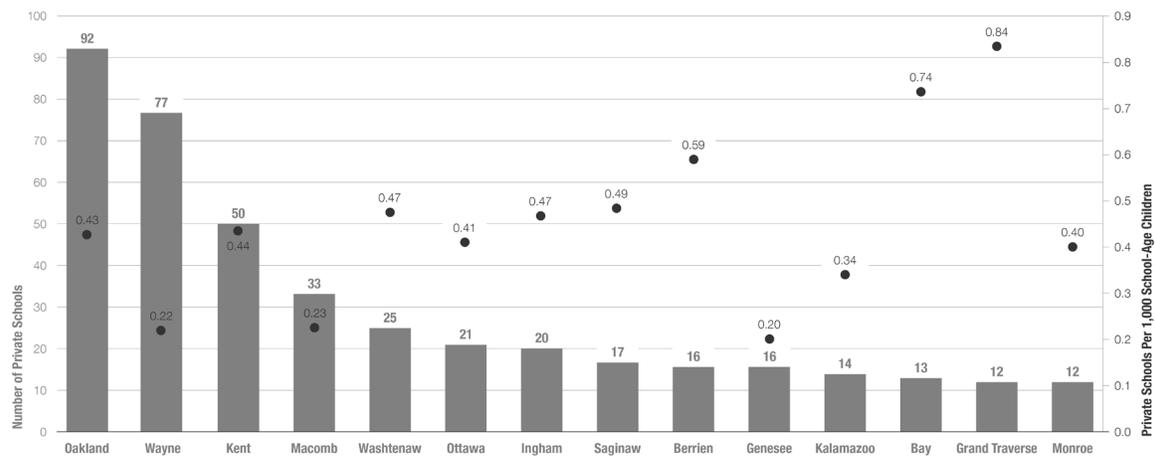


Source: Author's calculations based on "Nonpublic Student Counts" (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/2A4M-8XK8>; "Student Count" (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/D8F9-GE2Y>. Total public school enrollment includes charter school students.

Geographic Locations

Private schools operate in 70 of Michigan's 84 counties. Over one-quarter of all private schools are located in Oakland and Wayne counties. Additionally, Kent, Macomb, Washtenaw, Ottawa, and Ingham counties are each home to 20 or more private schools, as shown in Graphic 5. Although these counties have the greatest number of private schools, other counties have a higher availability of private schools after accounting for population differences. Grand Traverse County has the most private schools per 1,000 school-age children in the state, while Genesee County has the fewest (not including the 14 counties that do not have any private schools).

Graphic 5: Total Private Schools and Availability Per 1,000 School-Age Children



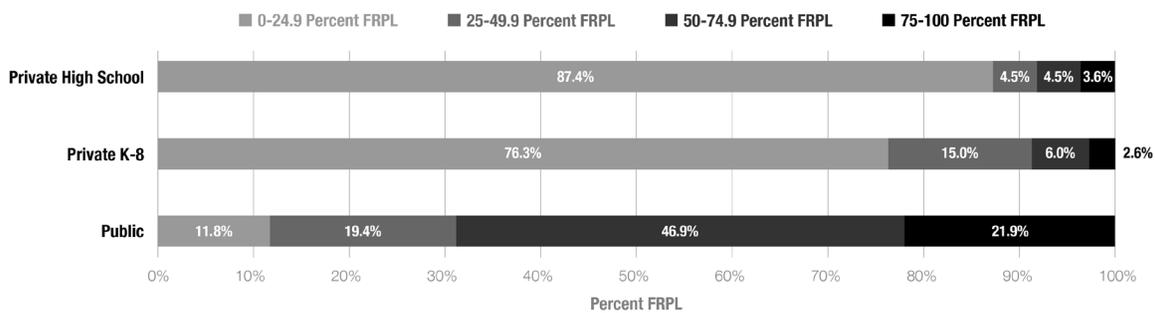
Source: Author's calculations based on "Nonpublic Student Counts" (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/2A4M-8XK8>. Fifty-six counties not listed in Graphic 5 are home to 183 private schools, however, each of these individual counties has fewer than 10 private schools.

Student Demographics

Data about the socioeconomic status of public school students is available from CEPI, but similar data for private school students is limited. This survey asked private school administrators about the socioeconomic status of their students and 266 schools (80 percent of survey sample) responded. Specifically, the survey asked what percentage of enrolled students are eligible for a federally subsidized free or reduced-priced lunch, indicating that their family income is at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level.⁵

As shown in Graphic 6, Michigan's private schools enroll fewer FRPL-eligible students than public schools. More than three-quarters of private schools have fewer than 25 percent FRPL-eligible students. The average private school serves a student body that is comprised of just 10 to 15 percent of low-income students. This finding should not be all that surprising given that private schools need to charge tuition in order to fund their operations, and with no publicly funded support for low-income families available, only families wealthy enough to afford these tuition payments (or fortunate enough to receive a scholarship) are able to enroll their children in private schools. Variation among private schools on this account does exist, nevertheless, with some schools serving student bodies where more than 75 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

Graphic 6: Percent Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Population by School Type



Teacher Credentials

According to state data, Michigan's private schools employ nearly 8,000 teachers. Within the private school teaching force, 82 percent hold a Michigan teaching certificate or permit. Another 2 percent hold a teaching certificate from another state. Fourteen percent of private school teachers hold a bachelor's degree, but not a Michigan teacher's certification. All told, 98 percent of private school teachers in Michigan have at least a bachelor's degree and the overwhelming majority are state certified. According to CEPI data, in 240 private schools, or 40 percent, all teachers have a Michigan teaching certificate.⁶

The remaining 2 percent of private school teachers without a bachelor's degree or teaching certificate have at least a high school diploma. There are no private schoolteachers with less than a high school diploma. Neither CEPI data nor survey data provided information on the number of private school teachers with a two-year degree, graduate degree or other type of certification.

