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HIGHLIGHTS

Differences in the organization of public and private schools are a focus of school reform discussions. Yet how different or similar public and private schools really are is not well understood. Debates about improving schools often overlook the diversity among private schools, as well as the potential for a high degree of similarity between many public and private schools. Using data from a national sample of secondary schools in the 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), this report examines organizational differences across public and private schools and among private school types.

- Overall, the results show considerable organizational variation among different types of private schools and some significant similarities between public schools and some types of private schools. For instance, compared to other private schools, Catholic schools often have more similarities with public schools. School sector is not a simple organizational fault line running through the nation's schools.
- Although religious development of students is the most important goal among many private schools, comparable proportions of public, Catholic, and unaffiliated religious secondary schools hold academic excellence as their main educational goal.
- Although private school principals may hold fewer education credentials than their public school counterparts, there are differences across private school types. Principals of all three types of Catholic secondary schools earned education credentials similar to those found among public school principals.
- Teacher salary schedules are lower in the private sector across school types, but there is a wider range among private schools than public schools.
- The size of the administrative staff within the school relative to the size of the school's faculty is larger in the private sector than in the public sector. However, there is considerable variation among private school types; for example, Catholic parochial, diocesan, and unaffiliated religious secondary schools have school based administration similar in size to public schools.
- Although private schools tend to have more on-site control of key administrative decisions about teacher hiring, curriculum, and student discipline policies, not all public schools lack this feature. There are some differences in degree of administrative control among types of private schools as well.

- There are few substantial sector differences in graduation requirements.
- After controlling for many other school characteristics such as size, location, and student body composition, information about sector membership and private school type greatly increased prediction of a school's teacher salaries, but only modestly improved prediction of administrative staff size and the degree to which the principal is a key decisionmaker.

INTRODUCTION

This report examines selected organizational characteristics of American public and private secondary schools from the 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey,¹ conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The analysis builds upon earlier NCES reports on the organizational nature of private schools, such as *Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile with Comparisons to Public Schools* (Benson and McMillen 1991) and most recently, *Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1990-91* (McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995).

This report compares similarities and differences in the organization of secondary schools across the private and public sectors and within the private sector. Six key organizational domains of schools are chosen for this comparison:

- Educational Goals
- Professionalization of Principals
- Teacher Compensation
- Size of Administrative Staff
- School-based Control
- Curricular Emphasis

The first part of this report provides the policy context from which to consider organizational differences across sectors; the questions that guide the analysis and a brief description of the six organizational domains are also examined in this section. The second part describes the specific parts of the Schools and Staffing Survey used. The third part of the report presents two sets of results: the first are descriptive analyses of a sector comparison of each of the six organizational domains; the second are analyses that compare influence of sector membership on several organizational domains after other school characteristics are accounted for.

Policy Context

The last 15 years of research comparing private and public schooling has had an unprecedented influence on the public discourse about education. Information comparing how private and public schools are organized and governed, as well as information comparing their relative academic effectiveness, is now commonly used in discussions about how to improve education worldwide (e.g., James 1987). Recently, for example, several specific policy recommendations among the current restructuring reforms in American public schools stem from research on private schooling. Similarly, the debate over school choice and chartering is an outgrowth of analyses of private schools and their presumed ability to serve clients with a more adaptive organization than public schools (e.g., Chubb and Moe 1990; Boyd and Walberg 1990; Alves and Willie 1987; Cookson and Lucks 1995; Hannaway and Abramowitz 1985). Related to this

¹ The sample used in this report included 4,623 schools offering classes to at least one of senior secondary grades 10, 11, or 12. Seventy-four percent of these are secondary schools, and 26 percent are combined schools. The term "secondary school" is used throughout this report.

are recent experiments with privatization of local public schooling (e.g., the Boston, Cambridge, and Baltimore projects). A common theme in all these policy discussions is that private schools offer an effective model that might be transferred to public schools to improve many aspects of the educational program (Ballou and Podgursky 1995).

Because research comparing private and public schooling has contributed so much to recent, central policy discussions about improving public schools, a perception may have emerged from this literature that the private sector is *different* from the public sector and that it is organizationally exceptional throughout. In other words, many believe that all private schools are similar, that they all differ from public schools, and that they all exhibit the organizational characteristics that are associated with effective schools. This overly simple perception can be reinforced by the tendency of debates over quality education to use an imagery of the American “private school” as a generic organization, even though the originating research examined only one part of the private sector.

For example, starting with reports in the early 1980s, some school-effects researchers have argued that private schools are better at educating children, particularly disadvantaged minority students, than their public counterparts. But this research has been based solely on the Catholic sub-sector of private schools, and even then has not compared different types of Catholic schools such as private order versus diocesan schools (e.g., Chubb and Moe 1990; Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore 1982; Greeley 1982; James and Levine 1988 V2; Jencks 1985; Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993). The earliest findings from Catholic schools started a trend that linked subsequent public and private school comparisons to reform questions. The initial idea behind this is perhaps best summarized in a question asked by school-effects researcher, Andrew Greeley, in his concluding remarks about the first wave of public and private school-effects reports in 1982:

Is it just possible that there might be something going on in the classrooms of Catholic schools from which other educational institutions in the country might learn?
(Greeley 1982, p. 111)

Over time, distinctions about what was being compared in the original research on Catholic and public schools have perhaps been replaced by a general image of more gross private and public differences. Further, the research focuses on central tendencies in considering effectiveness and organizational differences between some types of private schools and public schools.

