

Report Number 651
May 2002

Highlights

- Utah has a large percentage of school age children relative to the nation; however, only 2.8% of them attend private school, compared with 10% nationally.
- Private school students consistently score better on achievement measures than public school students. This gap is evident among both the general school population and students who are high achievers in school.
- Utah's private schools are concentrated along the Wasatch Front, in wealthier areas. This limits the educational choice of low-income and rural students.
- While having a low income may be a barrier to utilizing the private school system, the presence of a high median household income in a state is not related to the number of students who attend private school.
- Western states typically have low private school populations, compared to Eastern and Southern states. Utah is similar to Idaho, Wyoming, and Nevada in its low number of children attending private school.
- Historical and social factors unique to Utah may also help explain low private school enrollments compared to other states.

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The Status of Private Schools in Utah

Recently, significant attention has been paid to the issue of educational choice, both in Utah and nationally. A Gallup Poll in January 2001 found that 54% of the public believed that vouchers (state subsidies for private school tuition, aimed at families who would otherwise not be able to afford private school) would improve the public education system. Additionally, a 2000 poll by the National Association of Independent Schools asked parents to rank the top ten most important issues faced in schools and provide their opinion as to whether public or private schools did a better job at addressing these issues. In 8 of the 10 areas parents felt that private schools did at least as well, if not better than local public schools.

Debate on alternatives to public education has increased in Utah, both with the advent of charter schools, and with Senator Chris Butters' introduction of SB 69 proposing a tuition tax credit for parents who send their children to private schools. This is a relatively new development as both the West and Utah have traditionally had fewer private schools than other areas of the nation. A primary argument for vouchers and charter schools is that competition with private schools will stimulate positive change within the public school system, thus improving education for children in either system. However, critics have argued that the withdrawal of funding from the public school system is the least likely remedy for schools that are struggling to improve education outcomes.

As has been noted in prior reports¹, these effects could be magnified in Utah, because school age children make up such a high percentage of Utah's population. In short, this means that Utahns, compared to residents of other states, already pay more in taxes and receive a lower per pupil expenditure in return. If it is shown that increased choice for parents offers a way to increase the performance of public schools without harmful financial effects, the results in Utah could be dramatically positive. If, however, the results are shown to be very costly with no measurable benefit to the public school system, which educates the vast majority of students in Utah, the policy could be harmful.

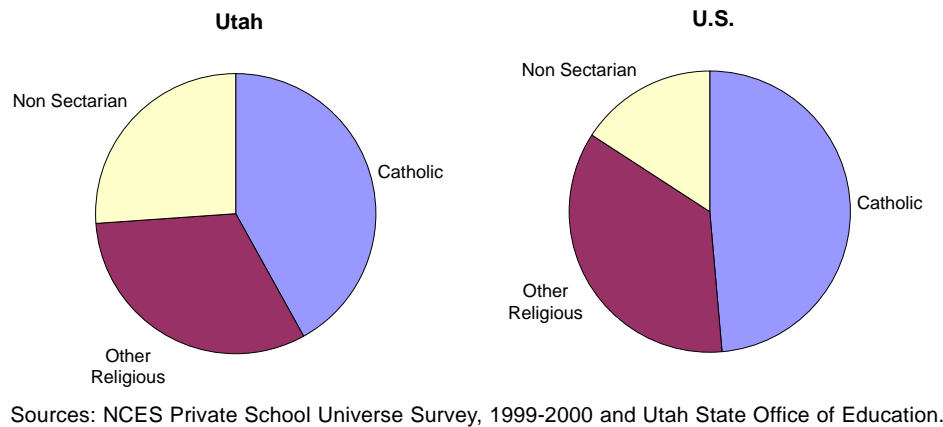
The increasing relevancy of these issues to both parents and policymakers makes it timely to evaluate the role of private schools in Utah and the effect, if any, they have on public school performance and finance. This report will look at several aspects of Utah's private school system, including performance on common measures of achievement, the costs of providing education, teacher salary, and the demographic makeup of private and public school populations. This report will evaluate these issues comparatively, within different areas of the state and nationally, and within Utah's historical and socio-political climate.

Types of Private Schools

The management of private schools varies significantly. Private schools can generally be broken down into three levels of control: Catholic, other religious, and non-sectarian. To complicate matters further, depending on nuances of management and program emphasis, schools within the same subcategory are not necessarily comparable, because they may emphasize different areas of learning than other schools. These differences, when compared with traditional

Figure 1

Enrollment by Type of Private School in 2000



education, make private schools attractive to parents.

Many educators have expressed concerns that high levels of private school enrollment can adversely affect public schools. Their most common contention is based on the concept of “skimming.” Skimming is the notion that private schools take the best and brightest out of the student population. Additionally, private schools tend to enroll students whose parents take a more active role in the child’s education. Since these two characteristics are often highly correlated to

success in school, particularly on standardized tests, some argue that a comparison of public and private school achievement results does not accurately reflect the relative quality of public and private education. However, because Utah’s small private school population is small, the skimming effect probably does not reduce public school test results in a noticeable manner.

Utah’s private school population is one of the smallest in the nation. However, the makeup of Utah’s private schools by type is roughly similar to the national makeup. Figure 1 shows the percentage of students who attend private schools by type both nationally and in Utah. It indicates that similar private schools are available in Utah as nationally, although more Utahns choose non-sectarian schools.