The average teacher-pupil ratio for private schools, based on state data, is one teacher for every 14 students.

Enrollment and Capacity

According to state data, there were more than 113,000 students enrolled in 601 private schools in Michigan for the 2014-2015 school year.⁷ The average private school enrolls about 190 students. With roughly 1.65 million school-age students in the state, private school students made up approximately 6.8 percent of the total school-age population.*

Using the average state per-pupil foundation allowance for 2014-15 of approximately \$7,400, Michigan's annual foundation allowance appropriation is about \$750 million less than it would have to be if private school students attended public schools instead. This calculation does not include the variety of other taxpayer support used to provide free public education services to students (federal, local and other state aid), and the total amount that the state does not have to appropriate as a result of private school students obtaining their education without relying on public funds is likely closer to \$1 billion per year.

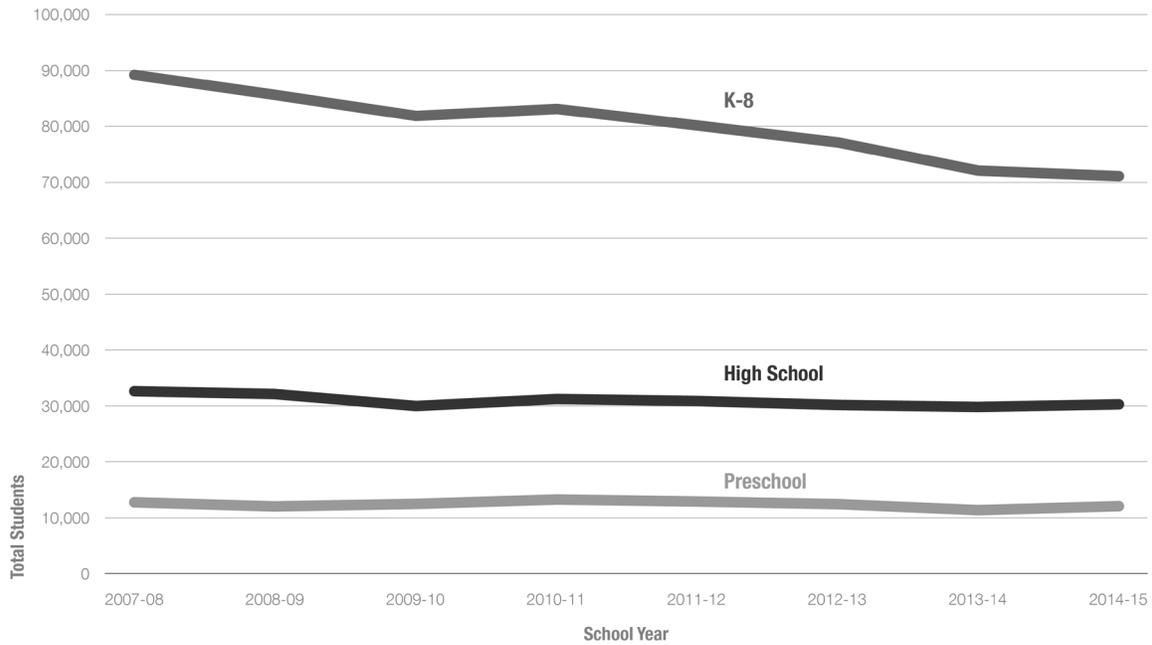
Private schools serve students in all grade levels, preschool through 12th grade. They have a rather even distribution of students enrolled in each grade: There are just over 84,000 elementary and middle school students (grades PreK-8) and approximately 30,000 high school students (grades 9-12).⁸ This works out to be an average of between 7,500 and 8,000 students per grade in private schools. As a percent of school-age children, private schools serve approximately 7.6 percent of Michigan's children ages 5 to 13 and 5.5 percent of ages 14 to 17.⁹

Similar to national trends, private school student enrollment in Michigan has experienced a consistent decline in recent years.¹⁰ Enrollment in the K-8 levels declined the most over the last eight years, as shown in Graphic 7. Additionally, as shown in Graphic 8, private school K-8 enrollment has declined at a faster rate than that of public schools. However, the opposite is true at the high school level: private high school enrollment has increased over the last five years, while public high school enrollment has declined. Finally, public preschool enrollment has drastically increased, likely due to the large influx of state aid for early childhood education under Gov. Snyder's administration. Meanwhile, private preschool enrollment has declined.[†]

