



P O L I C Y R E P O R T

Building a Case for School Choice: Initial Results from a Survey of North Carolina's Private Schools

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JUNE 2009

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2	Executive Summary
3	Introduction
4	Private Schools in North Carolina
4	Private School Questionnaire Procedure
5	Survey Results
6	Private School Class Size, Personnel, and Financial Averages
7	Student and Financial Information
9	Teacher Qualifications
10	Support for School Choice
13	Conclusion
14	Survey
19	Notes
20	About the Author

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Executive Summary

Better information about North Carolina's private schools is the first step toward persuading legislators and policymakers to increase educational options for North Carolina families. To this end, the John Locke Foundation conducted a survey of North Carolina's private schools to gather and analyze data on private schools generally not available to the public. This policy report provides a descriptive overview of questionnaire results of North Carolina's private schools, focusing on private school academics, students, personnel, finance, and attitudes toward school choice.

Academic environment and students. Among questionnaire respondents, the average class size was 14 students, and none of the private schools reported a class size of more than 30 students. The average private school enrollment was 198 students, ranging from four to 942 students per school. Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of private schools reported that they served students with learning differences and disabilities, and nearly 50 percent of respondents said that they had the ability to enroll more students with learning differences and/or disabilities.

Personnel. The average private school surveyed had an on-site, full-time staff of 28. On average, eight staff members per school had primarily non-teaching assignments, while twenty staff members were teachers. The average annual salary of a full-time private school teacher was \$26,137.

Finance. According to tuition data provided by respondents, a \$5,000 scholarship would cover the cost of the average private elementary day school tuition (\$4,889 average). A \$5,500 scholarship would cover the cost of the average private middle day school tuition (\$5,410 average), and a \$6,000 scholarship would cover the cost of the average private high school tuition in North Carolina (\$5,916 average). The average cost incurred by families for fees and other expenses at North Carolina private day schools was \$403. Recognizing that some

families have difficulty paying for fees and tuition, over two-thirds of all private schools surveyed offered financial aid.

Attitudes toward school choice. In general, private schools support increasing school choice options for families. Over 86 percent of respondents would support a voucher program that would pay the full tuition amount. None of the private schools surveyed would oppose a tax credit program that would cover part or the entire tuition amount. Nearly 85 percent of private schools would support a program that would provide a voucher to the families of targeted categories of students.

However, the prospect of government interference worried many of the private schools surveyed. Approximately 70 percent of private schools said that they would not enroll children whose families received public funds if it meant that the state would increase oversight of their school. More than half of the respondents would not enroll children whose families received public funds if the state compelled the school to administer state achievement tests. Schools strongly opposed the idea of abandoning admissions standards in exchange for enrolling children of families who receive a voucher or tax credit. Over 70 percent opposed any voucher or tax credit plan that would force schools to abandon religious activities in exchange for public funds.

Private religious schools were much less willing to accept government regulation or oversight than private schools with no religious affiliation. Over 75 percent of religious schools would oppose increased government regulation in exchange for public funds. Over 56 percent of independent schools would oppose additional government regulation in exchange for a voucher or tax credit. While 38 percent of independent schools would support further regulatory control by the state, only ten percent of religious schools would agree to further government oversight.

Introduction

North Carolina families are beginning to recognize that finding alternatives to public schools may be the only way to guarantee that children receive a quality education. The growing disenchantment with the state's public schools has forced financially able parents to pay twice for their child's education – taxes to pay for public schools and tuition to pay for the private schools that their children attend. On the other hand, families that cannot afford to send their children to private schools are demanding that the state of North Carolina provide them a scholarship or tax credit that covers part or all of the cost of a private school education. Regrettably, low and middle-income families are still fighting for school choice with little success. If North Carolina's families are going to build a strong argument for school choice, they will need to build both a qualitative and a quantitative case for giving parents the choice to send their children to a private school.

Unfortunately, there is little data available to show that the state of North Carolina can reasonably cover the cost of a private school education

by awarding scholarships and/or tax credits. After all, we do not have data that tracks the tuition and fees at the state's private schools. Furthermore, while we may intuitively know that the state's private schools have a better educational environment, we need to be able to quantify that superiority by obtaining test scores on standardized tests and other outcome-based measures of the educational environment. Information related to the qualifications of the faculty, the student-teacher ratio, and the rigor of the curriculum are also necessary data points that are not available. The North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education, an office within the state's Department of Administration, maintains data for all private and home schools in the state. Yet, the data does not provide the detail necessary to assess the viability of including the state's private schools in a scholarship, voucher, or tax credit program. This study is an effort to fill in some of the blanks. It answers basic questions about North Carolina private school academics, students, personnel, finances, and attitudes toward school choice.

Private Schools in North Carolina

Between the 1950s and 1970s, many affluent whites enrolled their children in private schools to avoid racial integration of public schools, and much of the academic literature on North Carolina's private schools centers on these events.¹ While "white flight" to private schools was an unfortunate legacy of North Carolina's segregated public school system, it is not the basis for the growth in private schools that emerged in subsequent decades and those that operate today.

