

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Students Significantly Exceed SAT Benchmark

A headline in *The Washington Post* early last month echoed a national concern: “SAT scores at lowest level in 10 years, fueling worries about high schools.” The Post went on to report that SAT scores “have sunk to the lowest level since the college admission test was overhauled in 2005, adding to worries about student performance in the nation’s high schools.”

The story described the average score for the class of 2015 (1490 out of a possible 2400) as being “down 7 points from the previous class’s mark” and “the lowest composite score of the past decade.”

Variance by Type of School

As troubling as the overall SAT results were, it turns out they varied significantly by the type of school students attended. In each of the subjects tested, SAT scores for college-bound seniors in religious and independent schools were substantially higher than the national average, actually helping to boost that average. Mean SAT scores for students in public schools were 489 in reading, 475 in writing, and 498 in math, while comparable scores for students in religious schools were 533, 527, and 536. Students in independent schools scored 532, 538, and 579. And among all members of the class of 2015 who took the test, average scores were 495 in reading, 484 in writing, and 511 in math, yielding the aforementioned total of 1490.

What’s more, SAT scores for 2015 graduates of religious and independent schools significantly exceeded the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark, a combined

score of 1550 on the three SAT tests (critical reading, writing, and mathematics) that helps predict success in college.

For college-bound seniors in independent schools across the nation, the combined average SAT score was 1649 (99 points above the benchmark) while

the average for religious school students was 1596 (46 points above the benchmark). Public school students scored 1462, which was 88 points shy of the standard.

According to the College Board, a benchmark score of 1550 is “associated with a 65 percent probability of obtaining a first-year GPA of B- or higher at a four-year college. It indicates a student’s readiness to enter college or career-training programs and to succeed in credit-bearing, entry-level college courses.”

Further, “High school graduates who reach the benchmark are more likely to enroll in a four-year college and graduate on time than those who do not meet the benchmark.”

Overall, “More than 712,000 students (41.9 percent of SAT takers in the class of 2015) met the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark.”

Among SAT-taking members of the class of 2015 for whom a high school is

known, 9 percent attended a religiously affiliated school, 7 percent attended an independent school, and 84 percent attended a public school. That translates into 139,975 students from religious schools, 107,110 from independent schools, and 1,332,096 from public schools. For 119,340 students, the type of high school was “other or unknown.” Overall, roughly 1.7 million students in the class of 2015 took the SAT.

Above-Average Share

The private school share of SAT-takers whose schools were identified as public, religious, or independent amounted to 16 percent, an amount disproportionately large in that only about 8 percent of all high school students in the country are enrolled in private schools. Not only do such schools account for an above-average share of students taking the SAT, they also account for students who help boost national average scores. Mean SAT scores for all the nation’s seniors, regardless of the school they attended, were 6 points higher in reading, 9 points higher in writing, and 13 points higher in math than the scores

attained by public school students alone.

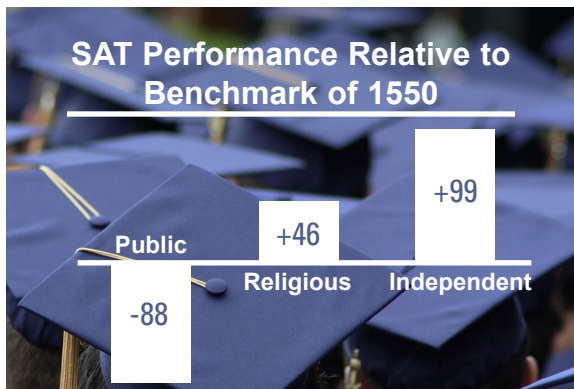
Fewer Tests

The College Board says it is engaged in an “ongoing commitment to connect assessments with opportunities that help more

students make successful transitions to college.”

“We need fewer tests that do more,” said College Board President David Coleman.

[Photos: © xymm/Dollar Photo Club]



Schools	Reading	Writing	Math
Independent	532	538	579
Religious	533	527	536
Public	489	475	498
National Mean	495	484	511

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
Council on Educational Standards and Accountability
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
35 Affiliated State Organizations

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

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U.S. Education Department Hosts Private School Leaders

“Where would America be without private schools?” That provocative question was posed last month during the keynote address at the annual National Private School Leadership Conference in Washington, DC, sponsored by the Office of Non-Public Education at the U.S. Department of Education. The speaker posing the question was Gerard Robinson, resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and former commissioner of education for the State of Florida and secretary of education for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Robinson kicked off his address with a quote from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787: “Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.” His talk centered on the variety of means available to deliver education to all children and the important role of private schools as one of those means.