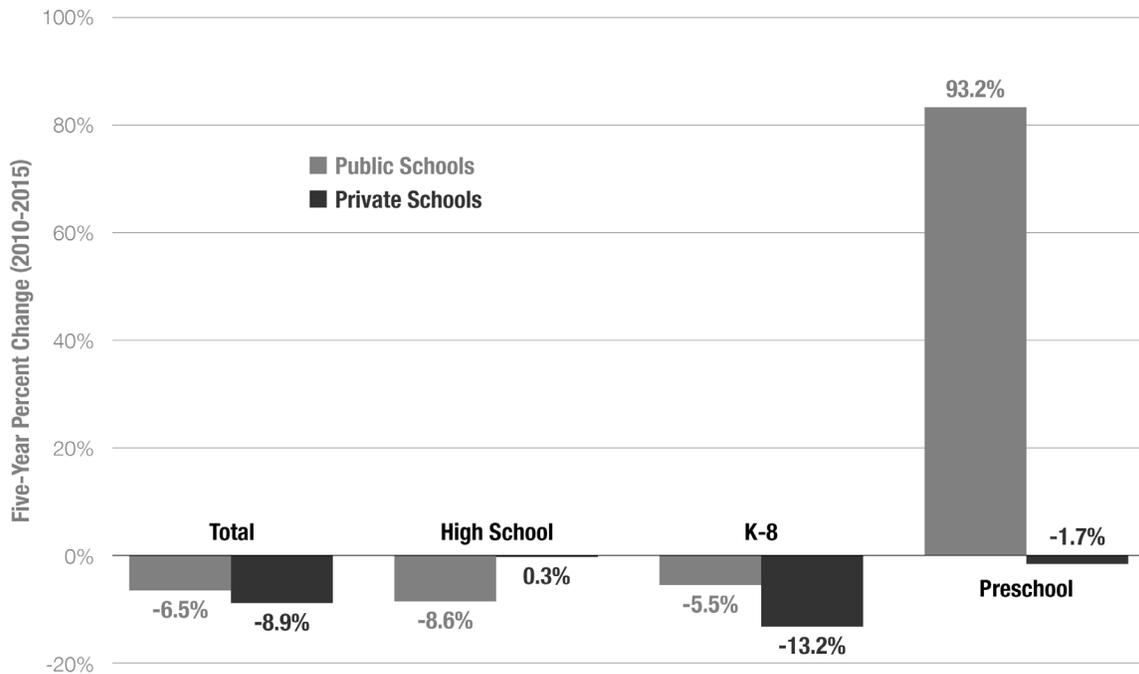
* "Child Population by Age Group: Michigan" (Kids Count Data Center, July 2015), <https://perma.cc/MWC2-2LDS>. Given that Michigan has experienced a declining population, it should be noted that this estimate may overestimate the total number of school-age children in Michigan in the 2014-15 school year. Thus, the reported percentage of school-age children served by private schools included in our survey may be underestimated.

† Funding for Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program increased from \$110 million in 2013 to \$240 million in 2015. Bethany Wicksall and Mark Wolf, "Line Item and Boilerplate Summary: School Aid" (Michigan House Fiscal Agency, Sept. 2012), 3, <https://perma.cc/WWH7-2NWG>; Bethany Wicksall, "Line Item and Boilerplate Summary: School Aid" (Michigan House Fiscal Agency, Sept. 2014), 4, <https://perma.cc/AZ7M-AV57>.

Graphic 7: Private School Student Enrollment Trends, 2008-2015



Graphic 8: Five-year Percent Change in Public and Private School Enrollment, 2010-2015



While publicly available data from CEPI provides annual student enrollment data in private schools, information related to private schools' enrollment capacity is not available. Thus, survey data was retrieved from private schools to provide insight into this issue. Survey responses revealed that private schools have immediate capacity to serve more students than are currently enrolled, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels. From the 257

schools that responded to this survey question (77 percent of survey sample), there are an additional 10,000 seats available for elementary and middle school students and over 2,000 additional seats for high school students.

Extrapolating this out for all private schools suggests that private schools in Michigan have immediate capacity for about 21,000 more students. If Michigan's private schools were filled to capacity, Michigan's annual per-pupil foundation allowance appropriation could be reduced by more than \$900 million per year.*

Willingness to Participate in Voucher or Tax Credit Programs

Twenty-nine states in the U.S. have programs that either provide public funds, commonly in the form of a voucher, or some other benefit, such as a tax credit, to help parents (mostly low-income families) afford the cost of private school tuition.¹¹ States can save money through these types of programs, because supporting a child's enrollment in a private school, on average, costs less than paying for that same student to attend a public school.

Michigan does not have any such program, because language in the state's constitution explicitly prohibits them. Despite claiming that "religion, morality and knowledge" are "necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind" and that the "means of education shall forever be encouraged," the Michigan Constitution also states that no "payment, credit, tax benefit, exemption or deductions, tuition voucher, subsidy, grant or loan of public monies or property shall be provided, directly or indirectly, to support the attendance of any student" at "any private, denominational or other nonpublic pre-elementary, elementary, or secondary school."¹²

Nevertheless, this survey asked private school administrators how willing their school would be to participate in one of these types of programs if one existed in Michigan. From the 289 respondents (87 percent of survey sample), 71 percent said that their school would be "likely" or "very likely" to participate, 16 percent said they were unsure, and 13 percent said that it would be "unlikely" or "very unlikely" that their school would participate.

Despite that a solid majority of private schools would likely participate in these programs, many administrators nevertheless expressed concerns. Most of these concerns centered on worries about what types of "strings" would be attached to such a publicly funded program — for instance, if the state government would require a new level of regulation on them if they participated. Many administrators noted that their schools would participate just so long as they would be able to maintain their autonomy, especially regarding the school's mission and curriculum.