During the 2007–2008 school year, North Carolina had 683 private schools that enrolled 97,656 students.² Even during the recent recession, the state's private schools *added* nearly 1,000 students during the 2008–2009 school year.³ Indeed, despite fluctuations in the economy, the growth of private schools has been steady. Over the last ten years, enrollment in private schools has increased 16 percent, while the number of private schools has increased nine percent. Today, private school students make up approximately six percent of all students in North Carolina enrolled in K-12 education.⁴ As the number of private school families increases, so does the demand for educational options.

Most of the state's private schools are concentrated in urban areas. During the 2007–2008 school year, Mecklenburg County had 81 private schools enrolling approximately 19,500 students. The next largest concentration of private schools was in Wake County, which had 61 schools and nearly 14,700 students enrolled. Guilford (7,122 students in 30 schools), Forsyth (5,441 students in 28 schools), and Durham (4,151 students in 28 schools) round out the top five counties with the largest private school enrollment.⁵

While urban areas dominate, most counties in North Carolina have at least one private school. In fact, during the 2007–2008 school year, only 13 of North Carolina's 100 counties did not have a private school.⁶ Most of these counties have small student populations and are located in eastern North Carolina (Camden, Gates, Jones, Martin, Pamlico, Pender, Perquimans, Tyrrell, and Washington counties) or northwestern North Carolina (Alexander, Allegheny, and Ashe counties). Clay County in southwestern North Carolina also does not have a private school, but the adjoining counties of Cherokee and Macon do.

Private School Questionnaire Procedure

The John Locke Foundation adapted portions of a Fall 2006 Cato Institute private school questionnaire.⁷ The original Cato Institute questionnaire was nine pages long and divided into ten sections. We edited the questionnaire into a five-page survey with five sections – 1) general information; 2) students; 3) personnel; 4) tuition, general finance, and financial aid; and 5) school choice programs (See Appendix A). Like the Cato Institute survey, the John Locke Foundation questionnaire utilized a variety of question types, including multiple choice, matrix of choices, rating scale, and open-ended questions.

The John Locke Foundation conducted an initial mailing of the questionnaire in February 2009 to the 683 private schools listed in the 2007–2008 Conventional Private School Directory published by the North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education.⁸ Regrettably, 44 schools from the 2007–2008 school year had closed, so the total number of

possible respondents dropped to 639. In April 2009, we sent a follow-up questionnaire to all private schools that did not respond to the initial mailing. The timing of the second questionnaire mailing was intentional. Private schools received their questionnaires shortly before they dismissed students for spring or holiday vacations, allowing school administrators ample time to complete the questionnaire.

The cover letter requested that school officials complete the mailed questionnaire and mail it to the John Locke Foundation in an enclosed envelope or complete an online questionnaire hosted by www.SurveyMonkey.com. Links to the online questionnaire were posted on the front page of the John Locke Foundation Web site. The cover letter and questionnaire informed recipients that we would not release information about individual schools to the public and would keep all information strictly confidential.

We received 117 valid responses (123 total responses) to the questionnaire out of 639 schools for a response rate of 18.3 percent. We received four questionnaires weeks after the cutoff date and thus, responses from these surveys could not be included in this report.⁹ Although it is futile to speculate about nonparticipation in the questionnaire, the length and detail required to complete the questionnaire likely discouraged some school administrators from participating. These factors, as well as privacy concerns, may have also con-

tributed to the questions skipped by participating schools.

This policy report provides a descriptive overview of questionnaire results of North Carolina's private schools, focusing on key questions about private school finance, personnel, and attitudes toward school choice. It does not utilize all data obtained in the questionnaire, nor does it subject the data to any extensive statistical analysis. The John Locke Foundation will analyze the questionnaire data in subsequent policy publications.

Survey Results

For schools responding to the questionnaire, dates of school establishment ranged from 1878 to 2008. Only fifteen (13 percent) of the schools answering the questionnaire were established before 1960. Twenty-four (21 percent) of the schools had been established between 2000 and 2008. Nearly 89 percent of the schools served elementary school students, and 86 percent of the schools served middle school students. Approximately 64 percent of respondents served pre-kindergarten students, while the same percentage served high school students. Only 15 percent of the schools were part of a larger administrative unit, such as a diocese or

religious conference, although 66 percent of schools were members of a religious or educational association. More than half (57 percent) of the participating schools were accredited through an accreditation agency or agencies.

The schools that participated in the questionnaire compared well to state and national averages (See Table 1). The percentage distribution of religious to independent schools was nearly identical to the state average. Approximately 72 percent of the schools identified themselves as religious, while 28 percent of the schools described themselves as secular.¹² Of the 63 schools that had a religious focus,

Table 1. Comparison of Private Schools: National, State, and Questionnaire School Enrollment, Staff, and Type¹⁰

	Enrollment	Staff	Religious Schools	Independent Schools
National Average	150	14 ¹¹	68%	32%
State Average	148	20	71%	29%
Survey Average	198	28	72%	28%
State Low	1	1	N/A	N/A
Survey Low	4	1	N/A	N/A
State High	1,637	224	N/A	N/A
Survey High	942	102	N/A	N/A

22 (35 percent) identified themselves as Christian or non-denominational; 15 (24 percent) identified themselves as Baptist; and eight were Catholic schools (13 percent). The questionnaire respondents represented a wide array of faiths, denominations, and sects, including Assemblies of God, Episcopal, Islam, Lutheran (Missouri Synod), Pentecostal, Presbyterian Church in America, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Wesleyan.

