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“I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day.”
Abraham Lincoln

New Statistics Show a Rise in Enrollment at Private Schools

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has released the results from the Private School Universe Survey (PSS), a biennial questionnaire which provides data on total number of private schools, students, and teachers, and other general information such as graduation rates, program emphasis, and religious affiliation or orientation. The PSS was first developed in the late 1980s in an effort to gather data about private schools in a more efficient manner. This report, titled [Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results from the 2015-16 Private School Survey](#), included two new questions regarding private school participation in Title I services and the National School Lunch Program. The data from this report shows that private schools account for 28% of the nation’s K-12 schools. The total number of private schools is over 34,500, and of these, 4,154 are identified as conservative Christian schools serving 663,776 students. The total number of students enrolled in all private schools across the country is 4.9 million, an increase of 7% since the 2013 report. Sixty-seven percent of private schools have a religious affiliation, and this includes 78% of private school students. The average size of a private school is 142 students. When breaking down these numbers according to age and grade of the students, the average size of elementary private schools is 100 students, the average size for secondary schools is 263, and the average for an elementary and secondary school combined is 199. Interestingly, the average size of conservative Christian schools is 159 students. As a whole, private schools prove to be successful academically with a graduation rate of 97%. The survey also provides data regarding number of full-time and part-time teachers, and enrollment by age, race and ethnicity, and gender. Some private school groups look to the PSS to gain useful data regarding private schools in their states and organizations and across the country. Survey participation is voluntary for schools, which can present a challenge for obtaining complete data; and although there is no government regulation requiring schools to respond to the questionnaire, participation in the survey is required for a school’s name to be included on the drop-down list for the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) website that graduates must use to apply for college assistance.

New Poll Shows Public Confidence in Private Schools

A recent [poll](#) released by Gallup shows that 71 percent of Americans trust private schools to provide an excellent education, compared to 44 percent that believe public schools provide an excellent education. Furthermore, public schools actually ranked lowest among the options listed on the survey, falling behind home schools, charter schools, church-affiliated schools, and private schools. Gallup’s Lydia Saad noted, “Americans as a whole believe private and parochial schools do a better job of educating students than public schools do, something that might be remedied with the right federal or state public school education policies.” While a greater number of Republicans tend to view forms of privatized education in a positive light, 68 percent of Democrats also agree that non-public schools provide an excellent education. Charter schools and homeschooling, however, are viewed far less favorably by left-leaning voters (around 40 percent). The strong

confidence in non-public education coincides with a growing national support for school choice options for parents and students.

White House Releases Memorandum on Defense Transgender Policy

President Trump recently signed a memorandum [implementing a ban](#) on transgender people serving in the armed forces. The memo directs the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security to halt resources being used for sex reassignment surgery and treatment. An exception to the rule was made for those individuals already in the military who have begun a transition process. However, the memo also directs the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security to evaluate the best path forward in dealing with these individuals and insists that the focus be on how their involvement in the military affects combat readiness, lethality, resources, and unit cohesion. This policy will become effective March 23, 2018, to give time for officials to develop an implementation policy to submit to the president. The memo comes one month after Trump said he would not permit transgender individuals to serve, tweeting, “The military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.”

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[12 Myths and Realities About Private Educational Choice Programs](#)

[The Nashville Statement](#)

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