The Five P’s

Robinson applied the four P’s of marketing—product, place, price and promotion—to private schools. The product of private schools, he said, is not only education, but also servant leadership. “The best leaders are those who actually serve the students.” The price is not the tuition that a school charges students, but “what will happen to our children if we do not invest in them.” The place is the center of activity in a school, the classroom, and promotion is making sure that we reach out to “as many parents as possible to let them know why our school matters.” Robinson added a fifth P, partnership, because by working together, “we can find ourselves in a better place.”

“Where would we be in America without the private school system?” Robinson identified

several unique contributions that private schools have made and are making to the country. The first is their history: “Private schools were here long before we had our public school system,” he said. Second, private schools are providing a “vitally important” type of education, “whether it’s mission-based, character-based, or theme-based.” Further, such schools are currently educating a significant segment of the population, and finally, the evidence suggests they are doing a solid job preparing many students for college and career.

Packed Program

Several other speakers graced the podium to provide a wealth of observations and insights of interest to private school leaders. Alyssa Schwartz, education programs director for the Association Montessori International / USA, a member of CAPE, served as the inaugural presenter in a new “Association Spotlight” segment of the agenda. Schwartz highlighted AMI/USA’s history as the U.S. affiliate of an international

organization established to promote the educational principles and practices of Dr. Maria Montessori. Schwartz also reviewed the organization’s work in school recognition, teacher training, and professional development.

Later in the day, Josie Webster, president of the Virginia Council for Private Education and coordinator of CAPE’s State CAPE Network, spoke as part of a panel of representatives from a working group of education department officials and private school leaders committed to ensuring equitable services for private school students in the Commonwealth of Virginia under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. The Virginia group was held up as a model of cooperation between the public and private sector to make certain that the provisions of ESEA are carried out.



Gerard Robinson from the American Enterprise Institute speaks at the ONPE conference. (Photo by Leslie Williams, USDE)



Alyssa Schwartz from AMI/USA speaks at the ONPE conference. (Photo by Leslie Williams, USDE)

Pope Francis Visits Catholic School in East Harlem

As part of a U.S. visit marked by epic events at the White House, the Capitol, and the United Nations, Pope Francis, known for humility and simplicity, stayed true to those traits when on Friday, September 25, he visited Our Lady Queen of Angels School in the East Harlem neighborhood of New York City.

An enthusiastic wave of selfie-seeking students from various schools in the Archdiocese of New York cheered the pontiff when his Fiat pulled up to the school, which has been serving the community for over 120 years and has a student population that is 70 percent Hispanic and 22 percent African American. Students chanted “Holy Father, we love you,” as the pope worked his way along the barrier to greet them and pause for photos.

Inside, children from OLQA and several other inner-city schools in Manhattan (St. Ann, St. Paul, and St. Charles Borromeo) serenaded the pope with “Make Me A Channel of Your Peace,” also known as the Prayer of St. Francis.

Third and fourth graders talked to the pope in Spanish and English about their class projects and lessons on community service, the sacraments, thanksgiving for God’s gifts, and stewardship of natural resources. For his part, the pontiff listened patiently and intently.

Two young children even gave the pope a quick demo on how to manipulate an interactive instructional panel, though the lesson revealed the pontiff to be a tad more high-touch than high-tech.

Students from the Archdiocese also prepared a “spiritual bouquet” for the pope, captured in a bound book of prayers, photos, and drawings.

Pope Francis thanked students for letting him come to the school and lightheartedly asked forgiveness from the teachers for “stealing” a few minutes of class time—forgiveness readily granted since everyone present considered the visit a gift rather than a theft.

The pope said that one of the nice things about the school is that “some students come from other places, and many from other countries.” While acknowledging that it is “not

easy to have to move and find a new home” and “learn a new language,” there is value to making new friends and meeting people “who open doors for us, who are kind to us.” Such people “try to help us not to feel like strangers” and “help us feel at home.”

One Big Family

Pope Francis described school as “one big family” where “together with our mothers and fathers, our grandparents, our teachers and friends, we learn to help one another, to share our good qualities, to give the best of ourselves, to work as a team, for that is very important, and to pursue our dreams.”

Continuing the theme of pursuing dreams, the pope talked about the Reverend Martin Luther King, explaining that King’s dream “was that many children, many people, could have equal opportunities. His dream was that many children like you could get an education. He dreamed that many men and women, like yourselves, could lift their heads high, in dignity and self-sufficiency. It is beautiful to have dreams and to be able to fight for our dreams. Don’t ever forget this,” the pope implored the children.

The pontiff went on to remind students that one of the dreams of their parents and teachers “is that you can grow up and be happy.” Noticing the children smiling, the pope encouraged them, “Keep smiling and help bring joy to everyone you meet.”

Declaring that children and adults have “a right to dream,” the pope observed, “Wherever there are dreams, wherever there is joy, Jesus is always present. Always.”