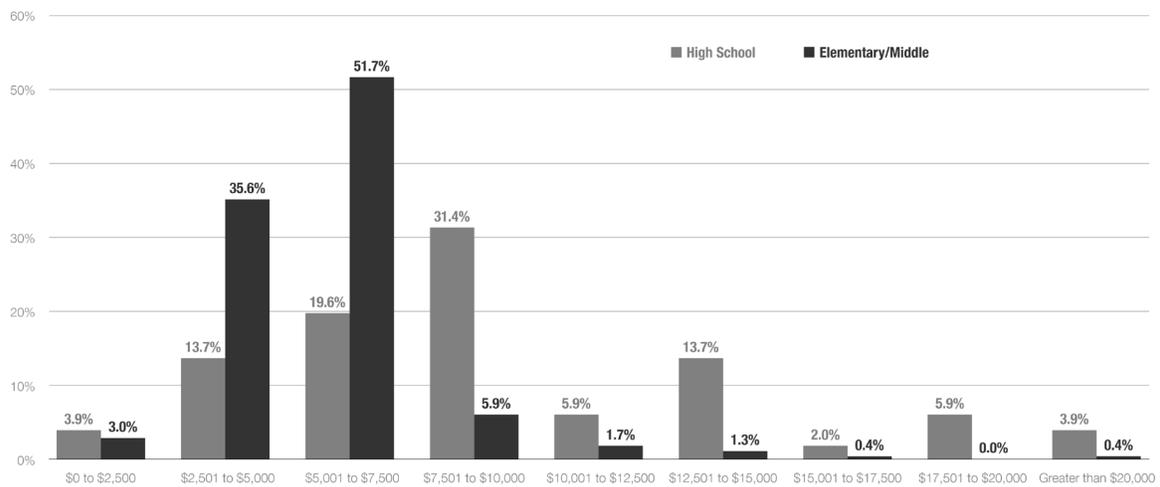
* It should be emphasized that this dollar savings calculation is an estimate. However, it does provide a rudimentary understanding of the extent of the possible savings to taxpayers of fully utilized private schools. The calculation was determined by (1) extrapolating the 12,000 additional seats indicated by the 334 survey respondent schools to 21,593 seats for 601 total private schools; (2) multiplying the total number of open seats by average per pupil foundation allowance for 2014-15 of approximately \$7,400; (3) adding the total dollar amount from (2) to \$750 million (the amount of money current private schoolchildren save Michigan taxpayers in foundation allowances).

Finances

Cost to Educate

Private school survey respondents provided insight into the cost to educate their students. Data from 248 private school survey respondents (77 percent of survey sample), indicated that it costs, on average, approximately \$5,800 to educate a primary school student and approximately \$9,200 to educate a high school student.* However, the cost to educate a private school student varied widely from school to school, as is evident by Graphic 9. At both the primary and secondary levels, some private schools reported that it cost less than \$1,500 per student per year, while others indicated it cost nearly \$20,000.

Graphic 9: Private School Estimated Cost to Educate One Student for One School Year



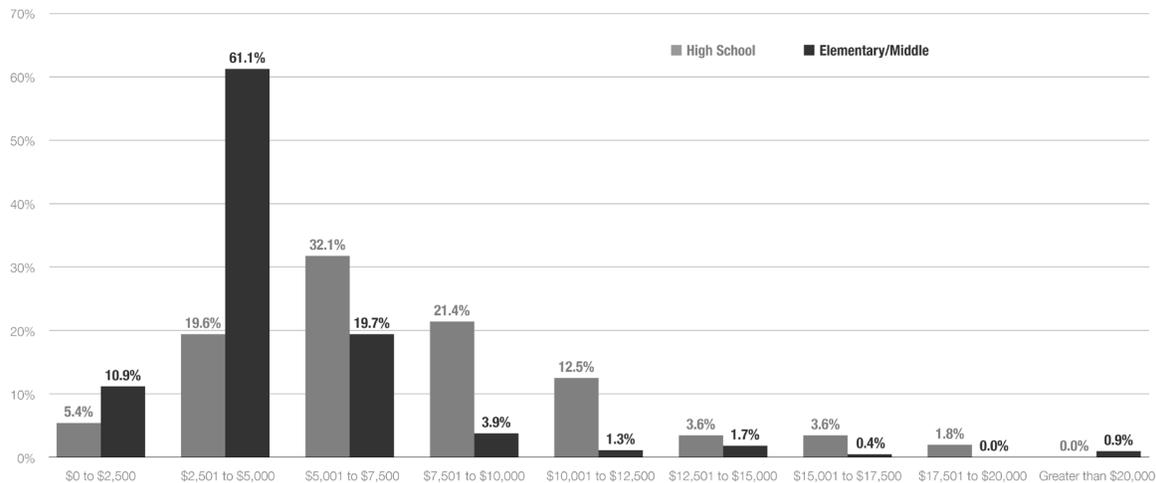
* The median values for these distributions were \$5,500 for elementary and middle school costs and \$8,600 for high schools. There were 235 responses for primary schools and 51 responses for high schools. For these calculations, and those for average tuition charges, outliers were removed from the data set (i.e., responses that were less than \$1,000 or more than \$25,000). Fewer than 10 outliers were removed for each calculation.

Tuition and Fees

Survey respondents also provided insight into private school tuition costs. From the 267 responding private schools (80 percent of survey sample), the average private school tuition was approximately \$4,700 per year for elementary and middle school students and \$7,800 per year for high school students.* However, tuition rates at private schools varied widely, as is evident from Graphic 10. At the elementary, middle and high school levels, some private schools charged tuition of less than \$1,500 per student per year while others charged more than \$20,000 per student per year. Notably, 92 percent of private schools charge \$7,500 or less for elementary and middle school students and 79 percent of private high schools charge \$10,000 or less.

Many private school administrators indicated that their school charges different tuition rates for different families. For instance, many schools use a sliding scale based on a family's income so as to make the school more affordable to more families. Some schools that are financially supported by a church charge different rates to families that are members of that church and to those that are not. A few schools also noted that their tuition rates vary based on a family's ability to pay, and some charge a percentage of a family's income as a tuition payment, commonly between 5 and 8 percent. Finally, many schools also offer discounts to families that enroll more than one child and some cap the amount large families are responsible for paying, meaning these families can enroll additional children at no extra costs to themselves.

