

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Private School Students More Likely to Attend College

Students who attended private high schools as ninth-graders were more likely to graduate from high school and to enroll and persist in postsecondary education than ninth-graders in public high schools, according to a report released last month by the National Center for Education Statistics.

The High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09) is a massive ongoing study that is following a nationally representative sample of students from public schools and private schools who were ninth-graders in the fall of 2009. The study tracks the same cohort of approximately 20,000 students as they progress through high school, postsecondary education, and into the workforce.

In addition to collecting the base-year data, HSLs:09 conducted its first follow-up in spring 2012, when most of the students were in 11th grade, and its second follow-up between March 2016 and January 2017, about three-years after high school graduation for most of the sample. The latest report is a “first look” at findings from the second follow-up.

High School Diplomas

Among students who were ninth-graders in the fall of 2009, 92 percent were awarded a high school diploma by February 2016. However, the results varied by the type of school students had attended, with 91.1 percent of students who had attended only public schools receiving a high school diploma, compared to 99.5 percent

of students who had attended only private schools. The differences become even more stark after high school.

Postsecondary Enrollment

Upon leaving high school, students have to decide whether to pursue a postsecondary credential or not. It turns out that students from different types of high schools tend to make different choices. Indeed, 95.8 percent of 2009 ninth-graders who had attended only private high schools had enrolled in postsecondary education as of February 2016, compared to 70.9 percent of students who had attended only public high schools.

In addition, private-school students pursued their postsecondary career with a lot more speed than their public-school counterparts. The report notes that 94.2 percent of the private school cohort who had enrolled in postsecondary education did so within four months of completing or leaving their high schools, as opposed to 81.3 percent of public school students.

Persistence

As everyone knows, enrolling in a postsecondary program and sticking with it are two different things. As of February 2016, 82.3 percent of 2009 ninth-graders who had attended only private high schools were currently enrolled in a postsecond-

ary program, while the same was true for only 48.7 percent of students from public schools.

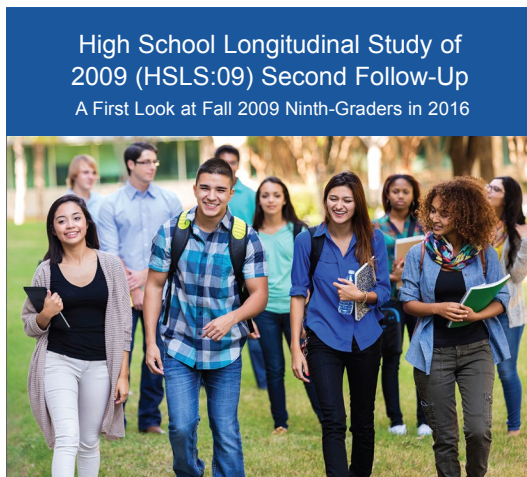
Two- or Four-Year Programs?

What were the kinds of postsecondary programs in which students enrolled? Again, the number varied significantly by the type of high school students had attended. Four-year colleges were the choice for most private high school students. Among fall 2009 ninth-graders who had enrolled in any postsecondary program, 85 percent of those from private high schools had first enrolled in public or private non-profit four-year institutions, compared to 54 percent of students from public high schools. On the other hand, public high school students were three times more likely to first enroll in a two-year public program (38 percent) compared to private high school students (13 percent).

Looking at the status of 2009 ninth-graders who had ever enrolled in postsecondary education, 76 percent of such students who only went to private high schools had persisted (as of February 2016) in a four-year college, compared to 44 percent of students who only went to public high schools.

So what exactly is the cause of these sector differences in high-school graduation and postsecondary attendance? On that question, the report is utterly silent, simply because the analysis does not support any conclusions about causation. As the report succinctly put it, “Readers should note that, because this report is descriptive in nature, it is not appropriate to draw causal inferences from the results presented.”

Nevertheless, the differences are stark and certainly worthy of further study regarding the factors that account for them.