Despite these similarities, only 2.8% of Utah students attend private schools compared to 10% nationally. Considering that Utah’s percentage of school age population relative to total population is 23% (the second highest in the nation) the reason for lower private school enrollment is not a lack of children.

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Comparing Public and Private Schools

Comparisons between public and private schools are difficult partly because they operate under different rules. Utah’s regulation of the private school system is minimal. Both public and private schools are required to meet minimum community safety requirements. This ensures that students attending private schools are immunized, for example. However, while public schools are held to a fairly uniform academic standard, such as testing achievement with the 9th Edition of the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 9), private schools are not required to apply the same academic standards. This applies to the social environment in the classroom as well. One example of this is the possibility of corporal punishment in private schools, which is allowed, provided the school adopts a policy and notifies the parents and/or guardians of the children in the school.² While most private schools do not exercise this option, its existence exemplifies the differences between educational systems, standards, and measures in public and private schools.

Additionally, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) does not

maintain comprehensive data on private school achievement. Enrollment information and immunization records are maintained by law; however, all other data (test scores and income level for example) are only maintained if a particular school volunteers that information. In order to obtain this data, the public must rely on many different national agencies. The federal government runs some of the agencies and some are run by private groups, meaning that differences in data gathering can easily occur. To avoid this, Utah Foundation relied on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the USOE as much as possible. Advanced Placement (AP) test data is an exception to this, and was obtained from the College Board (which provides the same data to NCES and USOE).

The most common measures of a school's success are generally various standardized achievement tests, including the SAT 9, the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT), the American College Test (ACT)³, Advanced Placement (AP) subject tests, etc. However, it has been well documented that socio-economic factors can greatly influence these traditional achievement measures.⁴ For example it has been found that poor students and minorities often struggle on standardized tests. Since private schools have a wealthier, more homogenous demographic makeup than public schools, their higher test scores may be attributable to a number of factors other than quality of education. For example, higher test scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) may indicate educational achievement, mirror social conditions, or be the result of a combination of the two. A comparison of public and private education that focused solely on scores achieved by students on various exams would be a skewed analysis of actual educational quality.

Test Scores

With this in mind, the motivation to send one's child to a private school over a public school is often rooted in the knowledge that many private school students achieve higher scores on these exams than public school students. Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in April 1983,⁵ the performance of the American public school system has been in question. While policymakers did respond to that report by passing unprecedented reforms in public school (including longer school days, more rigorous standards for high school students, and increased assessment of academic skills) it is still evident that many individuals believe the system is lacking. Nationally, 52% of Americans with private schools in their communities believe that private schools provide a better education than public schools.⁶

Utah Foundation looked at the SAT, AP subject tests, NAEP and Third International Math and Science Study Revisited (TIMSS-R) results and found that private school students did in fact have higher scores in almost all areas. Looking specifically at Utah public and private school students' performance on these tests showed that with the exception of the SAT, private schools outperformed public schools on all of these exams.⁷

A follow-up to the 1995 TIMSS was administered in 1999. This test evaluated 4th, 8th, and 12th grade students from all over the world to determine their skill level in math and science. Figure 2 shows the scores for students in private schools, all schools, and public schools in the United States compared to students from other countries. While the scores for children in public school in the United States are not significantly different than the scores of all children in the United States, the scores of students educated in private schools are consistently, and significantly, higher than those of students educated in public schools. In fact, in mathematics, while the United States ranked 26th overall, and public schools ranked 29th, private

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Figure 2**Results of TIMMS-R for Public, Private and All U.S. Schools Compared to Other Nations**

Science			Mathematics		
Nation	Average	Rank	Nation	Average	Rank
Chinese Taipei	569	1	Singapore	604	1
Singapore	568	2	Korea, Republic of	587	2
Hungary	552	3	Chinese Taipei	585	3
Japan	550	4	Hong Kong SAR	582	4
Korea, Republic of	549	5	Japan	579	5
U.S. Private Schools	548	6	Belgium-Flemish	558	6
Netherlands	545	7	Netherlands	540	7
Australia	540	8	Slovak Republic	534	8
Czech Republic	539	9	Switzerland*	534	8
Austria*	539	9	Hungary	532	10
England	538	11	Canada	531	11
Finland	535	12	Slovenia	530	12
Slovak	535	12	France*	530	12
Belgium-Flemish	535	12	Austria*	529	14
Slovenia	533	15	U.S. Private Schools	526	15
Canada	533	15	Russian Federation	526	15
Hong Kong SAR	530	17	Australia	525	17
Russian Federation	529	18	Finland	520	18
Sweden*	523	19	Czech Republic	520	18
Ireland*	518	20	Malaysia	519	20
Bulgaria	518	20	Ireland*	519	20
Germany*	518	20	Belgium-French*	518	22
United States	515	23	Sweden*	513	23
Norway*	514	24	Bulgaria	511	24
U.S. Public Schools	510	25	Latvia-LSS**	505	25
New Zealand	510	25	Germany*	502	26
Switzerland*	509	27	United States	502	26
Spain*	504	28	Norway*	499	28
Latvia-LSS**	503	29	U.S. Public Schools	498	29
Scotland*	501	30	Denmark*	497	30
Italy	493	31	England	496	31
Malaysia	492	32	Scotland*	493	32
Lithuania*	488	33	New Zealand	491	33
France*	488	33	Iceland*	484	34
Greece*	486	35	Spain*	483	35
Iceland*	484	36	Lithuania	482	36
Thailand	482	37	Italy	479	37
Portugal*	473	38	Greece*	479	37
Romania*	472	39	Cyprus	476	39
Denmark*	472	39	Romania	472	40
Israel	468	41	Moldova	469	41
Belgium-French*	466	42	Thailand	467	42
Cyprus	460	43	Israel	466	43
Moldova	459	44	Portugal*	451	44
Macedonia, Republic of	458	45	Tunisia	448	45
Jordan	450	46	Macedonia, Republic of	447	46
Iran, Islamic Republic of	448	47	Turkey	429	47
Indonesia	435	48	Jordan	428	48
Turkey	433	49	Iran, Islamic Republic of	422	49
Tunisia	430	50	Indonesia	403	50
Chile	420	51	Chile	392	51
Kuwait*	415	52	Colombia*	360	52
Colombia*	393	53	Kuwait*	355	53
Philippines	345	54	Philippines	345	54
Morocco	323	55	Morocco	337	55
South Africa*	243	56	South Africa	275	56