Graphic 10: Private School Estimated Annual Tuition



In addition to tuition, some private schools charge supplementary fees (e.g., registration, resources, technology, transportation). The majority of additional fees were associated with registration — 53 percent of private school survey respondents indicated that they charge registration fees. Approximately 11 percent of respondent schools charged technology fees and

* The median values for these distributions were \$4,000 for elementary and middle schools tuition and fees and \$7,200 for high school tuition and fees. These figures are based off 230 responses for primary schools and 56 responses for high schools.

approximately 10 percent charged textbook fees. The average amount of fees charged by private school survey respondents was approximately \$250 per student per year.

Tuition Assistance

Survey results revealed that more than one out of three private schools provide financial assistance to families and a little more than one third of students receives some form of tuition assistance. In particular, based on an average from the 247 survey responses to this question (74 percent of survey sample), 34 percent of elementary and middle school students and 40 percent of high school students receive financial assistance.

Survey results from 207 respondents (62 percent of survey sample) also revealed the average amounts of financial assistance provided to families. At the primary school level, the average amount of financial assistance per student among survey respondents was over \$1,600 per year, and at the high school level about \$2,000 per year. However, financial assistance varied widely from school to school: some schools offered more than \$9,000 per year, while others offered less than \$100. Many private school survey respondents indicated that tuition assistance varied widely and was highly dependent on individual circumstances and family needs.

Offerings and Accreditation

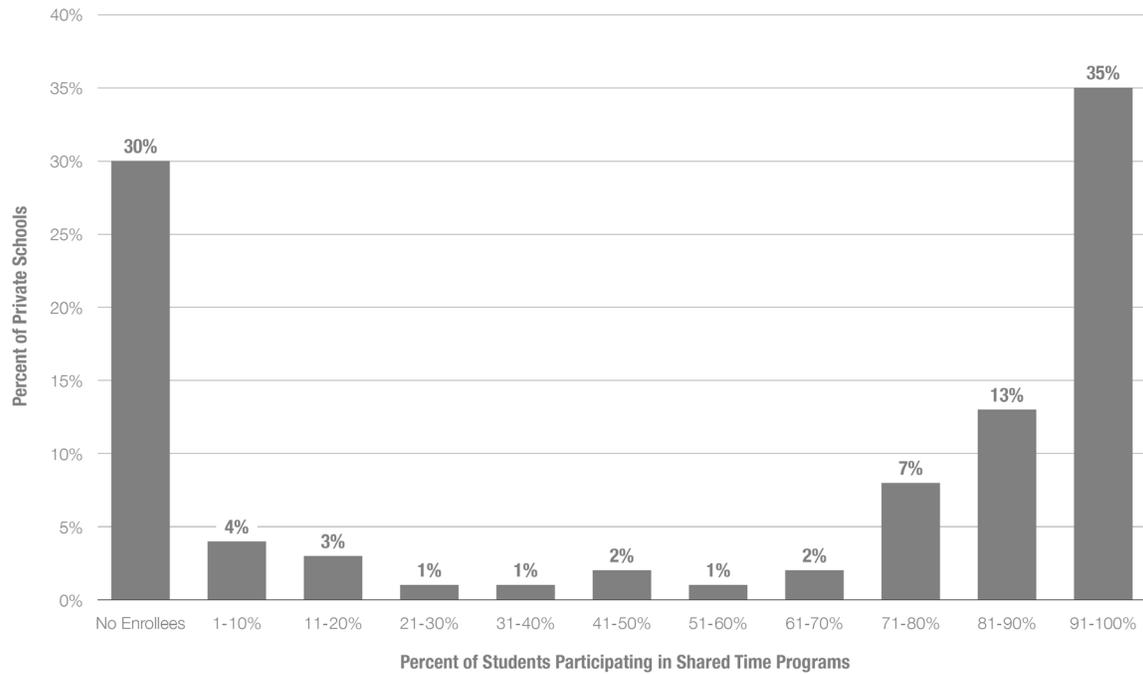
Enrollment in Collaborative Programs

Shared Time

Shared time is an agreement between a private school and a public school district that allows private school students (at no charge to them) in grades kindergarten through 12 to take noncore classes (e.g., foreign languages, physical education, fine arts, computer science) that are taught by teachers employed by the public school district.¹³ School districts then get to count these part-time students towards their total enrollment for the purpose of collecting state aid for providing such services.

Survey data was retrieved from 208 private schools (66 percent of survey sample) and 70 percent of these schools said that they enroll at least some students in shared-time programs. Moreover, of those private schools using shared time, 80 percent enroll 71 percent or more of their students in these programs. When broken down at school level, for those that have shared-time programs, the average participation rate is 60 percent for private elementary and middle schools and 36 percent for private high schools.