Percentage of 2009 Ninth-Graders Who Enrolled in Postsecondary Education by 2016 (by type of high school attended)

Public	70.9%
Private	95.8%

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 of Islamic Schools in North America
- Council on Educational Standards and Accountability
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Friends Council on Education
- Islamic Schools League of America
- Jesuit Schools Network
- 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
- Affiliated State Organizations

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12
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Outlook is published monthly (September to June) by CAPE. An annual subscription is \$35. ISSN 0271-1451

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Sec. DeVos Supports School Choice for Military Families

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos last month endorsed education savings accounts (ESAs) as a way to give military families the chance to “customize” the education of their children.

Noting that active-duty families make decisions about their military careers based, in part, on their children’s education, DeVos said ESAs could change the dynamic for those families, providing them the flexibility to select the settings that best meet their family’s needs.

Speaking February 22, at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference, the secretary said ESAs could provide children with “continuity in their education” as they move from “base to base or city to city.”

Depending on how the program is set up, ESAs offer a set amount of money per child that parents can spend on a hose of educational options, including online instruction, charter schools, public schools, private schools, tutors, and instructional materials.

The federal government offers block grants to help low-income families choose a preschool for their children, said DeVos, and other grants to help students at the postsecondary level. But the K-12 world is a different story. “I believe there is a very strong argument to be made that all families should have the same kind of power and choice, and the same kind of opportunities, that I had for my children,” she said. The quality of a child’s education should not be based on family income or where the family lives, she added.

Focusing on fundamentals, DeVos said, “I think the core issue is we need to really embrace, as a country, education freedom. That allows us to think more broadly about what education should be.”

Strong Support

A recent report by EdChoice and The Heritage Foundation found that 72 percent of respondents to a survey of military households supported education savings accounts. The report estimated that “there are about 750,000 school-aged children living in active-duty member households.” Roughly 80 percent of those children are enrolled in public schools. However, if given a choice, 34 percent would choose a regular public school and 33 percent would choose a private school. Another 17 percent would select a public charter school. Signifi-

cantly, the report noted that a “recent survey conducted and published by *Military Times* revealed that 35 percent of respondents said that dissatisfaction with their child’s education was a ‘significant factor’ in their decision to remain in or leave military service.”

Direct Role

The federal government plays a direct role in the education of military children. Federal Impact Aid provides assistance to school districts that educate concentrations of “federally connected” children, such as those who live on military bases. In addition, the Department of

Defense (DoD) operates 166 schools of its own to educate the children of active duty military and DoD civilian employees nationally and globally.

Impact Aid

Lindsey Burke, director of the Center for Education Policy

at Heritage, last year published a paper titled *Modernizing the Federal Impact Aid Program: A Path Toward Educational Freedom for Military Families and Other Federally Connected Children*. The paper essentially called for transitioning Impact Aid into ESAs. “Instead of filtering the \$1.3 billion in federal Impact Aid funding to district schools and then assigning students to those schools based on where their parents are stationed, Impact Aid dollars should be directed to eligible students,” wrote Burke. “All Impact Aid dollars for military-connected children in heavily impacted districts should go directly into a parent-controlled ESA, which the family could then use to pay for any education-related service, product, or provider that meets the specific needs of their child.”

Burke also proposed that the preK-12 schools run by DoD, known as Department of Defense Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS), be converted into a system of ESAs. “Rather than maintaining DDESS schools on military bases at great expense, the DoD should transition funding for DDESS schools into parent-controlled ESAs. Given the high average per-pupil expenditure at DDESS schools, the DOD could transition part of its current spending into flexible, parent-controlled accounts and use any savings to direct funds back to national defense priorities.”

[Photo: Straight 8 Photography/Shutterstock.com]



Federal Disaster Aid to Help Students and Schools

President Trump last month signed into law the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018* (HR 1892), which includes assistance to students and schools, both public and private, affected by certain hurricanes and wildfires in 2017. The assistance is designed to help restart schools damaged by the disasters and to help educate students forced to find new schools.