Far less attention has been paid to understanding the degree to which the distribution of qualities overlap across the private and public sectors. For example, policy debates rarely consider how much the public sector overlaps with the private sector on key organizational features that may be responsible for differences in educational quality. Consider Chubb and Moe’s summary statement about their 1990 discussion of private and public school comparisons:

Because private schools are disproportionately likely to enjoy autonomy, to be organized effectively, and to post large achievement gains.... the relationships we observe between autonomy and organization and between organization and achievement might possibly represent a “**private school effect**” and may not hold among schools in the public sector. We would be surprised if this proved to be the case.... Still, our empirical analysis leaves

open the possibility that **our results have more to do with differences between public and private schools than with differences among public schools** (Chubb and Moe 1990, pps. 259-60, emphases added).

As the last statement indicates, public and private school comparisons often preclude considering the consequences of a large overlap between the sectors on the organizational factors that these researchers suggest are effective.

Reliance on a generalized notion of the American private school ignores the considerable potential for organizational and quality diversity present in the private sector (Cooper 1988; McMillen and Benson 1991; McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995). Simple perspectives can unintentionally gloss over organizational differences among private schools and can lead one to overlook the actual nature of organizational diversity among the nation's schools.

Given the central role that the "private school compared with the public school" now plays in many policy debates about American education, it is important that the public and policymakers alike appreciate both the range of organizational diversity among private schools and the degree to which the schools in each sector overlap in crucial organizational factors that have been shown to be associated with a school's quality as an educational institution.

Analysis Questions

Recent landmark comparisons of private and public school effects on student outcomes have come from analyses of data collected by NCES, such as *High School & Beyond* (e.g., Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore 1982; James and Levine 1988). These data were designed to examine the academic progress of students and accordingly provided some answers about which students do well. However, these data do not provide much information on the organizational characteristics of schools across the wide landscape of American education. NCES' *Schools and Staffing Survey* was designed to collect more organizational information about schools.

To provide a closer look at the organization of American secondary schools, the analyses in this report addresses two questions:

- First, is the private secondary school sector uniformly different from the public secondary school sector across key organizational domains? How much overlap exists between the public and private sectors across these domains? And how much organizational variation exists within the private sector?
- Second, to what extent does sector membership predict key organizational characteristics of a school after controlling for other school characteristics, such as the types of students, community, school size, and so forth?

The first set of questions asks about the extent of organizational diversity among private schools and the degree to which the public and private sectors overlap on important organizational qualities. As the recent NCES statistical profile of private schools illustrates, there is considerable diversity among private schools (McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995). The

analysis here uses this idea as a starting point from which to examine further organizational diversity and overlap among the nation's schools. It could be, for example, that for a particular organizational feature, a small proportion of private schools are set off from the rest of their sector, and a much larger group of private schools are relatively similar to schools in the public sector. Or it could be that most private schools differ from most public schools on important organizational features.

The second question asks to what extent sector membership is associated with these key organizational qualities after controlling for other school characteristics such as the school's size, the type of community it serves, the nature of the student body, and so forth. Like other types of organizations, schools are shaped through a set of factors present in their social and political environments (Hannan and Carroll 1992; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Whether a school is in the public or private sector and the specific sponsorship of private schools (i.e., private school types such as Catholic, conservative Christian, nonsectarian) are two such factors among many important forces that shape the specific organization of a school. These analyses will compare the strength of sector membership relative to other factors in predicting six selected key organizational features of schools.

Why These Six Organizational Domains?

All schools are similar in superficial ways. Organizational researchers show a homogenizing of basic school structure even across sectors in the United States and other countries over the past century (Baker 1992; Ramirez and Ventresca 1992; Jepperson 1991). Things like age-graded class structure and basic core academic curricular areas are part of the "surface" organization of most schools (e.g., Benavot et al. 1991). Underneath the surface, however, are organizational domains that vary across schools and have been discussed as reasons why schools may function differently (e.g., Talbert 1988).

Indicators of six organizational domains are examined here: the school's main educational goals; the professionalization of its principal; the compensation of its teachers; the size of administrative staff within the school; which decisionmakers have the most influence on crucial educational matters; and the school's curricular emphasis. These organizational domains are related to recent restructuring reforms and are often among the factors cited as important areas of concern in school-effects research (e.g., Chubb and Moe 1990). They are also often the factors that have been used in past research to discuss reasons why school effectiveness may vary across public and private sectors (Talbert 1988).

Although the domains examined here are indicators of a school's central organizational qualities, they are not the only central factors. These six domains, however, represent at least a general picture of the organizational character of the school and thus offer a useful perspective from which to consider differences across and among private and public secondary schools.

Schools and Staffing Survey

This report uses data from the 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education, SASS is the largest and most comprehensive dataset available on the organizational aspects of American schools. It has gathered a wide range of information on the characteristics, work, career plans, and attitudes of administrators and faculty and the characteristics of schools and districts across the country. This information was collected for both private and public schools.

The 1990-91 SASS used a random sample of schools and staff stratified by state, sector, and school level. It is designed to provide national and state-level estimates for public schools and national and association-level estimates for private schools (see technical notes in Appendix E).

Using the *school* as the unit of analysis for this report, measures of organizational domains are based on responses to different questionnaires within SASS: the Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire for Public School Districts, the School Administrator Questionnaire, and the School Questionnaire. Sector analyses are done by comparing public schools with seven sponsorship categories of private schools from the NCES private school typology (McMillen and Benson 1991), consisting of three types of Catholic schools (parochial, diocesan, and private order), three types of other religious-oriented schools (conservative Christian, nationally affiliated, and unaffiliated), and nonsectarian regular schools. Two other small categories of private nonsectarian schools—special education and special emphasis—are excluded in this report because in serving special student populations their organizational features can be radically different from other private schools (McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995). For example, special education schools can combine health care and schooling in one institution.