*Denotes score from 1995, there was no 1999 score (these years were found to be comparable).

**Only Latvian Speaking students were scored.

Source: NCES.

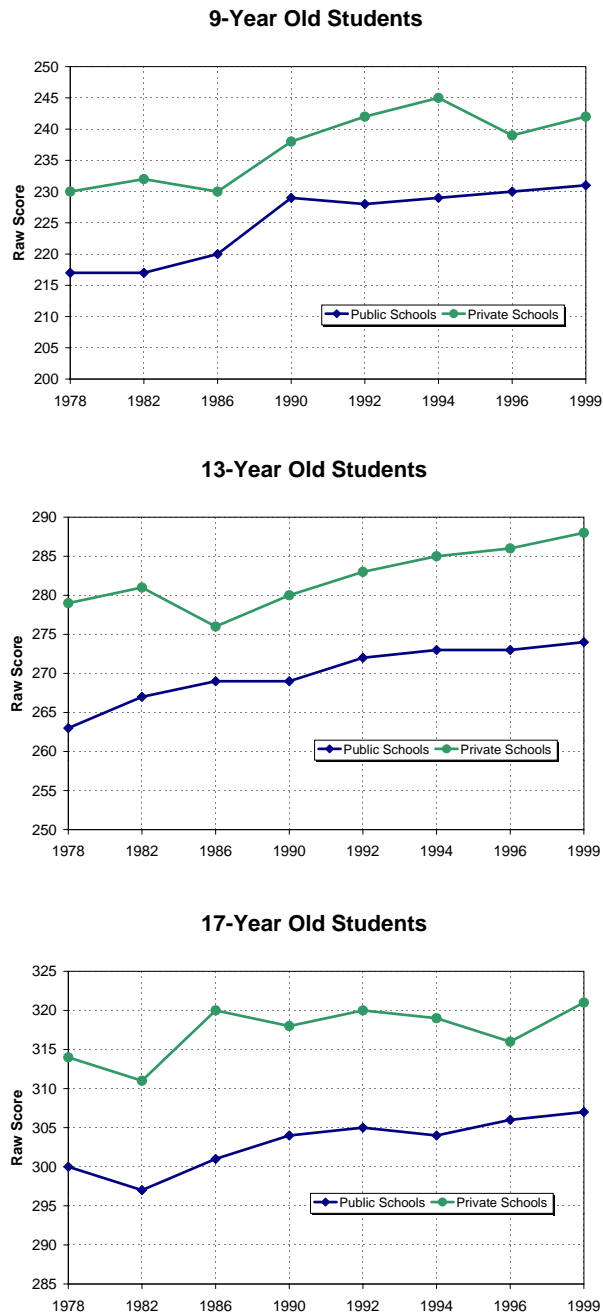
schools ranked 15th. In science, the difference was even more startling, with all schools and public schools ranking 23rd and 25th, respectively, and private schools ranking an impressive 6th.

NAEP results in mathematics and science show the same gap and indicate that this gap is persistent. NAEP mathematics data can be obtained as far back as 1978. This allows one to view over twenty years of data and the trends in achievement between public and private schools. Figure 3 shows that, while raw scores on NAEP are increasing for all students, private schools have maintained a competitive advantage over public schools in mathematics instruction. Additionally, while there are years where public schools begin to decrease the gap between their scores and those of private schools, particularly at the nine-year old level, as children get older the gap widens and is more difficult to bridge. At the age of seventeen the closest public school students' scores came to those of private school students was ten points in 1998. A similar difference in performance can be observed on the NAEP science examination, although in science it appears that the gap between public and private achievement decreases as students grow older (see Figure 3).