Graphic 11: Private Schools by Shared-Time Participation Rates of Students



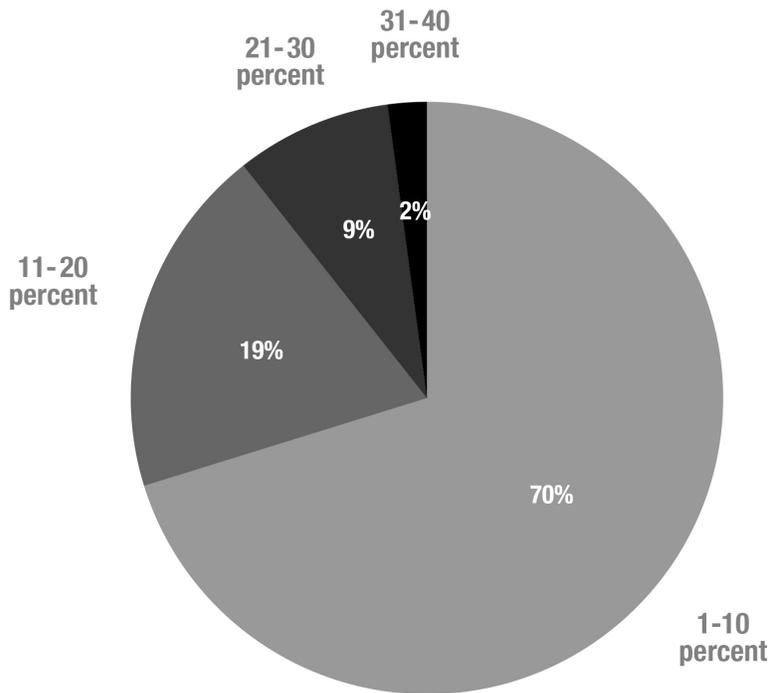
Dual Enrollment

In 2012, the Michigan Legislature made changes to the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Act, which allows for private school students to “dual enroll” in a state-funded, college-level course without having to first enroll as a part-time public school student.¹⁴ Additionally, the law allows private schools students to take college courses that count for credits towards both a college degree and a high school diploma.*

Survey data was retrieved from 67 private high schools (88 percent of the high school survey sample) on this issue and found that 69 percent of private high schools had at least one student dual enrolled for the 2015-16 school year. Of those schools, the average percentage of students dual enrolled was approximately 10 percent, and 89 percent of these schools enrolled 20 percent or fewer of their students in dual enrollment programs, as shown in Graphic 12.

* Private school students can only count “nonessential” courses towards their high school diploma. “Frequently Asked Questions - Postsecondary Dual Enrollment” (Michigan Department of Education, Apr. 23, 2014), <https://perma.cc/979N-VEE8>.

Graphic 12: Percent of Private High Schools by Percent of Students Participating in Dual Enrollment

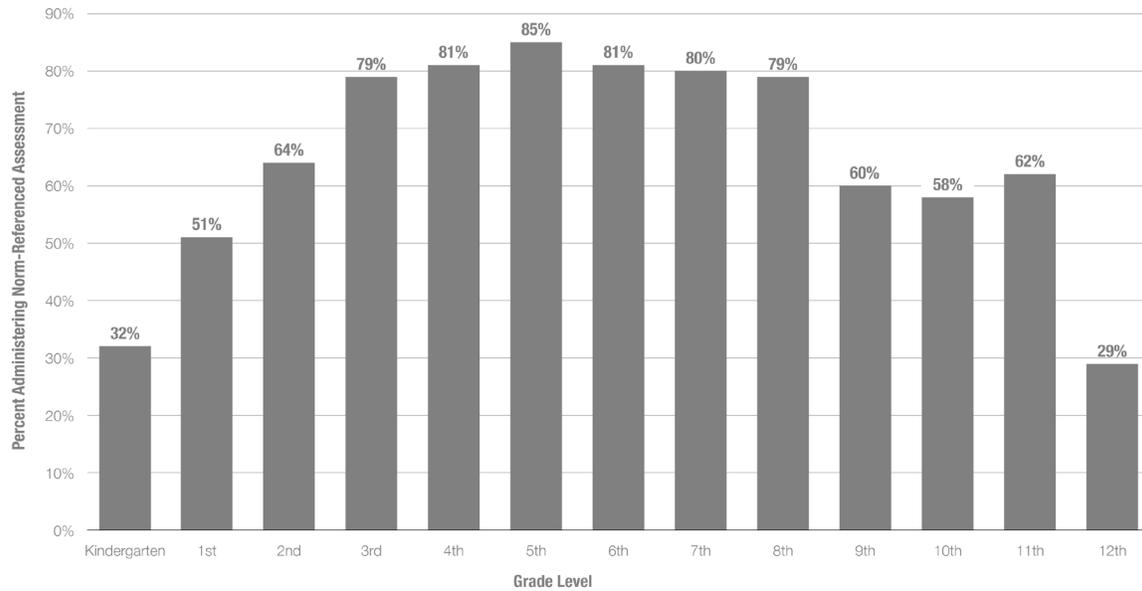


Student Assessment

All private schools can elect, but are not required, to administer state assessments to their students during the testing period as prescribed by the Michigan Department of Education.¹⁵ Approximately 80 percent of private school respondents indicated that they measure student academic performance annually for third through eighth graders using a norm-referenced assessment.* At the high school level, just over one half of schools annually assess ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders and fewer than one in three high schools administer an annual, norm-referenced assessment to their twelfth grade students. Graphic 13 provides a breakdown of private school student assessment by grade.

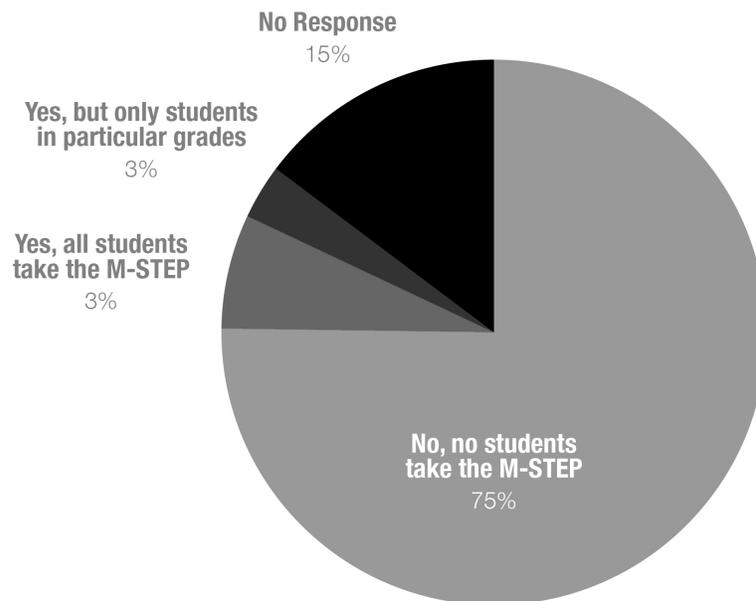
* A norm-referenced assessment compares a student's performance to others within their peer group. For example, a third-grade student's norm-referenced test assesses how the third grader is performing relative to how other third graders perform.