The definitions of the seven categories of private schools are listed below:

- *Catholic schools* are divided into the governance categories:
 - *parochial*,
 - *diocesan*, and
 - *private order*.
- Non-Catholic religious schools are classified as *Other religious* and are divided into
 - *conservative Christian*, schools with membership in a conservative Christian association;
 - *affiliated* schools that have a formal or recognized association with an established religious group or denomination; and
 - *unaffiliated* religious schools that do not have a formal association with any organized religious group or religious association.
- Regular *nonsectarian* schools are those schools with a regular elementary/secondary program emphasis.

The analyses here are confined only to schools that include at least the senior secondary level (see footnote 1) because most of the research on private schools has been on the secondary school (e.g., Chubb and Moe 1990; James and Levine 1988 V2).

Standard errors indicating the accuracy of estimates are included in Appendix C. All comparisons discussed in the report are tested for statistical significance at the $\alpha = .05$ level, with appropriate Bonferroni adjustments for multiple comparisons.

To put the subsequent results about school sectors and organizational domains in perspective, three things should be kept in mind about the relative size of the public and private sectors (McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995). First, the majority of American students in 10th through 12th grades attend public schools with just about 1 out of 10 students attending some type of a private institution. Second, because private schools are smaller on average than public schools, about 1 out of 4 schools offering 10th through 12th grades in the country is private. Although private schools educate a modest proportion of the nation's total secondary students, they represent a substantial organizational share of all American secondary schools. Third, private schools are sponsored by a diverse set of agencies, most of which are affiliated with religious denominations.

ARE PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS DIFFERENT FROM PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

Educational Goals

The goals pursued by any organization influence its structure and ultimate functioning. This is a central conclusion from research and theory about organizations as rational social operations (March and Simon 1958; Scott 1981). Although goals and organizational actions are often imperfectly aligned, and disagreements on goals can exist across an organization, goals and actions are inextricable (Cyert and March 1963; March and Olsen 1976; Simon 1964).

This idea is true of schools and their central educational goals. Main educational goals may not influence everything a school does as an organization, but goals clearly have an influence over how schools function (Hannaway 1989; Weick 1976). Within the broad spectrum of formal education, a school can emphasize different goals as an organization, thus shaping the way it functions. Educational goals are ends to which schools strive, thus goals can influence how resources are distributed within the school, which organizational issues school administrators focus on, and numerous day-to-day decisions made by the school's faculty.

In SASS, the principal of each of the sampled schools was asked to choose which of seven educational goals was the most important for their school.² The seven goals are the following:

- building basic literacy skills (reading, math, writing, speaking)
- encouraging academic excellence
- promoting occupational or vocational skills
- promoting good work habits and self-discipline
- promoting personal growth (self-esteem, self-knowledge, and so forth)
- promoting human relations skills
- promoting specific moral values

For principals of private schools, an eighth goal—the fostering of religious or spiritual development—was included.³ Public schools can never hold this goal.

² Principals were also asked to select the second and third most important goals. For these results, see McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries (1995). Also, for a contrast between public and private school teachers' opinions of educational goals, see McMillen (1988).

³ Principals of public schools were asked about the goal of promoting multicultural understanding. However, since private schools were not asked about this goal, it is not included in this analysis since no direct comparisons can be made with private schools.

Table 1 displays the distribution of a school's most important educational goal across sectors. Figure 1 illustrates cross-sector differences by contrasting the results for the three educational goals most frequently chosen by schools: **building basic literacy skills, academic excellence, and religious development of their students.**

Given the wide variety of students within the public sector, it is not surprising that 4 to 5 out of every 10 public school principals rate basic literacy skills as their school's most important organizational goal. At the same time, almost 3 out of 10 public school principals indicate that academic excellence is their school's most important organizational goal.

Religious development of students is the most common central goal of all types of religious private schools.⁴ But at the same time, among all three types of Catholic schools, 3 out of 10 school principals indicate that academic excellence, not religious development, is their schools' most important goal. This proportion is similar to that found among public secondary schools. Of schools examined here, only principals of nonsectarian private schools have a majority of principals responding that academic excellence is the most important goal of their school.

These findings suggest several conclusions about goals of schools in public and private sectors. The simplest sector difference is that public schools are split between a primary goal of basic skills or a primary goal of academic excellence, whereas private schools are split between religious development or academic excellence as the primary goal. Also, the private sector is not uniformly different from the public sector. A substantial proportion of both public and private schools identify academic excellence as the most important educational goal. Although almost half of American private secondary schools rate religious education as the most important goal, there are also sizable numbers of religiously sponsored schools that see academic excellence as their most important educational goal. Further, within the private sector, distinct goal patterns emerge across schools. Catholic and unaffiliated religious schools are more evenly split between having religious development and academic excellence a primary goal than the conservative Christian and affiliated religious schools. The nonsectarian schools show a distinct third pattern in the selection of their most important goal, with over one-half of these schools holding academic excellence as their primary goal.

⁴ Because almost one-half of all private schools hold religious development as their primary goal, it is of interest to consider the second most important goal among these schools. As table A.1 in Appendix A shows, among Catholic schools, academic excellence is the overwhelming second goal; among other religious schools, there is more variation among secondary goals of academic excellence, basic learning skills, and specific moral values.