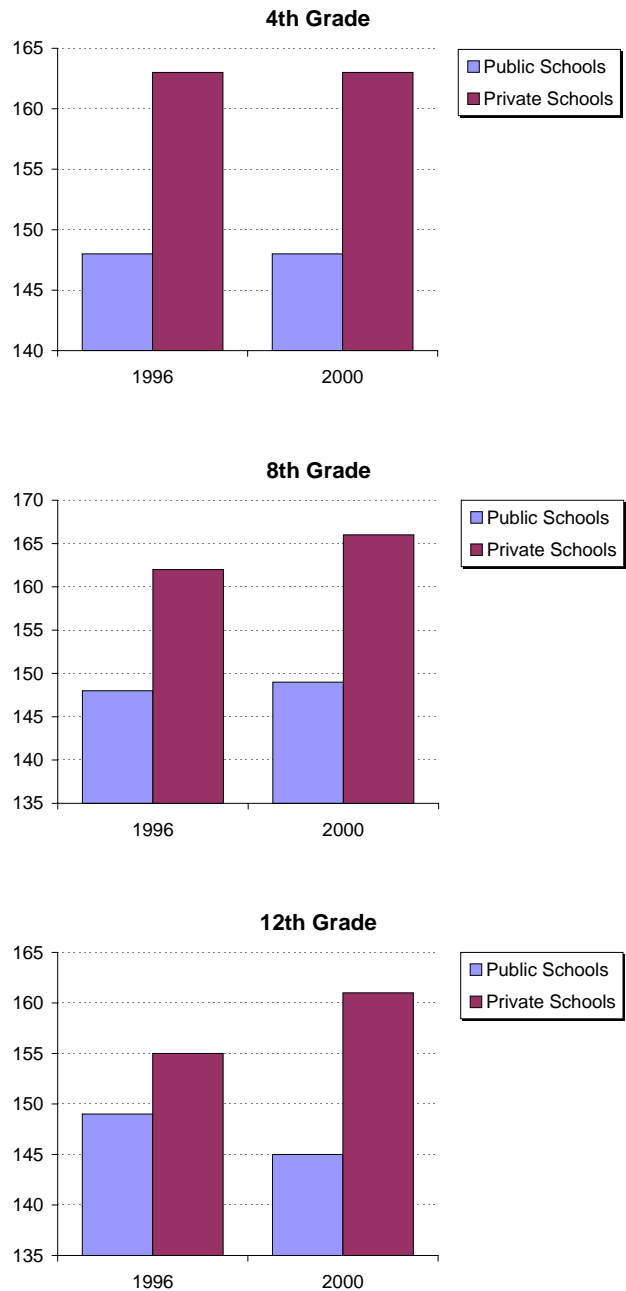
Standardized tests with data available at the state level offer insight into the progress of students in public and private schools. These tests are administered uniformly, and data is gathered by independent agencies, which then report back to the states and the federal government. In Utah, the two most common forms of tests taken by high school seniors are the ACT and AP examinations; however, some students also take the SAT. The major problem with data from these exams is that they do not represent the entire student population. Students who participate in these exams are college-bound seniors and generally represent the stronger achievers in a given school. This is exacerbated when looking at AP participation and scores, because the purpose of the AP program is to offer

Figure 3

NAEP Math Scores 1978-1999 by Age



NAEP Science Scores 1996 & 2000 by Age



Source: "The Nation's Report Card," NCES.

qualified juniors and seniors the opportunity to receive college credit while they are in high school. Therefore, it should not be viewed in the same context as standardized tests, such as TIMSS, NAEP or the SAT 9.

Generally, a higher percentage of private school students than public school students participate in the AP program. Figure 4 shows the percentage of students who are enrolled in public and private school in Utah compared with the number of AP tests taken by private and public students. While only about 2.8% of students are enrolled in private schools

Figure 4**Percentage of 10th, 11th, and 12th Graders* Taking the Most Popular AP Tests**

Subject Tested	Public Schools	Private Schools
Biology	1.07%	4.25%
Calculus AB	1.35%	4.85%
English Language & Composition	1.27%	4.71%
English Literature & Composition	1.92%	6.24%
European History	2.76%	7.58%

*All 10th, 11th, and 12th graders were used as the base population for calculating percentages. This makes the data comparable, even though students take different tests at different grade levels.

Source: The College Board, with calculations by Utah Foundation.

in Utah, between 6% and 10% of tests, varying by subject, were taken by private school students.

Figure 5 shows the scores achieved by public and private school students on the top five most popular AP subject tests (English literature and composition, English language and composition, calculus AB, biology and European history). While private school students enjoy an advantage in all of the more popular tests except European history, the margins between public school performance and private school performance are smaller in Utah than they are nationally. Additionally, both public and private school students in scored higher than the national public school average in four out of these five tests.

Utah's private school students did, however, have a higher average score on all of the tests, except European history, than their public school counterparts. For example, in the most popular test, English Literature and Composition, private school students averaged 3.05, while public schools scored an average of 2.98. Once again, however, these gaps were smaller than the national gaps on the same tests, indicating that there is less of a performance difference between Utah's public and private schools. Additionally, both Utah public and private schools attained higher scores than the national public average, although national private scores were higher than Utah's private school scores in three of the five tests (see Figure 5).

In addition to their high performance on quantitative measures of achievement, polls have shown that private schools are favored for qualitative reasons as well. In addition to the aforementioned "On Thin Ice" survey, which measured the attitudes of adults and parents towards private schools and school choice, the Horatio Alger Association publishes a survey yearly entitled "The State of Our Nation's Youth." It measures the attitudes that students in the United States have about various aspects associated with education. In 2000, this survey released data on students' attitudes towards private and public education, including students' perceptions about where a better education can be achieved. Figure 6 reveals the results of the survey in categories where public and private

data were reported separately. When asked the straightforward question: "Where can you receive a better education, in public schools or private schools?" most students, 57%, felt that they could receive a good education in either school system. However, as the remainder of the survey data shows, when asked more detailed questions about the quality of education and environment in their schools, private school students were considerably more likely to respond favorably.