Specifically, the program provides services, equipment, and supplies to get schools that were in harm's way back on their feet. It also offers schools across the country assistance to help cover the costs of educating displaced students.

The maximum payment per displaced student is \$10,000 for a child who has a disability, \$9,000 for a child who is an English learner, and \$8,500 for all other children. In the case of private schools, the payment may not exceed the cost of tuition, fees, and transportation expenses at the school.

The program closely resembles a law enacted to deal with the aftermath of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina in 2005.

Aid to Rebuild Schools

To be eligible for building aid, a school damaged by a covered disaster must be: (1) located in a state or territory affected by a covered disaster or emergency in 2017; (2) serving an area in which a major disaster has been declared; (3) accredited, licensed, or otherwise operating in accordance with state law; (4) a school that was in existence one week prior to the date on which the major disaster was declared for the area.

Although private schools are not eligible for direct funds, they are entitled to services, equipment, and materials that are secular, neutral, and nonideological (the criteria for similar assistance under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*). The assistance must be used for specific purposes, such as the replacement of information systems, the rental of instructional space, the replacement of instructional materials, textbooks and equipment, and various other activities specified in the law.

The program requires states to set aside a portion of funds for assistance and services to private schools. The share must be at least equal to the share of private school students in the state. Thus, if private school students account for 20 percent of the elementary and secondary

school students in the state, the state must set aside at least 20 percent of funds for services and assistance to those schools.

The law states that services and assistance to private school students “shall be equitable in comparison to the educational services and other benefits provided for public school students... and shall be provided in a timely manner.”

Aid for Displaced Students

Another component of the disaster aid provides assistance for the education of students displaced by the covered disasters, whether that education takes place in a public school or a private school.

For private schools serving displaced students, the assistance flows through the local school district in which the private school is located.

The district makes payments to accounts established at the request of the parent or guardian of the displaced student. Private schools then draw funds from the accounts to cover the costs of educating the students.

To be eligible to participate in this program, a private elementary or secondary school must, again, be accredited or licensed or must otherwise operate in accordance with state law; and must serve at least one displaced student whose parent or guardian has applied for funds.

Nondiscrimination

The program requires participating schools not to discriminate against any student (displaced or otherwise) on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, disability, or sex. For schools controlled by religious organizations, the prohibition of religious discrimination does not apply to the enrollment of students other than displaced students. Also, notwithstanding the prohibition of sex discrimination, the program allows for single-sex schools, classes, or activities. Further, to the extent consistent with Title IX of the *Education Amendments of 1972*, the sex discrimination language does not apply to schools where it would violate religious tenets or beliefs.

Also under the heading of religious practices, a parent or guardian of a displaced student on whose behalf a payment to an account is made may opt to have the child excluded from religious worship or religious classes offered in the private school in which the student is enrolled.

FEMA and Faith

The education-related disaster aid (see story left) provided in the budget bill that President Trump signed into law last month was not the new law's only provision relating to private schools affected by disasters. The law also includes an important change relating to the eligibility of religious schools for disaster aid in general—a change that goes hand-in-hand with new language relating to disaster aid for houses of worship.

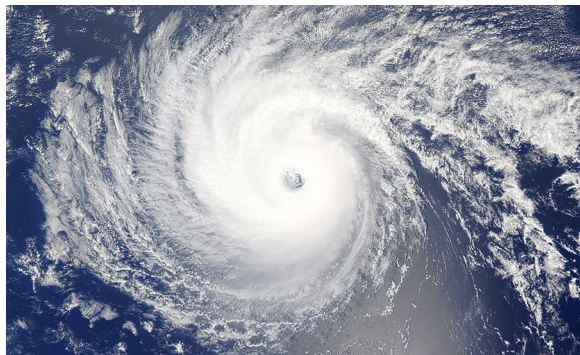
The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has long excluded houses of worship from eligibility for disaster assistance. But in early January, FEMA reversed that policy, citing *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer* as its reason.