Table 1— Percentage of public and private secondary school principals reporting the educational goals as the most important, 1990-91

	Basic literacy skills	Academic excellence	Vocational skills	Discipline	Personal growth	Human relations skills	Specific moral values	Religious development
Total public schools	44.7	29.0	2.5	8.0	13.7	1.1	0.7	NA
Total private schools ¹	14.4	23.6	0.0	2.9	6.0	0.5	4.3	48.3
Private school type ¹								
Catholic								
Parochial	12.6	30.1	0.0	0.0	12.0	0.0	2.3	43.1
Diocesan	6.1	31.1	0.0	0.9	8.2	0.0	6.6	47.1
Private order	8.9	33.0	0.0	2.1	15.2	0.0	4.7	36.1
Other Religious								
Conservative Christian	12.7	11.6	0.0	1.4	0.4	0.0	5.6	68.3
Affiliated	15.5	16.3	0.0	2.0	6.2	0.8	1.1	58.1
Unaffiliated	20.3	25.7	0.0	7.9	4.0	0.0	5.7	36.5
Nonsectarian								
Regular	21.2	53.5	0.3	5.0	14.7	3.4	1.9	0.0

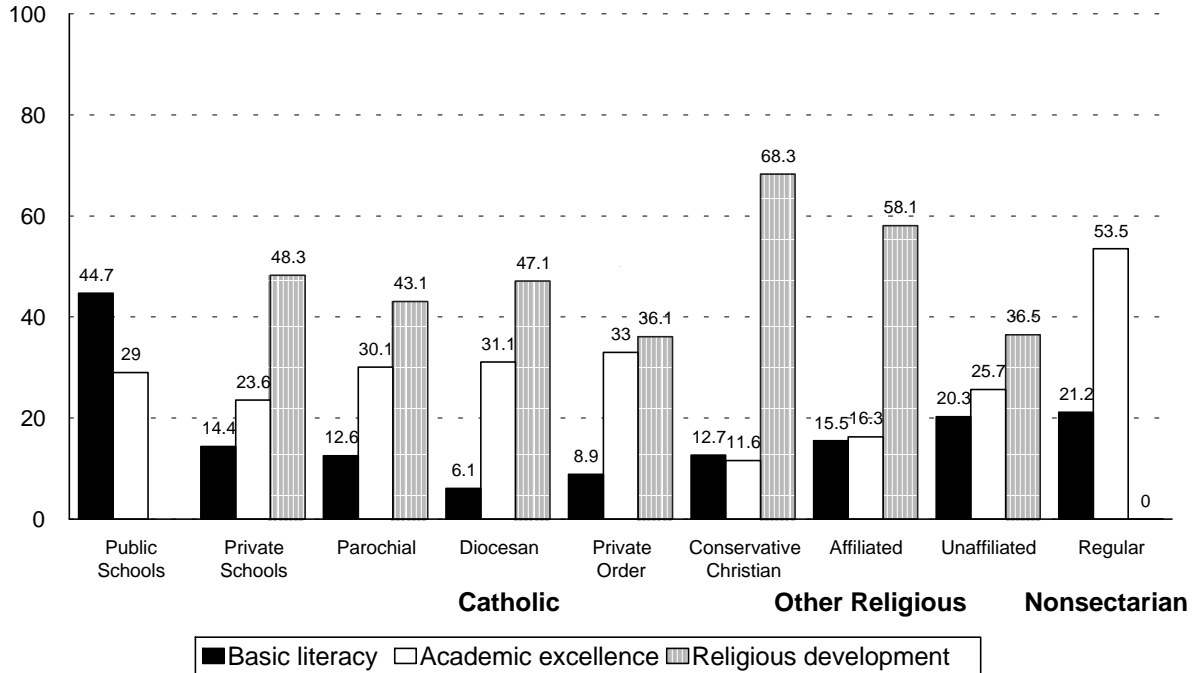
¹ Schools classified as Nonsectarian Special Emphasis and Special Education are not included.

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

These sector comparisons are drawn only on the main educational goal of a school. It should be kept in mind that schools can certainly have several important goals. For example, a religious school can have academic excellence as its primary goal, but it can also consider religious socialization as an important goal. The same could be true for the goals of academic excellence and promoting basic academic skills within a public school. Educational goals are not necessarily mutually exclusive; it should also be kept in mind that the primary educational goal of a school can exert more influence over the functioning of the school than secondary goals.

Figure 1. Percentage of public and private secondary school principals reporting selected educational goals as the most important, 1990-91



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

Professionalization of Principals

The principal as the school's chief educational leader plays a major role in shaping the nature of the organization. The principal in the American public system is often in a key position to shape the school to local concerns of the faculty, students, and community. For example, principals who take a professional approach to closely manage the instruction in a school may positively influence student academic outcomes (Shoemaker and Fraser 1981). Additionally, the complexity and larger size of secondary school academic programs place greater administrative responsibility upon the role of the principal. Because many private secondary schools are "stand-alone" organizations, this may be even more the case in the private sector (Kane and Mason 1992; McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995).

This report examines two characteristics of school principals that are commonly used to measure the professional development of individuals within a white collar occupation (Freidson 1973). First is the level of formal schooling that principals have attained in terms of their highest educational credential. Second is the degree to which principals participate (i.e., enroll) in on-the-job leadership and professional development training.

In comparing public and private schools, the results observed for principals' educational credentials resemble those reported earlier for educational goals. As shown in table 2 and figures 2-4, if the public sector is compared with the private sector as a whole, there are substantial differences across the sectors. Almost one-third of private school principals have a bachelor's degree or less (only 1.7 percent without a bachelor's degree), while few public school principals have less than a graduate degree. Nearly one-fourth (23 percent) of private school principals have a degree beyond the master's, while almost 40 percent of their public counterparts have advanced graduate degrees.