Among respondents, enrollment and staff count per school were slightly above state and national averages. For the state, enrollment ranged from one student to 1,637 students per school. Enrollment ranged from four students to 942 students per school

(See Table 1).¹³ According to state data, only 13 private schools had student enrollments above 942 students. Moreover, 47 percent of questionnaire respondents had an enrollment of 100 students or fewer, while 62 percent of private schools in North Carolina had an enrollment of 100 students or fewer.

For the state, the staff count ranged from one staff member to 224 staff members. Among questionnaire respondents, the staff count ranged from one staff member to 102 staff members (See Table 1). Similar to the enrollment count, state data indicated that only 12 private schools had over 102 staff members.¹⁴

Private School Class Size, Personnel, and Financial Averages

The average class size for surveyed private schools was 14 students (See Table 2). The average class size for public elementary and middle schools ranged from 17 to 21 students, depending on the grade level.¹⁵ None of the private schools reported a class size of more than 30 students. Moreover, for surveyed private high schools that had a graduating class, the average percentage of students accepted to college was 90 percent. Only one school had a college-acceptance rate that was below 50 percent.

As mentioned above, the average private school surveyed had an on-site, full-time staff of 28. On average, eight of the staff members per school were non-teaching staff (administrators, bookkeepers, etc.), while 20 of the staff members were teachers (See Table 2). Among schools that had part-time employees, the average was 5.5 positions. Interestingly, the average private school had more volunteers than school staff. Many private schools reported that one or more family members of all enrolled students volunteered at least once during the school year. Other private schools made parental volunteering a requirement. A number of private schools could not estimate the number of volunteers that assisted the school during the year, but most private schools reported an extraordinary

amount of volunteer support. Apparently, limited staff and small budgets spur individual initiative and parental involvement.

In “What Does a Voucher Buy? A Closer Look at the Cost of Private Schools” (2003), David F. Salisbury of the Cato Institute assessed the cost of private schools and found that a \$5,000 voucher would cover most of the cost of most urban private schools.¹⁶ Given that the average per-pupil cost of a public school education was nearly \$9,000 in 2003, Salisbury concluded that a voucher would realize substantial savings and improve educational outcomes.

During the 2007–2008 school year, the average per pupil expenditure in the North Carolina public schools was \$9,370.¹⁷ The John Locke Foundation questionnaire found that a \$5,000 scholarship would cover the cost of the average private elementary day school tuition, a \$5,500 scholarship would cover the cost of the average private middle day school tuition, and a \$6,000 scholarship would cover the cost of the average private high school tuition in North Carolina (See Table 2). Thus, the marginal cost savings realized by a modest private school scholarship program would likely total thousands of dollars per student.

Table 2. Private School Questionnaire Averages: Student, Finance, and Personnel Factors

	Average	Range (Low)	Range (High)
Average class size	14	3	30
Average college acceptance rate	90%	26%	100%
Average number of on-site staff	28	1	102
Average number of non-teaching staff	8	0	42
Average number of teaching staff (full-time)	20	1	80
Average number of teaching staff (part-time)	5.5	0	33
Average number of volunteers	29	0	390
Average annual teacher salary	\$26,137	\$2,500	\$51,000
Average elementary school annual tuition (day school)	\$4,889	\$0	\$18,000
Average middle school annual tuition (day school)	\$5,410	\$0	\$18,000
Average high school annual tuition (day school)	\$5,916	\$0	\$22,420
Average elementary school annual tuition (boarding school)	\$12,076	\$2,410	\$38,000
Average middle school annual tuition (boarding school)	\$28,901	\$2,410	\$60,000
Average high school annual tuition (boarding school)	\$29,066	\$2,410	\$60,000
Average annual revenue	\$1,378,686	\$7,900	\$10,376,901

Student and Financial Information

Contrary to the perception that private schools are not appropriate for special needs students, approximately two-thirds of private schools in North Carolina served students with learning differences and disabilities. Nearly 50 percent of respondents said that they had the ability to enroll more students with learning differences and/or disabilities (See Table 3). According to disaggregated results, 97 percent of independent private schools served special needs students, and 73 percent of those schools have the capacity to enroll more special needs students. On the other hand, 56 percent of religious private schools served special needs students, and only 38 percent of those schools have the capacity to enroll additional special needs students. Religious schools typically have smaller enrollments and modest budgets, which would make serving special needs students difficult.

Most private schools had admissions guidelines.

Religious private schools were much more likely to have admissions guidelines than independent private schools. Just over 93 percent of religious private schools had admissions guidelines, while nearly 68 percent of independent private schools had admissions standards (See Table 3). Private schools reported a variety of criteria used to admit students, but there were three main criteria reported. A number of schools required that incoming students exceed cut scores on standardized tests. Other schools required an interview, recommendations, and/or parental input. Finally, a handful of the religious schools required that students and parents were members of a church or denominational body or were families that adhered to a statement of faith or religious creed.