Trinity Lutheran was the decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court last June that found the state of Missouri in violation of the U.S. Constitution because it had excluded a church from a public benefit solely because it was a church.

The *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018* (BBA) essentially codified FEMA's new policy of extending disaster aid to houses of worship.

But what about religious schools? Prior to the BBA, FEMA's policy was to exclude from disaster aid school buildings, or parts of buildings, that were primarily used for religious purposes. School chapels, for example, were excluded. But the new law includes a change in the definition of “private nonprofit facility” found in the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act*, the act that authorizes federal disaster assistance. The amended definition now includes educational facilities “without regard to the religious character of the facility.”

Naturally, this amendment to the Stafford Act is subject to rules, guidance, and actual implementation by FEMA. But all signs are that religious schools may soon be treated like any other school when it comes to federal disaster relief.



NASA Image

CAPE notes

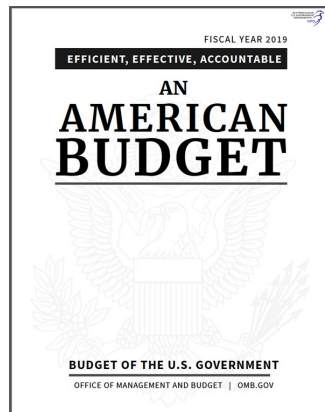
★ President Trump last month released his proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2019, which, for the second year in a row, calls for the creation of a school choice program but the elimination of a popular teacher quality improvement program and a student support program.

The president’s budget would provide \$1 billion for “a new Opportunity Grants program to expand both private and public school choices, particularly for students from low-income families.” Under the proposal, “States could apply for funding to provide scholarships to students from low-income families that could be used to transfer to a private school.” In addition, eligible public school districts could apply for funds to establish or expand open enrollment systems.

The proposed budget would also cancel funds for Title II-A of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), which deals with the professional development of teachers. Educators in religious and independent schools have greatly benefited from Title II-A throughout the program’s long history.

During the most recent reauthorization, the private school community worked very hard to ensure that equitable services for educators in private schools would be calculated based on a school district’s total

allocation of funds under Title II-A. With that provision now in place, the program carries even more significance for private schools.



Another program slated for cancellation in the president’s budget is Title IV-A of ESEA, which provides Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAEG). Those grants may be used to support well-rounded educational opportunities, safe and healthy students, and the effective use of technology—all through a variety of means best suited to local needs. States and districts

receiving funds under Title IV-A must provide equitable services to students and teachers in private schools.

★ Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), chairwoman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, recently called on House Appropriations Committee leadership to make funding for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAEG) a “top priority” in their legislation to appropriate funds for the remainder of FY 2018.

Foxx said the SSAEG program provides funds “to support a variety of needs, including student mental health services and professional development for school personnel in crisis management and school-

based violence prevention strategies.” She said schools “need a multi-pronged approach to ensure they are doing everything they can to provide a safe and secure learning environment for their students,” and that SSAEG “can be a key piece in their approach.”

★ The Pioneer Institute has released a feature-length documentary on school choice and the barriers that state Blaine amendments are placing in the path of parents seeking choice.

“Big Sacrifices, Big Dreams” looks at four families in three states (Georgia, Massachusetts, and Michigan) and how they have come to make decisions about their children’s education.

The looming backdrop for the film is Blaine amendments—state constitutional prohibitions against government funding of “sectarian” schools. They get their name from James G. Blaine, who sought such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1875. Although the House passed Blaine’s measure by a decisive vote (180-7), the Senate rejected it. Nevertheless, Blaine-like amendments soon took hold in individual state constitutions, with some states adopting them as a condition imposed by the federal government for statehood. The amendments were rooted in 19th century anti-Catholic prejudice.

The smartly produced film features commentary by former Boston Mayor Ray Flynn. It may be found on YouTube at <<https://youtu.be/Aeki7AUwB8o>>.