When comparing the distributions of principals' degrees between public schools and different types of private schools, however, a different conclusion emerges. For all three types of Catholic secondary schools, the credentials earned by principals are similar to those found among public schools. For these private schools, a few principals have only a bachelor's degree or less, over one-half have a master's, and one-third or more have advanced graduate degrees. The principals of non-Catholic schools with a religious orientation tend to have less formal education than principals in either the public system or the rest of the private sector. Principals of non-Catholic schools with a religious orientation also tend to have less teaching experience before becoming a principal.⁵ Regular nonsectarian private school principals' degrees are similar to public and Catholic schools with the exception that about one-tenth have a bachelor's degree or less.

⁵ This is true except for affiliated schools compared to parochial schools.

Table 2— Percentage of public and private secondary schools with principals' highest educational degrees and mean years of experience, 1990-91

	% Bachelor's degree or less	% Master's degree	Beyond master's and PhD	Mean number of years teaching	Mean number of years as principal
Total public schools	1.9	59.7	38.4	10.3	8.8
Total private schools ¹	33.0 ²	43.5	23.4	7.9	7.8
Private school type ¹					
Catholic					
Parochial	0.0	63.3	36.7	12.5	8.3
Diocesan	4.5	54.8	40.6	12.7	6.7
Private order	2.5	61.6	35.9	13.6	8.0
Other Religious					
Conservative Christian	57.5	29.1	13.4	5.1	6.9
Affiliated	30.0	51.0	19.1	7.3	8.8
Unaffiliated	47.5	30.1	22.4	6.1	7.8
Nonsectarian					
Regular	11.6	57.9	30.5	10.2	10.0

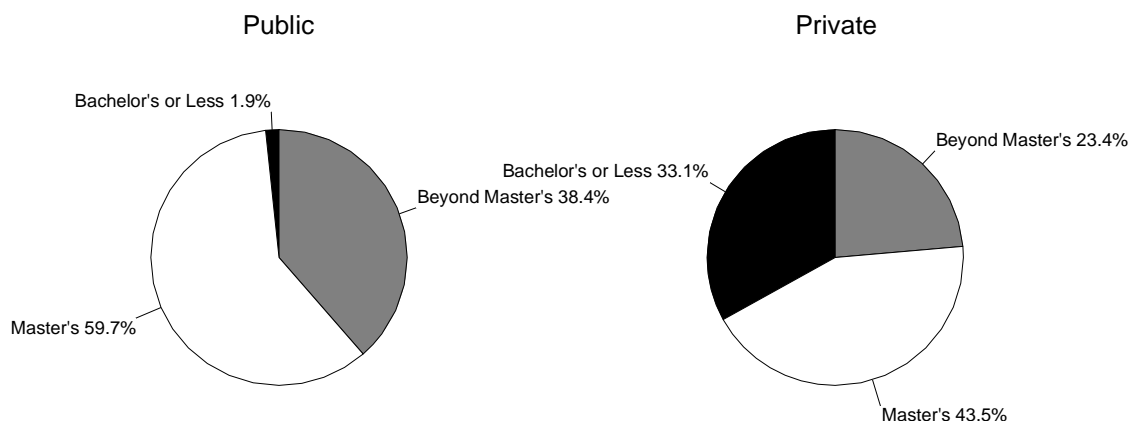
¹ Schools classified as Nonsectarian Special Emphasis and Special Education are not included.

² The majority of private school principals have at least a bachelor's degree; only 1.7 percent of them had less than a bachelor's degree.

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

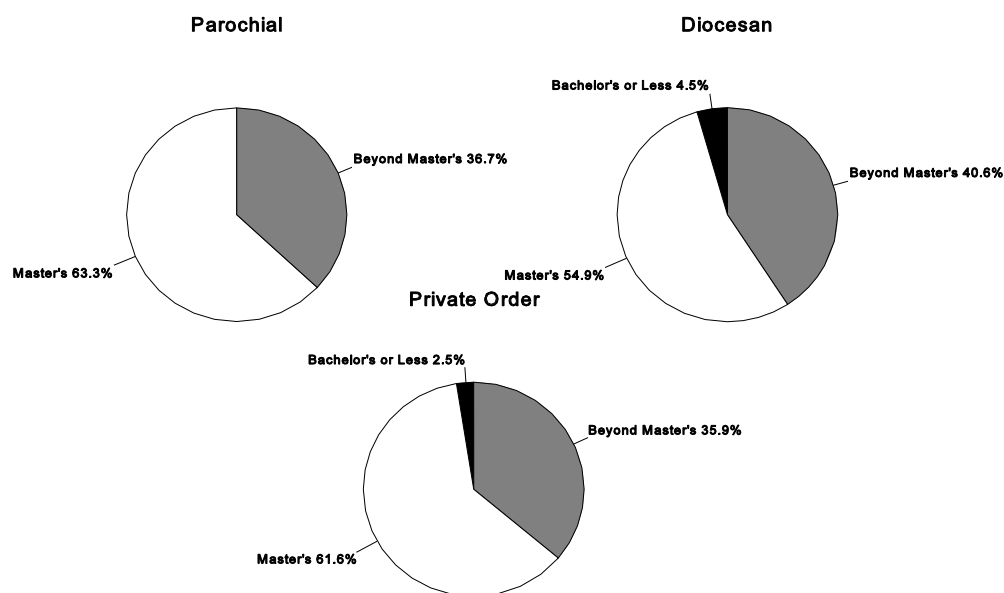
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

Figure 2. Percentage of public and private secondary schools with principals' highest educational level, 1990-91