Over half of the schools granted high school diplomas, and, as mentioned above, an average of 90 percent of students were accepted into an institu-

tion of higher education. Although few schools had precise data on college acceptance rates, private schools reported that between 50 and 100 percent of graduates were accepted into an institution of higher education (See Table 3).

Nearly all private schools administered standardized achievement tests, and 78 percent of schools made their results available to the public (See Table 3).¹⁸ Among the schools that reported the kinds of tests used, 33 of the schools surveyed (35 percent) administered the Stanford Achievement Test and 20 schools (21 percent) administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. A handful of private schools used the Woodcock Johnson (11 percent), California Achievement Test (11 percent), and Terra Nova (7 percent) tests. Five schools (5 percent) used one or more North Carolina End-of-Grade or End-of-Course tests.¹⁹

Only two private schools reported that they did not charge tuition (See Table 3). These respondents described their schools as extensions or ministries of their church. Typically, schools that have low tuition rates raise money for the school from a church congregation or a non-profit orga-

nization to offset the cost of operating the school. Moreover, these schools, particularly religious private schools, employ a number of cost-saving strategies to keep tuition rates low. These strategies include tapping church staff for administrative and instructional positions, adapting church facilities for use as instructional space, recruiting volunteers, and requesting special donations from congregants.

There is a wide range of fees and charges for books, registration/application, supplies, facilities, uniforms, and technology. The average cost incurred by families for fees and other expenses at North Carolina private day schools was \$403. Fees per school ranged from \$22 for supplies to \$1,115 for registration, course fees, and extracurricular activity fees. Recognizing that some families have difficulty paying for fees and tuition, over two-thirds of all private schools surveyed offered financial aid. About half of the private schools that offered financial aid used household income or federal poverty guidelines to determine financial aid eligibility, while the other half used an independent or third-party assessment to determine eligibility.

Table 3. Basic Questions Related to Students and Finance

Category	Question	No	Yes	Total
Students	Does your school serve students with learning differences and/or disabilities?	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%
Students	Does your school have the ability to enroll more students with learning differences and/or disabilities?	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%
Students	Does your school have admission guidelines?	14.0%	86.0%	100.0%
Students	Does your school grant high school diplomas?	43.9%	56.1%	100.0%
Students	Do your students take any standardized achievement test(s)?	4.7%	95.3%	100.0%
Students	Are aggregate test scores made available to the parents and/or the public?	21.9%	78.1%	100.0%
Finance	Does your school charge tuition?	2.0%	98.0%	100.0%
Finance	Does your school charge fees or require students to pay for other expenses (e.g., books)?	22.9%	77.1%	100.0%
Finance	Is your school a boarding school?	92.6%	7.4%	100.0%
Finance	Does your school offer any financial aid?	35.4%	64.6%	100.0%

Teacher Qualifications

Private school administrators looked for a number of factors when they examined the qualifications of prospective teachers, but nearly all questionnaire respondents found the following five factors to be important: 1) college degree in any field; 2) college degree in/related to subject area(s) taught; 3) professional experience related to subject area(s); 4) previous teaching experience in subject area(s) taught; and 5) recommendations from previous employers. Thus, private school administrators look for prospective teachers to have a college degree, professional or teaching experience, and strong recommendations from previous employers (See Table 4).

Administrators found traditional public school credentials to be less important, although about two-thirds of the respondents said that they sought prospective teachers with state certification and/or teachers who graduated from a state-approved

teacher education program. Most administrators also took college reputation, graduate degrees, observations, and certification by a private organization into account. However, few private school administrators valued applicants that performed well on the SAT, ACT, or Praxis exams or those who acquired National Board Certification (See Table 4).

In sum, private school administrators evaluated many of the traditional credentials of prospective teachers. Yet, one important difference between public and private schools in this regard is that, unlike public schools, state certification does not act as a barrier to individuals who want to teach in a private school. Indeed, private school administrators may choose the best applicant for the job, while, in general, state certification and licensure requirements force public schools to find the best applicant among those who have earned certification.

Table 4. Importance of Qualifications for Prospective Teachers

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	N/A
Reputation of college attended	25.2%	54.4%	20.4%	0.0%
College degree in any field	61.8%	35.3%	2.0%	1.0%
College degree in/related to subject area(s) taught	77.2%	21.8%	1.0%	0.0%
Graduate degree in/related to subject area(s) taught	35.4%	49.5%	15.2%	0.0%
Professional experience related to subject area(s)	71.0%	27.0%	2.0%	0.0%
Previous teaching experience in subject area(s) taught	76.2%	21.8%	1.0%	1.0%
Recommendations from previous employers	81.2%	17.8%	1.0%	0.0%
Observation of the applicant during a trial class/period	51.0%	34.7%	12.2%	2.0%
Graduation from a state-approved teacher education program	24.0%	42.0%	33.0%	1.0%
Certification by a private association or organization	24.0%	44.0%	32.0%	0.0%
Certification by the state	32.4%	34.3%	33.3%	0.0%
SAT or ACT score	6.1%	28.3%	60.6%	5.1%
Passing score on a Praxis I: Pre-Professional Skills	17.0%	35.0%	42.0%	6.0%
Passing score on a Praxis II: Subject Assessments	16.3%	35.7%	41.8%	6.1%
Passing score on a Praxis III: Classroom Performance	17.8%	33.7%	43.6%	5.0%
National Board (NBPTS) Certification	4.2%	34.7%	55.8%	5.3%