Graphic 13: Percent of Private Schools Annually Administering Norm-Referenced Student Achievement Tests



While annually assessing their students, very few private schools utilize Michigan’s state assessment (i.e., M-STEP for 2015-16).^{*} As shown in Graphic 14, over three-quarters of survey respondent private schools indicated that none of their students take the state standardized assessment. The most common norm-referenced tests taken by private school students include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, NWEA Measurement of Academic Performance, and, at the middle and high school levels, both the ACT and SAT suite of tests (e.g., ACT Aspire, Plan, Explore and ACT, or the PSAT and SAT).

^{*} This could be due to the fact that the M-STEP is a relatively new test, having been administered for the first time in April of 2015. It may be that some private schools plan to administer the test, but are going to wait until they can further review it and the procedure for participating in the test. “M-STEP Summative” (Michigan Department of Education, 2016), <https://perma.cc/C2M6-9NHF>.

Graphic 14: Percent of Private School Respondents Who Administer the M-STEP

In addition to, or in lieu of, norm-referenced tests, some private schools assess their students' academic achievement using assessments that are not norm-referenced. At the elementary and middle school levels, approximately one out of every three private schools administers non-norm-referenced assessments to their elementary and middle school students. At the high school level, less than one out of every four private schools administers non-norm-referenced assessments to their students. Commonly administered non-norm-referenced assessments include: DIBELS, STAR and other, locally-developed assessments.*

Accreditation

Under state law, Michigan's private schools may choose to participate in an accreditation program.¹⁶ Survey results from over 300 private schools indicate that about 80 percent of private schools are accredited. Of those schools that are accredited, the majority are accredited by the Michigan Non-Public School Accreditation Association (see Graphic 15).

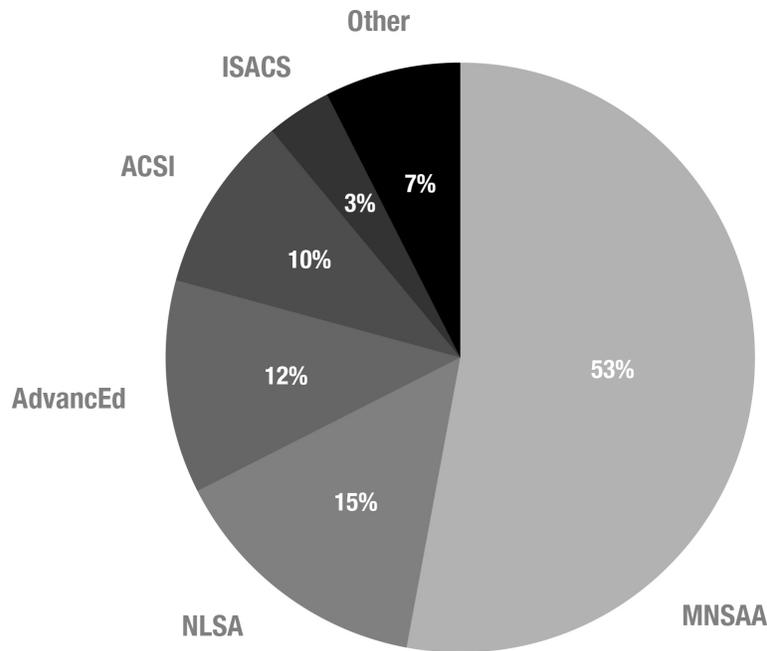
MNSAA is recognized by the College Board as an accreditation agency. In order to begin the MNSAA accreditation process, a school must have (a) been operating for at least three years; (b) developed a strategic plan for school improvement; and (c) been evaluated by an external group of public and private educators.¹⁷ Additionally, a school must demonstrate its compliance with state law and regulations. After having been accredited, schools must be re-evaluated every five or seven years.

The second most popular accreditation agency is the National Lutheran School Accreditation. To be NLSA accredited, a school must undergo an evidence-based evaluation (i.e., ratings are

* DIBELS stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills and assesses literacy skills for grades K-6. STAR assessments are computer-adaptive tests in early literacy, reading and math.

established based on evidence and practices that are in place at the time of the accreditation self-study).¹⁸ Schools must also be “purpose-driven,” have qualified and competent staff, use designated curriculum and instructional design, regularly assess student learning, ensure teacher effectiveness, offer student supports services and activities, provide safe and healthy buildings, grounds and equipment, and more.¹⁹ Finally, 22 percent or more of Michigan private schools are accredited through AdvancED or the Association of Christian Schools International.²⁰

Graphic 15: Michigan Private School Accreditation Agency Affiliations



Conclusion

Much of the focus on improving K-12 education centers on reforming Michigan's public school system. This makes a lot of sense given that 93 percent of students in Michigan attend traditional public schools or charter schools. Private schools, however, should not be entirely left out of these discussions, and policymakers should consider the role private schools may have in helping improve educational opportunities for Michigan residents. The first step in that process is understanding the current state of private schools in Michigan, and this report is intended to serve as a means to that end.