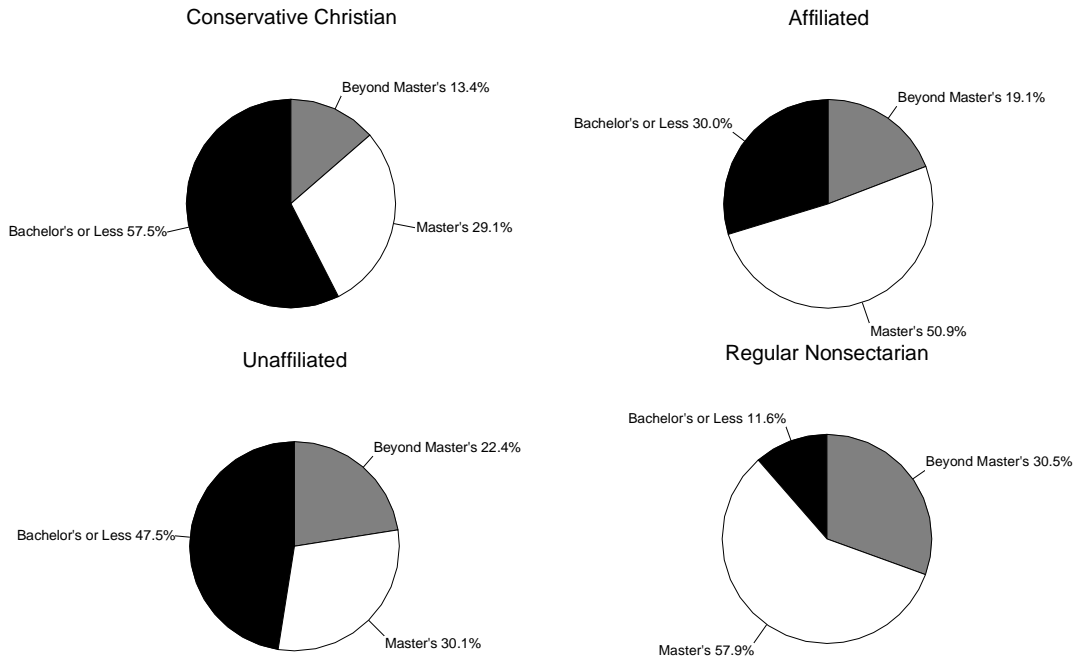
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

Figure 3. Percentage of Catholic secondary schools with principals' highest educational level, 1990-91



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

Figure 4. Percentage of other religious secondary schools with principals' highest educational level, 1990-91



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

Table 3 shows a cross-sector comparison of principal participation in leadership training aside from coursework for a degree. Overall, over 90 percent of public school principals compared to 78 percent of private school principals have received some kind of on-the-job leadership training. Over three times as many private secondary school principals than public school principals have never participated in on-the-job professional training, and more public school principals participate in all types of training than do their private school counterparts. As with educational credentials, participation rates vary across private school types. For example, only one-third of unaffiliated secondary school principals compared to close to two-thirds of diocesan school principals participated in management techniques training.

Table 3— Percentage of public and private secondary schools with principals who received leadership training, 1990-91¹

	Evaluation and supervision	Management techniques	Administrative internship	No training
Total public schools	86.0	73.4	36.9	6.8
Total private schools ²	62.1	53.1	18.3	21.6
Private school type ²				
Catholic				
Parochial	75.1	58.4	16.0	17.8
Diocesan	66.9	63.1	24.5	18.9
Private order	55.0	49.5	36.5	19.3
Other Religious				
Conservative Christian	70.7	61.8	16.0	12.3
Affiliated	59.5	44.8	11.8	29.9
Unaffiliated	45.6	34.0	16.1	38.0
Nonsectarian				
Regular	59.0	58.0	20.5	21.0

¹ Course work for a degree is not included.

² Schools classified as Nonsectarian Special Emphasis and Special Education are not included.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

Teacher Compensation

A school's faculty is the largest part of its total workforce, its biggest operational cost, and its single greatest human resource (U.S. Bureau of Census 1993). The kinds of teachers that a school can attract and retain has as much to do with its educational functioning as any other organizational quality. Although many factors contribute to the occupational match between individuals and a particular workplace, research on labor forces has consistently shown compensation in the form of salaries and benefits to be a main factor. All other things equal, higher compensation translates into employees with more education, skill, and motivation (Adams and Rosenbaum 1962). This holds true for the teaching occupation. This conclusion does not discount the importance of other factors that attract teachers to a particular school, such as compatibility with a school's educational approach, workplace conditions, credential requirements, types of students served, religious ideology, geographical location, and availability of positions. Although many factors influence what kinds of teachers schools attract, compensation is certainly a major one.

The Schools and Staffing Survey asked schools to report salary schedules for teachers with different types of education and teaching experience.⁶ These schedules, reflecting average compensation across categories of faculty, are more useful than average salary for comparisons between schools, since actual wages of individual teachers can fluctuate for numerous idiosyncratic reasons. Additionally, schools provided information on whether they offered various employee benefits to teachers.

There are clear and uniform differences between public and private schools in the salary schedules of both new and experienced teachers (see table 4). There are also some substantial differences in salary schedules across private schools. The three types of Catholic secondary schools and regular nonsectarian schools have higher average salaries than conservative Christian and unaffiliated religious schools.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of starting salaries for new teachers with a bachelor's degree for public and private sectors and for types of schools in the private sector. There is a large amount of variation between private schools and public schools. Private school starting salaries range from \$3,000 to \$40,000 with a median of \$13,534, while public school salaries range from about \$12,000 to just over \$35,000 with a median of about \$20,000. There is also considerable variation among private school types. For example, Parochial and diocesan schools have very narrow salary ranges, and 75 percent of starting salary schedules in conservative Christian and unaffiliated religious schools are below \$15,000.

Figure 6 shows that starting salaries offered by private schools are typically lower than public school starting salaries. Only a small proportion of private schools have starting salaries at or above the median public salary of \$20,000.⁷ This finding illustrates a commonly known fact about public and private schools (Chambers 1988, 1996).