Support for School Choice

In general, private schools supported school choice options for families (See Table 5). Support for tax credits was higher than support for vouchers. Only 10.7 percent of respondents opposed a voucher program that would pay the full tuition amount. On the other hand, 86.4 percent of respondents supported a voucher program that would pay the full tuition amount. None of the private schools surveyed opposed a tax credit program that would cover part or the entire tuition amount. Finally, 84.6 percent of private schools supported a program that would provide a voucher to the families of targeted categories of students. All told, the private school community supported providing families both vouchers and tax credits to attend the schools of their choice.

The prospect of government interference worried many of the private schools surveyed. Approximately 70 percent of private schools said that they would not enroll children whose families received public funds if it meant that there would be increased government oversight of their school.²⁰ More than half of the respondents would not enroll children whose families received public funds if the state forced them to administer state standardized tests. Schools strongly opposed abandoning admissions standards in exchange for enrolling children of families who received a voucher or tax credit, while over 70 percent opposed abandoning religious activities in exchange for public funds. A plurality of private schools were indifferent to the expansion of charter schools in North Carolina, suggesting

Table 5. Support for School Choice

Question	Strongly Support	Support	No Opinion	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Would you support a voucher program that paid part of the tuition amount?	69.2%	18.3%	2.9%	5.8%	3.8%
Would you support a voucher program that paid the full tuition amount?	64.1%	22.3%	2.9%	5.8%	4.9%
Would you support a tax credit program that covered part of the tuition amount?	82.1%	13.2%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Would you support a tax credit program that covered the full tuition amount?	79.8%	14.4%	5.8%	0.0%	0.0%
If North Carolina had a voucher program for particular categories of students (e.g., low-income), would you accept students using these funds?	55.8%	28.8%	5.8%	6.7%	2.9%
Would you accept public funds even if it meant government regulation/oversight of your school?	5.7%	12.4%	12.4%	16.2%	53.3%
Would you accept public funds even if it meant that you had to administer state tests?	9.5%	25.7%	9.5%	21.9%	33.3%
Would you accept voucher or other scholarship students if they were assigned to attend your school through a random lottery, which means that you would not be able to use any admission criteria for these students?	4.7%	2.8%	8.5%	34.0%	50.0%
Would you accept voucher or other scholarship students if you were forbidden from requiring them to participate in religious or other activities at your school?	8.5%	11.3%	8.5%	11.3%	60.4%
Would you support an increase in the number of charter schools in North Carolina?	13.2%	19.8%	41.5%	10.4%	15.1%

that they did not believe that an increase in charter schools was a threat (See Table 5).

There were interesting differences in opinion that emerged between secular and religious private schools. For example, compared to secular private schools, religious schools were not as supportive of enrolling particular categories of children whose family received public funds. This signaled that some private religious schools were reluctant to relinquish control of their admissions standards, fearing that doing so would compromise their religious mission. Even so, a majority of private religious schools supported vouchers or tax credits for particular categories of students (See Table 6).

Private religious schools were much less willing

to accept government regulation or oversight than private schools with no religious affiliation. Over 75 percent of religious schools opposed increased government regulation. Over 56 percent of secular schools opposed additional government regulation, but nearly 38 percent of the schools supported further regulatory control by the State of North Carolina. A paltry 9.6 percent of religious schools supported increased government oversight (See Table 7).

Many private schools would be willing to administer state tests, but most opposed the idea. Private schools with a religious affiliation were slightly more likely to oppose this measure than private schools without a religious affiliation, as some private schools

Table 6. Support for Vouchers and Particular Categories of Students (by school type)

If North Carolina had a voucher program for particular categories of students (e.g. low-income), would you accept students using these funds?		
Answer Options	Secular (no religious affiliation)	Religious
Strongly Support	71.0%	49.3%
Support	19.4%	32.9%
No Opinion	6.5%	5.5%
Oppose	3.2%	8.2%
Strongly Oppose	0.0%	4.1%

Table 7. Support for Vouchers and Government Regulation (by school type)

Would you accept public funds even if it meant government regulation/oversight of your school?		
Answer Options	Secular (no religious affiliation)	Religious
Strongly Support	9.4%	4.1%
Support	28.1%	5.5%
No Opinion	6.3%	15.1%
Oppose	21.9%	13.7%
Strongly Oppose	34.4%	61.6%

Table 8. Support for Vouchers and Administering State Tests (by school type)

Would you accept public funds even if it meant that you had to administer state tests?		
Answer Options	Secular (no religious affiliation)	Religious
Strongly Support	12.5%	8.2%
Support	31.3%	23.3%
No Opinion	6.3%	11.0%
Oppose	25.0%	20.5%
Strongly Oppose	25.0%	37.0%

administer religious-based tests (See Table 8). For example, a handful of Catholic schools reported that they administer the NC Catholic Writing Test. There may have also been fear among religious schools that state tests would force the schools to strip their curriculum of religious content. Yet, private schools may have supported the idea of administering state tests because they believed that the school would not have to shoulder the financial burden of paying for a test directly from school funds.²¹