Costs and Demographics

Nationally, approximately 10% of all students are enrolled in private schools.⁸ In Utah, however, only 2.8% of students attend private school. Utah ranks 50th in the nation based on the percentage of students in private school. Additionally, there is no indication that this will change over the next ten years. Figure 7 shows Utah State Office of Education projections for private school enrollment in Utah, indicating that private school enrollment is not expected to increase. There are two possible reasons for

Figure 5**Public and Private Student's Scores Taking Advanced Placement Examinations: Most Popular Examinations**

Utah	Public Schools	Private Schools
Biology	3.04	3.31
Calculus AB	3.23	3.36
English Language & Composition	2.94	3.09
English Literature & Composition	2.98	3.05
European History	2.81	2.73

U.S.	Public Schools	Private Schools
Biology	2.89	3.22
Calculus AB	2.97	3.10
English Language & Composition	2.78	3.22
English Literature & Composition	2.90	3.24
European History	2.87	3.19

Source: The College Board, with calculations by Utah Foundation.

this: the cost of private schooling and the advent of charter schools, which offer parents educational choice within the public school system.

The cost of private school is as widely varied as the missions of private schools. Figure 8 shows annual private secondary school tuition for schools in Utah. Tuitions in Utah range from \$3,295 at Layton Christian School to \$16,300 at Wasatch Academy. Figure 9 shows the national trends for private school tuition at different levels of household income.

Nationally, the cost of private education for all students followed a fairly uniform pattern prior to 1994. During that time, the percentage increase in the cost of private education for students in the 75th percentile of median household incomes kept pace with CPI, while students in the 50th and 25th percentiles of income saw rates rise slower than the CPI. In fact, between 1991 and 1994 the cost of private school tuition showed a decrease when adjusted for inflation. After 1994, however, prices rose faster than the CPI for all students. Students at the 75th percentile saw their tuition at secondary schools rise over 100% in the last three years measured, and over 265% since 1979. Students in the 50th percentile of incomes had their cost of tuition rise more than 100%, while students in the 25th percentile saw increases at 82%. Figure 9 compares median household income and tuition rates. While increases in tuition have been smaller for students in lower income brackets, smaller base incomes, and smaller raises in those base incomes has meant that they are paying relatively more for education than they were before. For example, in the lower income brackets income rose slightly less than \$1,000. Tuition, on the other hand, has risen \$1,200.

Additionally, a high median household income does not necessarily mean that a state will have high private school enrollment. Comparing median household income in 1997 with private school enrollment from 1997⁹ shows that, of the top ten states by income, only one (New Jersey) also ranks in the top ten in terms of private school enrollment. Furthermore, two of these states (Utah and Alaska) rank in the bottom ten in private school

Figure 6

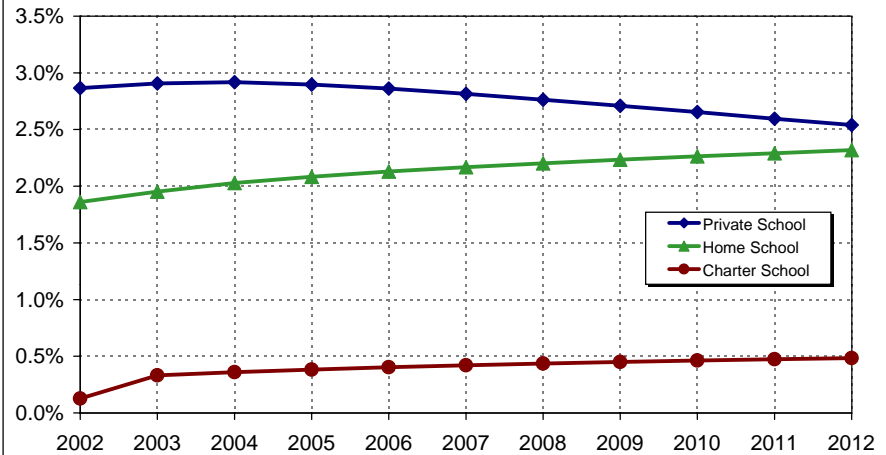
Excerpts from “The State of Our Nation’s Youth” Survey, 2000

	Public School Students	Private School Students
Are your courses:		
Preparing you for the future?	63%	87%
Challenging?	55%	81%
Interesting?	49%	61%
Exciting?	37%	46%
Giving more Opportunity for Open Discussion?	63%	78%
Does [other] student behavior interfere with your performance?		
Yes	40%	26%
Does your school take steps to make school safe?		
Yes	41%	57%
Public v. Private: Where do you think you get a better education?		
	All Students	
In public school	15%	
In private school	28%	
In either kind of school	57%	

Source: Horatio Alger Association, “The State of Our Nation’s Youth,” 2000.