Figures 7 and 8 report data on the salaries that schools offer teachers at the highest step of the salary schedules, i.e., teachers with the most experience and training. The patterns described above for starting salaries are evident here. See also McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries (1995) and Chambers (1995) for further cross-sector analyses of teacher salaries.

⁶ Schools without a salary schedule reported the lowest and highest range of base year teacher salaries. These numbers are used for a teacher with a bachelor's degree and the highest possible step on the salary schedule, respectively.

⁷ Also, between 9 to 20 percent of each type of private schools fell in the few thousand dollar range between their third quartile and public school median salary. Almost all conservative Christian schools are below the public school median salary.

Table 4— Mean annual salary from teacher salary schedule at different career stages in public and private secondary schools, 1990-91

	Normal Yearly Base Salary for a Teacher with BA/BS Degree and No Experience ²		Highest Possible Step on the Salary Schedule ³	
	Mean	Difference from the public mean	Mean	Difference from the public mean
Total public schools	20,614	NA	37,953	NA
Total private schools ¹	13,696	-6,918	23,218	-14,735
Private school type ¹				
Catholic				
Parochial	15,647	-4,967	27,225	-10,728
Diocesan	16,853	-3,761	31,536	-6,417
Private order	17,345	-3,269	31,936	-6,017
Other Religious				
Conservative Christian	10,589	-10,025	16,789	-21,164
Affiliated	14,846	-5,768	23,984	-13,969
Unaffiliated	11,882	-8,732	17,668	-20,285
Nonsectarian				
Regular	16,673	-3,941	31,540	-6,413

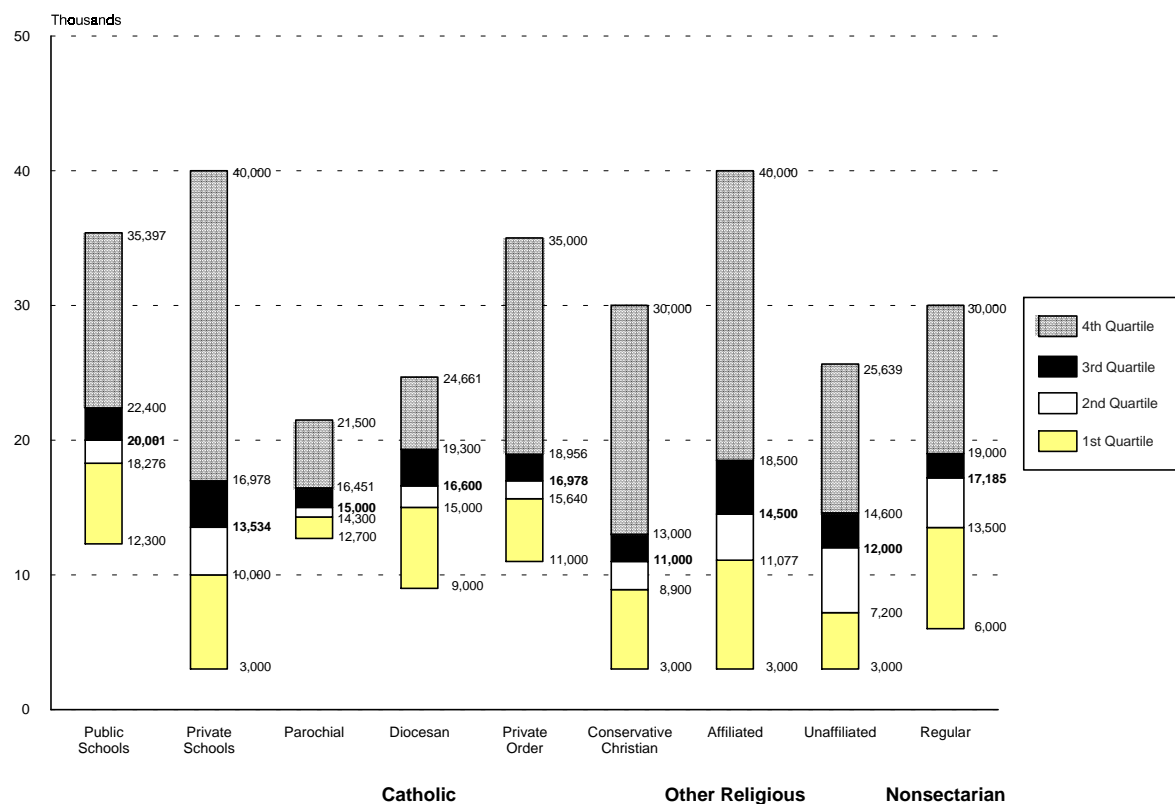
¹ Schools classified as Nonsectarian Special Emphasis and Special Education are not included.

² For schools that do not have a salary schedule, the lowest range of base year teacher salaries was used in the calculation.

³ For schools that do not have a salary schedule, the highest range of base year teacher salaries was used in the calculation.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1990-91 (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire for Public School Districts and Private School Questionnaire).