Clearly, private schools value their admissions standards. Many religious schools base admissions decisions on membership in a church or denominational body and/or adherence to a statement of faith or religious creed. Students assigned to a private school through random lottery would not guarantee that students' religious beliefs corresponded to the mission or goals of the school. Non-religious schools also have admissions standards that could be compromised by student assignment via random lottery. For example, private schools that used the

Montessori Method prefer applicants that have had prior exposure to Montessori instruction. Other private schools cater to a specific population or gender, which would make a random lottery an inappropriate admissions vehicle. For these reasons, fewer than 10 percent of secular and religious private schools would support accepting voucher students from a random lottery system (See Table 9).

Of course, private schools with a religious focus would be strongly opposed to measures that forbid students to participate in religious activities. Private schools with no religious affiliation were much more willing to provide latitude in the kind of activities required of students. In the questionnaire, 50 percent of secular private schools supported or strongly supported accepting students from families who receive a voucher in exchange for restrictions on student activities. Only seven percent of religious schools would be willing to accept those restrictions. Nearly 91 percent of religious schools opposed the restrictions (See Table 10).

Table 9. Support for Vouchers and Admissions (by school type)

Would you accept voucher or other scholarship students if they were assigned to attend your school through a random lottery, which means that you would not be able to use any admission criteria for these students?		
Answer Options	Secular (no religious affiliation)	Religious
Strongly Support	6.3%	4.1%
Support	3.1%	2.7%
No Opinion	12.5%	6.8%
Oppose	34.4%	33.8%
Strongly Oppose	43.8%	52.7%

Table 10. Support for Vouchers and Religious or Activity Restrictions (by school type)

Would you accept voucher or other scholarship students if you were forbidden from requiring them to participate in religious or other activities at your school?		
Answer Options	Secular (no religious affiliation)	Religious
Strongly Support	21.9%	2.7%
Support	28.1%	4.1%
No Opinion	21.9%	2.7%
Oppose	3.1%	14.9%
Strongly Oppose	25.0%	75.7%

Conclusion

Benjamin Franklin said, “For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information, or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise.”²² Without a doubt, “better information” about our state’s private schools can change the minds of state legislators and policymakers on the important subject of school choice. This study is a first step in a larger effort to correct decades-old misconceptions and prejudices about private schools.

The impressive growth of North Carolina’s private schools is no accident. They remain affordable, diverse educational institutions that strive to cultivate academic, spiritual, and personal excellence in all students. Regrettably, our elected leaders have chosen to deny poor and middle-class children the means to attend these institutions based upon an allegiance to an outdated, 19th century educational model specifically designed to limit choices and compel deference to state authority. As a state and as a nation, we can do better.

Appendix A. Survey Instrument

Privacy Disclaimer

The information collected in this survey will be used only to draw general conclusions about private schools in North Carolina. No information about individual schools will be released to the public.

Purpose of this Survey

The purpose of this survey is to promote North Carolina's private schools by gathering and analyzing data on private schools generally not available to the public.

We appreciate your participation! If we can be of assistance, do not hesitate to contact us at 919-828-3876.

1. General Information

a) The following information will be used to validate the survey. It will not be made public.

Official school name:

Main phone number:

Physical address – Street:

City:

State:

Zip:

School website:

b) Year your school was established: _____

c) Please check grade levels served:

- Pre-kindergarten
- Elementary (Grades K-5)
- Middle (Grades 6-8)
- High (Grades 9-12)
- Other grade configuration – Please specify _____

d) Which best describes your school?

- Secular (no religious affiliation)
- Religious—Please specify your school's religious affiliation or orientation

e) Is your school part of an administrative unit (e.g. "Diocese of Raleigh")?

- No
- Yes—Please list. _____

f) Is your school currently accredited through any accreditation agency/agencies?

- No
- Yes—Please list. _____

g) Is your school currently a member of any religious or educational associations or organizations?

- No
- Yes—Please list. _____

2. Students

a) Does your school have admission guidelines?

- No
- Yes—Please describe (or attach a copy of admission policies to this survey). _____

b) Approximately how many of your current students came to your school from a public school? _____

c) What is your school's total enrollment for the current (2008-2009) school year? _____

d) What was your school's enrollment for the 2008-2009 school year by race/ethnicity—Please provide the number of students for each category (or best estimate).

- American Indian or Alaska Native _____
- Black, not of Hispanic origin _____
- Asian or Pacific Islander _____
- White, not of Hispanic origin _____
- Hispanic, regardless of race _____
- Other _____

e) Approximately what percentage of your students come from low-income families?

- 0 – 25%
- 26 – 50%
- 51 – 75%
- 76 – 100%

f) Which best describes your school's curriculum or program? Check all that apply.

- Carden
- College preparatory
- Early childhood
- Montessori
- Special education
- Elementary or secondary—General
- Vocational/Technical
- Language immersion
- Waldorf
- Reggio Emilio
- Paideia
- Other—Please list. _____

g) Does your school grant high school diplomas?