The pontiff then said sadness, mistrust, envy, and evil desires stem from the devil, who “always sows sadness, because he doesn’t want us to be happy; he doesn’t want us to dream.” By contrast, “Wherever there is joy, Jesus is always present,” he said, “because Jesus is joy, and he wants to help us to feel that joy every day of our lives.”

Before he left, the pope gave the students a homework assignment: “Please don’t forget to pray for me, so that I can share with many people the joy of Jesus.”



Pope Francis meets with students during a visit to Our Lady Queen of Angels School in East Harlem. (Photo by Fran Davies, Archdiocese of New York)

Goodbye, Mr. Speaker

House Speaker John Boehner, an unwavering proponent of parent choice in education and perhaps the most effective choice supporter ever to serve in Congress, plans to give up his gavel and his House seat at the end of the month.

Boehner has a fire-in-the-belly passion for the right of parents to choose their child’s school. As chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, he helped spearhead passage of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, the first and only federally-funded K-12 voucher program, which was signed in 2004.

In a meeting in March 2003 with CAPE’s board of directors and state representatives, Boehner spoke movingly of his strong belief “in the power of school choice.” He said that in his entire career he had never dealt with a policy issue “that has etched a spot on my soul like this issue of education.” Referring to children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are stuck in terrible schools, Boehner said, “I’m going to do something the rest of my life to help make sure that these kids are not forgotten.”

A touching gesture reflects how seriously Mr. Boehner took that pledge. In January 2011, then newly elected Speaker Boehner launched a high-profile campaign to reauthorize the DC-OSP, and to punctuate the priority status of the legislation he invited students and parents from the program to attend the State of the Union address as his special guests.

During the House floor debate on the measure several months later, Boehner called scholarship students and their parents the program’s “greatest ambassadors.” The truth, however, was that the program’s greatest ambassador was the speaker himself. His passionate commitment to children, parents, and choice will be sorely missed.

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced September 29 the names of 335 schools identified by the U.S. Department of Education as the National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2015.

Schools were selected either because their test scores in reading and math placed them among the top-performing schools in the nation or state, or because they made notable improvements in closing achievement gaps.

Fifty 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 9-10 in Washington, DC.

"This honor recognizes your students' accomplishments and the hard work and dedication that went into their success," Duncan said in a video message to the awardees.

The following schools were named National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2015:

Arkansas — St Vincent de Paul School, Rogers • **California** — Heights Christian Schools-Chino Hills Campus, Chino Hills • Legacy Christian Academy, Valencia •

New Horizon Elementary School, Irvine • Santa Fe Christian Middle School, Solana Beach • **Colorado** — Valor Christian High School, Highlands Ranch • **Georgia** — First Presbyterian Day School - Elementary School, Macon • **Illinois** — Our Lady Of The Wayside School, Arlington

Heights • St Cornelius Elementary School, Chicago • St Theresa Elementary School, Palatine • **Indiana** — Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Carmel • St Pius X Catholic School, Granger • **Kentucky** — Blessed Sacrament School, Ft. Mitchell • Christian Academy of Louisville Middle School, Louisville • St Albert The

Great School, Louisville • St Gabriel the Archangel School, Louisville • St Margaret Mary, Louisville • St Mary Academy, Prospect • St Pius X Elementary, Edgewood • **Louisiana** — St Aloysius School, Baton Rouge • St James Episcopal Day School, Baton Rouge • St Paul 's School, Covington • **Maryland** — Cardinal Hickey Academy, Owings • Our Lady Of Lourdes School, Bethesda • **Massachusetts** — Mount Alvernia Academy, Chestnut Hill • **Missouri** — Nerinx Hall, Webster Groves • St Louis University High School, Saint Louis • **Nebraska** — St Robert Bellarmine School, Omaha • **New Jersey** — Acad-

emy of Saint Paul, Ramsey • Holy Cross Elementary School, Rumson • Oratory Preparatory School, Summit • Our Lady Of Czestochowa, Jersey City • Our Lady Of Good Counsel School, Moorestown • Trinity Academy, Caldwell • **New York** — Rambam Mesivta, Lawrence • **Ohio** — St Agatha School, Columbus • **Pennsylvania** — Our Mother of Consolation, Philadelphia • St Agnes Catholic School, West Chester • St Joseph School, Mechanicsburg • St Norbert Elementary School, Paoli • **Tennessee** — Tennessee Christian Preparatory School, Cleveland • **Texas** — All Saints Catholic School, Dallas • Christ The King Catholic School, Dallas • Grace Community High School, Tyler • **Virginia** — Christ The King Catholic School, Norfolk • Immanuel Christian School, Springfield • Our Lady Of Hope Catholic School, Potomac Falls • St Mark Catholic School, VA, Vienna • Trinity Lutheran School, Newport News • **Wisconsin** — St Stanislaus/Saint Stephen School, Stevens Point.