Figure 7

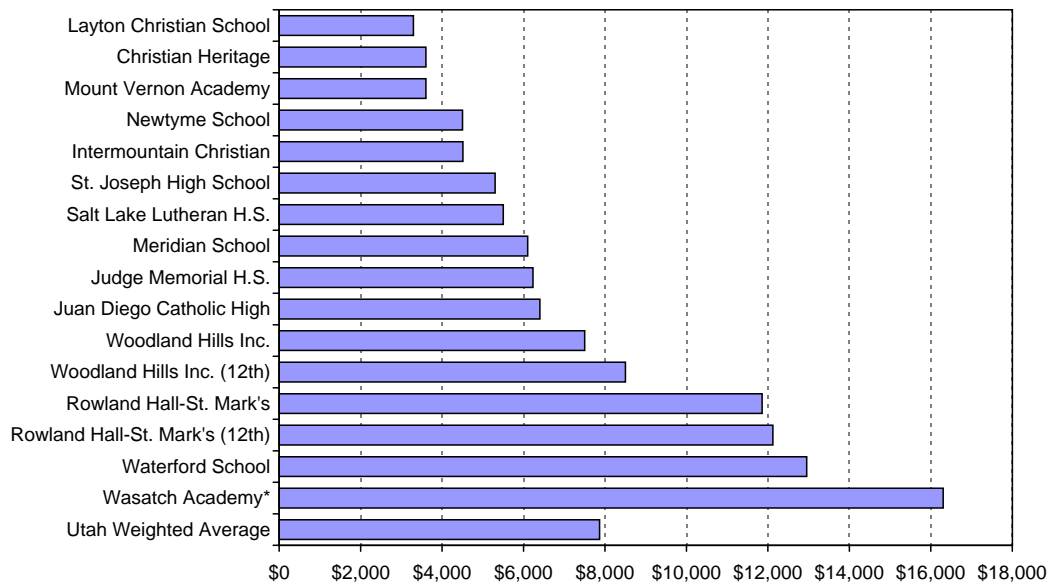
Private, Charter and Home School Enrollment
Percentage of Total School Enrollment, Projected to 2012



Source: Utah State Office of Education projections.

Figure 8

Private Secondary Tuition in Utah 2002-2003



Data obtained from private schools in Utah and compiled by Utah Foundation.

enrollment. In Utah, it is possible that large family sizes act as an impediment to private school enrollment for many families, because of the difficulty in paying multiple tuitions.

Many studies have shown that educational attainment is correlated with family income, regardless of the type of school a parent chooses for their child. In Utah, this is evident in an analysis of the SAT 9 scores.¹⁰ In fact, the Utah State Office of Education

Figure 9

US Tuition and Median Household Income Growth Since 1979 By Income Group

Annual Cost of Secondary Tuition in 1998 Constant Dollars			
Year	Income Group		
	25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile
1979	\$1,525	\$1,983	\$2,569
1991	\$2,175	\$3,198	\$4,699
1994	\$1,938	\$3,140	\$4,307
1997	\$2,778	\$4,166	\$9,374
% Change	82%	110%	265%

Median Household Income at Selected Percentiles in 1998 Constant Dollars			
Year	Income Group		
	20th Percentile	50th Percentile	80th Percentile
1979	\$14,598	\$34,286	\$60,605
1991	\$14,686	\$35,148	\$66,221
1994	\$14,556	\$34,980	\$68,132
1997	\$15,522	\$37,296	\$72,062
% Change	6%	9%	19%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Median Household Income data was not available for the same percentile groups as tuition costs, but the figures chosen provide a general concept of income growth for similar households.

sets an expected score range for students based on the percentage of students receiving free or reduced priced lunch in a district or a school. Since private schools historically have a higher percentage of upper- and middle-income families than public schools, it has been argued that their high levels of achievement are a reflection of their demographics, rather than better instruction.

Another factor that is highly correlated with achievement as measured by test scores is race. Utah's private schools are 10.27% minority, compared with the 15.15% minority population in Utah's public schools. However, this number is artificially high, because it includes schools run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in San Juan County. The population of these schools is 100% minority, because they service the American Indian populations in Southeastern Utah. When these schools are excluded from the calculation, only 8.59% of Utah's private school enrollment is minority. Furthermore these differences are most obvious in Utah's school districts that have a high minority population. After San Juan, the Salt Lake and Ogden school districts rank 2nd and 3rd respectively, in terms of minority enrollment. As one can see in Figure 10, they are also the two districts with the largest discrepancy between public school and private school minority enrollment.

Differences in private and public school performance can not be attributed to higher pay for private school teachers. In 1993-94 (the last years with data available for both public and private schools) the average salary for a full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher at a public school was \$37,373, and the average salary for a similar teacher at a private school was \$31,772 (both figures in actual dollars). However, many teachers at private schools, particularly Catholic schools, are clergy and make a significantly lower salary per year.

Private School Distribution

In addition to the homogenous makeup of private schools relative to race and income, a third factor that often influences test scores is the distribution of private schools between urban, suburban and rural areas. Utah's private schools are almost exclusively an urban and suburban endeavor, and the public school students from these areas typically score better than their rural counterparts. At the secondary level there is one private school, enrolling less than 10 students, which is located outside of the

Wasatch Front.¹¹ Of the 54 private schools in Utah, only seven are in rural areas. Two of these schools are boarding schools run by the BIA, one is a pre-school, and a fourth is an elite boarding school, which serves residents of Utah and residents of other states. Therefore, only three private schools exist in rural areas in Utah to serve the educational needs of the general public. They are located in Park City, San Juan, and Grand School Districts. They serve 165 total students. This is particularly important, because the areas in Utah that have traditionally struggled in terms of test scores and the percentage of students who are low-income are Utah's rural school districts. Figure 11 highlights this; it shows a map of Utah's school districts and the location of private schools within those districts.