- No
- Yes – How many students graduated in the 2007-2008 school year? _____

h) Of the 2007-2008 graduates for whom college status is known, how many were accepted to college? _____

i) Does your school serve students with learning differences and/or disabilities?

- No
- Yes – Please indicate number of students served. _____ Estimated cost. _____

j) Does your school have the ability to enroll more students with learning differences and/or disabilities?

- No
- Yes

k) Do your students take any standardized achievement test(s)?

- No
- Yes – Please specify test (include series/version where applicable). _____

l) Are aggregate test scores made available to the parents and/or the public?

- No
- Yes – Please describe (or attach documentation to this survey). _____

3. Personnel

a) What is the total on-site staff count at your school? _____

b) What is the total number of non-teaching staff (e.g. principals, maintenance, and support staff)? _____

c) What is the total number of teaching staff at your school (including administrators who teach)? _____

d) What is the total number of part-time staff? _____

e) What is the total number of volunteers? _____

f) Please indicate the level of importance you place on each of the following qualifications when reviewing job applications from prospective teachers for your school.

Reputation of college attended	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
College degree in any field	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
College degree in/related to subject area(s) taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Graduate degree in/related to subject area(s) taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Professional experience related to subject area(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Previous teaching experience in subject area(s) taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Recommendations from previous employers	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Observation of the applicant during a trial class/period	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Graduation from a state-approved teacher education program	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Certification by a private association or organization	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Certification by the state	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
SAT or ACT score	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Passing score on a Praxis I: Pre-Professional Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Passing score on a Praxis II: Subject Assessments	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Passing score on a Praxis III: Classroom Performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
National Board (NBPTS) Certification	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important
Other qualification criterion/criteria—Please list. _____			

g) What is the average teacher salary at your school? _____

h) Do you offer signing bonuses, performance, incentive, or merit pay?

o No

o Yes – Please describe. _____

i) What is the average length of service for teachers (including administrators who also teach) at your school?
Choose one.

o 0-5 years

o 6-10 years

o 11-14 years

o 15 or more years

j) What is the average class size at your school? _____

4. Tuition, General Finance, and Financial Aid

Please note: all financial data will be kept strictly confidential.

a) Does your school charge tuition?

- No GO TO ITEM 4e
- Yes

b) What was the average annual tuition (for regular day, full-time students) at your school for the 2008-2009 school year? Please note: You may include a tuition and fee schedule to answer questions 8b through 8d.

Pre-kindergarten rates: _____
 Elementary school rates: _____
 Middle school rates: _____
 High school rates: _____
 Other (including before/after school programs): _____

c) Does your school charge fees or require students to pay for other expenses (e.g. books)?

- No
- Yes – Please list purpose(s) and estimated amount(s). _____

d) Is your school a boarding school?

- No
- Yes – Please indicate the average annual boarding student tuition for the 2008-2009 school year? _____

e) Please indicate your school's total revenue for the 2008-2009 school year. _____

f) Please indicate your school's revenue from tuition and fees in 2008-2009. _____

g) Please indicate the current operating expenses for your school. _____

h) Please indicate the total expenditures for your school for the 2008-2009 school year. _____

i) Does your school offer any financial aid?

- No GO TO NEXT PAGE
- Yes – What was the average scholarship amount? _____

j) What type of financial aid does your school offer? Check all that apply.

- Aid based on financial need
- Aid based on merit

k) What percentage of all enrolled students received school-funded, need-based scholarships in the 2008-2009 school year?

- 0 – 25%
- 26 – 50%
- 51 – 75%
- 76 – 100%

l) If your school offers aid based on financial need, how do you determine "need"?

- Percentage above annual federal poverty guidelines—Please indicate percentage. _____
- Household income—Please describe income guidelines (and adjustments for family size, if applicable). _____
- Other—Please describe. _____

5. School Choice Programs

If North Carolina gave parents a voucher redeemable at your school...

Would you support a voucher program that paid part of the tuition amount? Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

Would you support a voucher program that paid the full tuition amount? Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

If North Carolina gave parents a tax credit on their income tax for the tuition spent at your school...

Would you support a tax credit program that covered part of the tuition amount? Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

Would you support a tax credit program that covered the full tuition amount? Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

If North Carolina had a voucher program for particular categories of students (e.g. low-income), would you accept students using these funds?

Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

Would you accept public funds even if it meant government regulation/oversight of your school?

Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

Would you accept public funds even if it meant that you had to administer state tests?

Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

Would you accept voucher or other scholarship students if they were assigned to attend your school through a random lottery, which means that you would not be able to use any admission criteria for these students?

Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

Would you accept voucher or other scholarship students if you were forbidden from requiring them to participate in religious or other activities at your school?

Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

Would you support an increase in the number of charter schools in North Carolina?

Strongly support Support No opinion Oppose Strongly oppose

Thank You

Thank you for your participation in this survey!

- I would like a copy of the forthcoming policy report that analyzes the results of this survey.
- I would like to be placed on the John Locke Foundation mailing list.
- I have a few questions or need assistance and would like to be contacted by John Locke Foundation staff.