This report hopes to provide valuable information for anyone interested in learning more about the makeup, characteristics and potential of Michigan's private schools. While enrollment in these schools has been on the decline, they still serve a meaningful number of Michigan students and they have the potential to serve many more. Private schools in Michigan are a relatively diverse group of institutions that provide parents a broader range of educational opportunities for their children.

About the Authors

Rachel White received her bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. For this report, she analyzed the quantitative data and composed the results of the analysis.

Ben DeGrow is the Mackinac Center's director of education policy. He joined the Center in 2015 after a long stint at Colorado's Independence Institute, where he provided expert analysis on school choice, school finance, collective bargaining and education employment policies. He authored numerous policy reports and op-eds for various newspapers and other publications and regularly appeared on radio and television and before legislative committees.

DeGrow graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in history from Hillsdale College and went on to receive a master's degree in history from the Pennsylvania State University. Ben's experiences in the classroom include service as a university graduate assistant and as a substitute teacher in Michigan public schools. He also spent nearly a year on the editorial staff of the *Hillsdale Daily News*.

Appendix: Details About Survey Methodology

From March 15 to May 8, data were collected using online survey software (SurveyMonkey) from private schools across the state of Michigan. Emails inviting individuals to participate in the survey were sent to all members of the Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools. The initial email invitation was sent from MANS officials to MANS member schools on March 15. MANS sent follow-up and reminder emails to MANS member schools on March 22, March 31 and May 5.

MANS also distributed email survey invitations to all non-MANS members with private school contacts listed in the Michigan Department of Education's Educational Entity Master, which is managed by the Center for Educational Performance and Information. The initial email invitation for non-MANS members was sent on March 22. Follow-up and reminder emails were sent on March 31 and May 6. In total, 659 emails were sent from MANS to private school contacts.

Upon the closing of the survey on May 9, 2016, 475 unique responses were entered into the survey. Just over 100 responses were duplicative (23 percent). Duplicate responses were identified using both school name and IP address. If a duplicate response was identified, the response with the most data available was retained. For those duplicate responses that had the same amount of data, the most recent entry was retained. The total number of nonduplicate responses was 366. In addition to duplicate data, 32 schools entered the survey but did not provide any data other than their school name. These responses were also removed from the final data set. Thus, the total number of nonduplicate, complete responses was 334, for a total response rate of 51 percent.

Data within the survey was cleaned on an individual basis. Data cleaning procedures consisted primarily of investigating abnormal responses, such as percentages greater than 100 percent. When a percentage response was greater than 100, the response was investigated further to better understand the nature of the response. For example, when asked to enter the percent of students that were in shared time programs, an individual entered "254." While 254 percent was not possible, further investigation revealed that the total enrollment for the school was 259 students; as a result, the data point was manually changed to 98 percent. Other data cleaning procedures included shifting spelled-out responses to numerical responses (e.g., "eight" to "8") and identifying data entry issues (e.g., manually changing a response of "0.05" to "5%").

In addition to survey data, data from CEPI were collected from the MDE Nonpublic School Database. This database includes data on private schools' geographic location, affiliation, teacher counts and characteristics (e.g., education level and certification status), enrollment counts by grade, and basic course offerings.

Endnotes

- 1 MCL § 388.1618.
- 2 For examples, see: Diane Ravitch, *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2013); Christopher A. Lubeinski and Sarah Theule Lubeinski, *The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- 3 “Public Schools Are Improving Their Grades, but Private Schools Remain at the Head of the Class” (The Harris Poll, Sept. 29, 2015), <https://perma.cc/9CSP-GVJN>.
- 4 “Private School Enrollment” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014), <https://perma.cc/DSPF-XKZN>.
- 5 Federal Register, Vol. 80, No. 61, p. 17026-17027, March 31, 2015, <https://perma.cc/9E3E-VVKK>.
- 6 “Nonpublic Student Counts” (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/2A4M-8XK8>.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Author’s calculations based on “Nonpublic Student Counts” (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/2A4M-8XK8>.
- 9 Author’s calculations based on “Child Population by Age: Michigan” (Kids Count Data Center, July 2015), <https://perma.cc/R2TE-ZFLJ>; “Nonpublic Student Counts” (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016), <https://perma.cc/2A4M-8XK8>.
- 10 Thomas D. Snyder, Cristobal de Brey and Sally A. Dillow, “Digest of Education Statistics 2014” (National Center for Education Statistics, April 2016), 119, Table 205.20, <https://perma.cc/9KT8-FCFX>.
- 11 For more information about these programs in other states, see: “School Choice in America” (Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, 2016), <https://perma.cc/5S78-QUGB>.
- 12 Mich. Const. Art. 8, Sec. 1-2.
- 13 For more information, see: “Pupil Accounting Manual: 5-E: Nonpublic and Home-Schooled Pupils” (Michigan Department of Education, 2016), <https://perma.cc/2VMF-Y4UD>.
- 14 “Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act” (State of Michigan, July 1, 2012), <https://perma.cc/S5SW-ACCV>.
- 15 “Nonpublic and Home School Information” (Michigan Department of Education, Sept. 2015), 12, <https://perma.cc/SFST-HMPD>.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 “MNSAA Accreditation” (Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools, 2016), <https://perma.cc/S4DY-GGDK>.
- 18 “NLSA Evidence-Based Accreditation” (The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod), <https://perma.cc/KX8X-MUL6>.
- 19 “About National Lutheran School Accreditation” (The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod), <https://perma.cc/N7UR-9NKK>.
- 20 For more information about these accreditations standards, see: “AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools” (AdvancED, 2016), <https://perma.cc/MA29-DVXN>; “Accreditation for Early Education to Grade 12 Schools” (Association of Christian Schools International), <https://perma.cc/H3A5-2JYW>.

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