Private schools are not only concentrated in Utah's urban and suburban areas, but also along the Wasatch Front's wealthy areas. This could help explain some of the discrepancy between private schools' demographic makeup and the composition of the general school-age population, because private schools tend to be located wealthier areas. Students outside those areas who would likely be from less wealthy families, would also be required to pay extra costs for transportation. This makes private schooling even more expensive for those who are less able to pay for it, further limiting a diverse demographic in private schools.

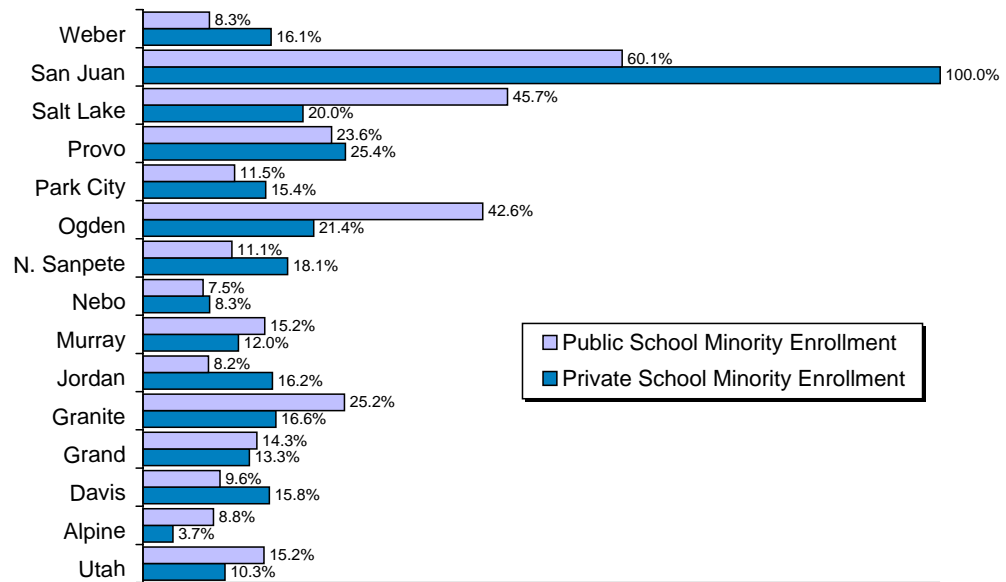
Historical and Social Factors

Private school enrollments have changed very little over the past 10 years. Nationally, they have grown with the rate of the population. A similar trend is evident in Utah; however, net enrollments are projected to decrease in Utah over the next ten years (see Figure 7) as charter schools and home schooling increase in popularity. There are two historical reasons Utahns seem to prefer public schools.

The first reason is typical of the West. In the Eastern United States, the private school system preceded the public school system. As such, it has

Figure 10

Private and Public School Minority Enrollment by District



Source: USOE, with calculations by Utah Foundation.

Of the 54 private schools in Utah, only seven are in rural areas.

Figure 11

**Private School Geographical Distribution in Utah
Compared to Public School Districts**



Sources: Utah Foundation, Utah State Office of Education. Each black dot represents one private school.

stronger roots and has historically educated more students than its Western counterparts. While these numbers are declining, private school enrollment rates in New England and the Southern United States are the highest in the nation. The education system in the West evolved in the exact opposite way. The first schools in the West were part of the public school system. Private schools developed as emigration from the Eastern United States to the Western United States increased. Referring to Figure 12, it is apparent that many of the states with high median household incomes, which are also located in the West, show the biggest disconnect between income and private school enrollment, while those differences are much smaller in New England and the opposite of what one would expect in the South.

A second reason that Utah is consistently 50th or 51st in terms of private school enrollment as a percentage of school age population is rooted in religion. As Figure 1 indicates, over 80% of private schools nationwide are sponsored by churches. The impetus for their existence can be found in the separation clause in the Bill of

Rights. Catholics, Protestants, and others recognized that they would not be able to teach religion to children in public schools, so they set up private schools to ensure that children would be educated spiritually as well as intellectually. In Utah, however, this was not the case.

Most Utahns are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS Church). The LDS Church has traditionally urged its members to be involved in and support civic organizations, including local governments such as school districts. Also, children involved in the LDS Church receive significant religious instruction through church auxiliaries and family activities, which may lessen the desire of families for additional religious instruction at school.

Another factor that probably reduces the LDS population's desire for church-sponsored schools is that high school students in Utah are allowed "release-time" hours from public school to pursue religious education off school grounds. Although some may question this practice based on the separation of church and state, it has been found constitutional under several Supreme Court cases, most notable *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952). In *Zorach*, the court held that:

"The government must be neutral when it comes to competition between

sects. It may not thrust any sect on any person. It may not make a religious observance compulsory. It may not coerce anyone to attend church, to observe a religious holiday, or to take religious instruction. But it can close its doors or suspend its operations as to those who want to repair to their religious sanctuary for worship or instruction. No more than that is undertaken here.”¹²

The combination of these religious factors, in tandem with less-evolved private school systems in the West, have created an environment that has not been conducive to significant growth in private education in Utah.