Notes

¹ For example, see Wilma Peebles-Wilkins, "Reactions of Segments of the Black Community to the North Carolina Pearsall Plan, 1954-1966," *Phylon* 48:2 (2nd Qtr., 1987): 112-121; Charles T. Clotfelter, "School Desegregation, 'Tipping,' and Private School Enrollment," *The Journal of Human Resources* 11:1 (Winter, 1976): 28-50; J. Harvie Wilkinson, III, "The Supreme Court and Southern School Desegregation, 1955 - 1970: A History and Analysis," *Virginia Law Review* 64:4 (May, 1978): 485-559; and Walter F. Murphy, "Private Education with Public Funds?," *The Journal of Politics* 20:4 (Nov., 1958): 635-654.

²Department of Administration, North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education (NCDNPE), "2008 North Carolina Private School Statistics," June 2008, <http://www.ncdnpe.org/hhh500.asp>.

³NCDNPE, "2009 North Carolina Private School Statistics," June 2009, <http://www.ncdnpe.org/hhh500.asp>.

⁴NCDNPE, "2008 North Carolina Private School Statistics."

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Many thanks to Adam Schaeffer of the Cato Institute for his assistance.

⁸NCDNPE, "2008 North Carolina Directory of Non-Public Schools, Conventional Schools 2008 Edition," June 2008, <http://www.ncdnpe.org/hhh118-2007-2008.asp>.

⁹Data from questionnaires received after the cutoff date will be included in future private school studies.

¹⁰NCDNPE, 2008 North Carolina Private School Statistics. Stephen P. Broughman, Nancy L. Swaim, and Patrick W. Keaton, "Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results From the 2007-08 Private School Universe Survey (NCES 2009-313)," National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, March 2009, p. 6, 17, and 20.

¹¹This includes full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers only.

¹²NCDNPE, "2008 North Carolina Private School Statistics." Broughman, Swaim, and Keaton, "Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States."

¹³NCDNPE, "2008 North Carolina Private School Statistics."

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Office of the Governor, State of North Carolina, "North Carolina School Report Cards," May 2009, <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/>.

¹⁶David F. Salisbury, "What Does a Voucher Buy? A Closer Look at the Cost of Private Schools," Cato Institute, 2003.

¹⁷N.C. Department of Public Instruction, "2007-08 Selected Financial Data," Division of School Business, November 2008, www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/resources/data/, p. 19.

¹⁸While the question asked if schools make the test results available to parents and/or the public, a number of schools that withheld results indicated that they made results available to parents but not the public.

¹⁹Note: Some schools administered multiple standardized tests.

²⁰The State of North Carolina imposes regulation and oversight on private schools. Article 39, Chapter 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes imposes minimal requirements on private schools. Private schools in North Carolina must meet the following requirements: 1) comply with mandatory attendance laws; 2) meet all state health and safety regulations; 3) administer standardized tests in the areas of English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics; 4) administer high school competency tests (if applicable); and 5) maintain applicable testing, health, and safety records and allow state, county, and municipal authorities to examine those records upon request. Local/county zoning, health, and safety regulations also apply.

²¹Article 39, Chapter 115C – Section 551 of the North Carolina General Statutes, titled "Voluntary participation in the State programs," suggests that private schools would not have to pay to administer state tests. The statute says, "Any such school may, on a voluntary basis, participate in any State operated or sponsored program which would otherwise be available to such school, including but not limited to the high school competency testing and statewide testing programs." However, taxpayers would shoulder the burden of such a requirement because the Department of Public Instruction would need to increase the size of its testing and accountability staff, as well as pay for the additional cost of developing, administering, and analyzing tests for an additional 100,000+ students.

²²Benjamin Franklin to the Federal Convention, September 17, 1787. The print version quoted here is from the following: Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, Rev. ed. 4 vols, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1937. Retrieved from <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a7s3.html>.

About the Author

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Stoops earned a bachelor's degree in speech communication from Clarion University of Pennsylvania and a M.Ed. in Administrative and Policy Studies from the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. He is completing a Ph.D. in Foundations of Education at the University of Virginia Curry School of Education. While pursuing his doctorate, Stoops received the Bache Renshaw Fellowship from the Intercollegiate Studies Institute and was a research intern for the Publications and Educational Services Division of the Library of Virginia.

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The John Locke Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy institute based in Raleigh. Its mission is to develop and promote solutions to the state's most critical challenges. The Locke Foundation seeks to transform state and local government through the principles of competition, innovation, personal freedom, and personal responsibility in order to strike a better balance between the public sector and private institutions of family, faith, community, and enterprise.

To pursue these goals, the Locke Foundation operates a number of programs and services to provide information and observations to legislators, policymakers, business executives, citizen activists, civic and community leaders, and the news media. These services and programs include the foundation's monthly newspaper, *Carolina Journal*; its daily news service, CarolinaJournal.com; its weekly e-newsletter, *Carolina Journal Weekly Report*; its quarterly newsletter, *The Locke Letter*; and regular events, conferences, and research reports on important topics facing state and local governments.

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*“To prejudge other men’s notions
before we have looked into them
is not to show their darkness
but to put out our own eyes.”*

JOHN LOCKE (1632–1704)

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