Conclusion

This report has shown that, while there are advantages (as measured by achievement tests, public opinion, and students’ perceptions), to a private elementary or secondary education in Utah, the demand for that education is low in Utah. Additionally, the opportunity for that education is hindered more by geographic barriers than by economic factors (although income level is certainly a barrier, particularly in lower income brackets). This is particularly true when looking at various tuition rates in the state, which are reasonable, and often times below the state average per pupil expenditure of \$4,475 per public school student.

Traditional concerns about skimming, and the adverse effects it could have on the public education system, are not readily apparent in Utah. Utah’s public school students are generally at or above the national average on most achievement measures, and while they are out-performed by their private school peers, the difference is not as large as it is nationally.

Of greater concern in Utah is the lack of private school opportunity for students who do not live along the Wasatch Front. However, it is not clear whether this lack of opportunity is due to a small private school infrastructure, or a lack of demand for that infrastructure. This is an issue that should be evaluated in greater depth, particularly in light of the growing prominence of the issue of school choice.

Endnotes

- ¹ See Utah Foundation Research Reports 628 and 645.
- ² See <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/RegPrivSchl/utah.html> for an overview of the regulation of private schools in Utah. See also, the Utah State Code Title 53A-11-802.
- ³ The ACT is the most common college entrance examination taken by Utah’s juniors and seniors. Unfortunately, private school ACT results could not be obtained from the American College Testing Association due to confidentiality concerns.
- ⁴ See Utah Foundation Research Report 649.

Figure 12

Median Household Income & Private School Enrollment by State

Median Household Income & Private Enrollment by State				
State	Median Household Income	Rank	% Enrolled in Private School	Rank
Alabama	\$31,939	41	8.7%	27
Alaska	47,994	2	3.9%	47
Arizona	32,740	39	4.8%	43
Arkansas	26,162	51	5.6%	41
California	39,694	15	9.8%	22
Colorado	43,233	6	6.0%	39
Connecticut	43,985	5	12.6%	16
Delaware	43,033	7	20.8%	2
D.C.	31,860	42	23.4%	1
Florida	32,455	40	8.8%	26
Georgia	36,663	22	6.8%	36
Hawaii	40,934	14	20.3%	3
Idaho	33,404	36	2.9%	48
Illinois	41,283	12	15.0%	9
Indiana	38,889	17	9.7%	23
Iowa	33,783	33	10.6%	21
Kansas	36,471	24	7.8%	30
Kentucky	33,452	34	10.7%	20
Louisiana	33,260	37	20.2%	4
Maine	32,772	38	7.1%	33
Maryland	46,685	3	13.7%	12
Massachusetts	42,023	11	12.8%	15
Michigan	38,742	19	11.2%	17
Minnesota	42,564	10	10.8%	19
Mississippi	28,499	49	10.8%	18
Missouri	36,553	23	13.3%	14
Montana	29,212	48	6.6%	38
Nebraska	34,692	31	14.4%	10
Nevada	38,854	18	2.7%	49
New Hampshire	40,998	13	8.8%	25
New Jersey	48,021	1	16.1%	8
New Mexico	30,086	46	7.6%	31
New York	35,798	27	17.4%	6
North Carolina	35,840	26	4.8%	42
North Dakota	31,661	43	7.1%	34
Ohio	36,134	25	13.5%	13
Oklahoma	31,351	44	4.3%	46
Oregon	37,247	21	5.8%	40
Pennsylvania	37,517	20	20.1%	5
Rhode Island	34,797	30	14.2%	11
South Carolina	34,262	32	7.0%	35
South Dakota	29,694	47	8.6%	28
Tennessee	30,636	45	9.2%	24
Texas	35,075	28	4.4%	45
Utah	42,775	9	2.0%	51
Vermont	35,053	29	8.4%	29
Virginia	42,957	8	7.3%	32
Washington	44,562	4	6.7%	37
West Virginia	27,488	50	4.7%	44
Wisconsin	39,595	16	17.0%	7
Wyoming	33,423	35	2.2%	50

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau and NCES. Both are 1997 numbers, as that was the last year both numbers were available for all states.

The Utah ratio of private school students differs from the in-state calculation used in other parts of this report, but these figures are useful for comparing the states from a consistent data source.

⁵ Available online at: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>.

⁶ Public Agenda survey released in “On Thin Ice: How Advocates and Opponents Could Misread the Public’s Views on Vouchers and Charter Schools,” 1999. An abridged version of the findings is available online at <http://www.publicagenda.org/specials/vouchers/voucherhome.htm> .

⁷ The exception is the Scholastic Achievement Test; however, those results are not considered representative, because the sample size for private and public school students taking the SAT in Utah is less than 2.7% of the 11th and 12th grade student population.

⁸ The Private School Universe Survey 1999-2000; available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001330.pdf>.

⁹ 1997 is the last year data on private school enrollment by state was available for all fifty states and the District of Columbia.

¹⁰ See Utah Foundation Research Report 649. Additionally see Reports 641 and 631.

¹¹ This analysis excludes schools whose missions state that they are residential treatment centers. The limited amount of time students spend at those schools, in addition to the substantial affect they would have on statistics (due to Utah’s small private school population) led to their exclusion.

¹² See *Zorach v. Clauson*; available online: <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?navby=case&court=us&vol=343&invol=306#312> .

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