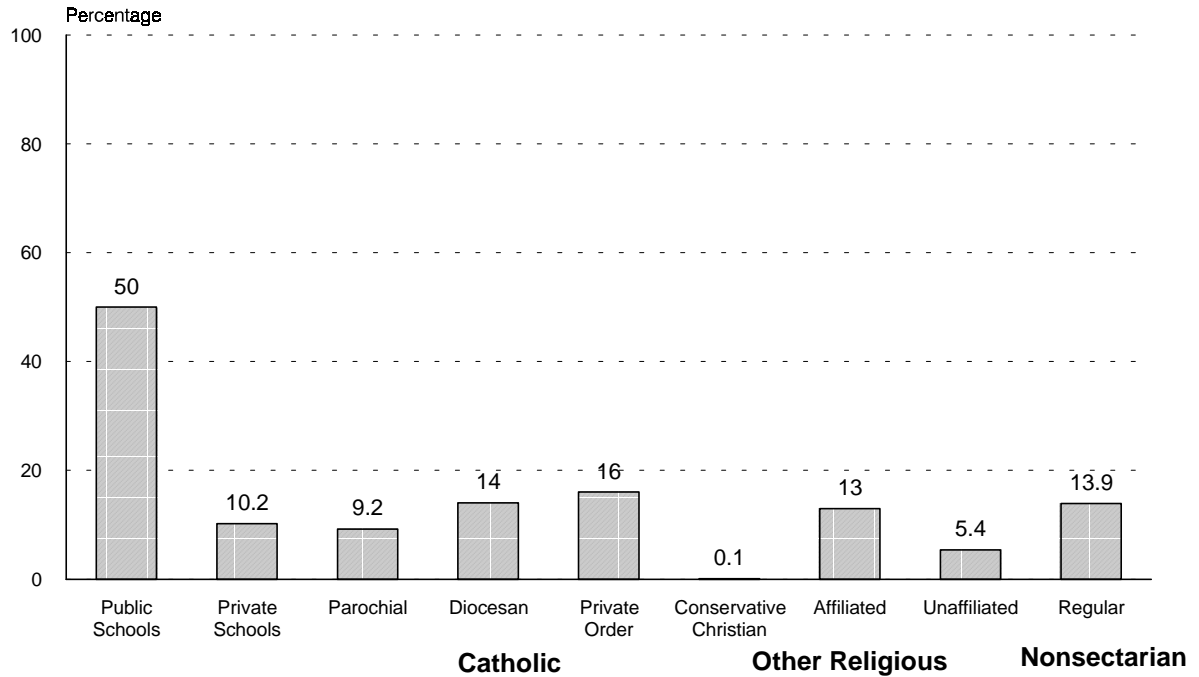
Figure 5. Normal yearly base salary for public and private secondary school teachers with BA/BS degree and no experience, 1990-91 (numbers show quartiles)



NOTE: Median salary is in bold.

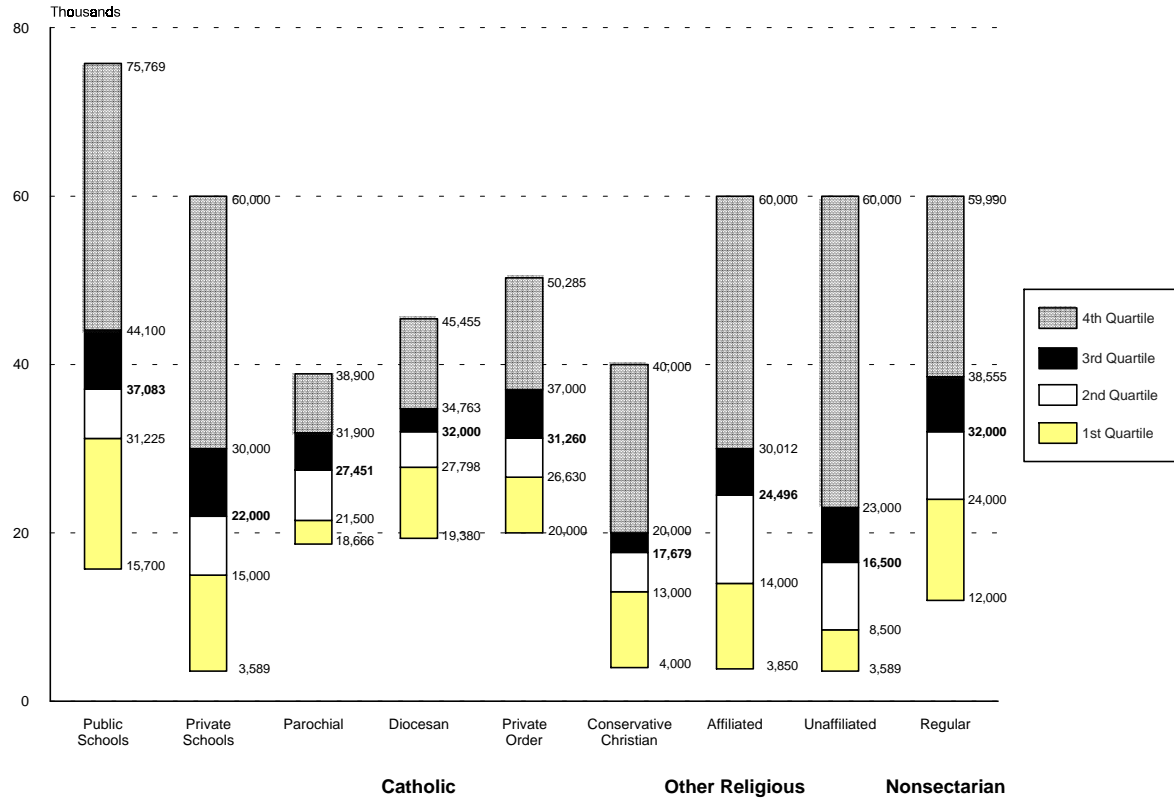
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire for Public School Districts and Private School Questionnaire).

Figure 6. Percentage of secondary schools equal to or above the median public school base starting salary (\$20,001), 1990-91



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire for Public School Districts and Private School Questionnaire).

Figure 7. Highest step on teacher salary schedule in public and private secondary schools, 1990-91 (numbers show quartiles)

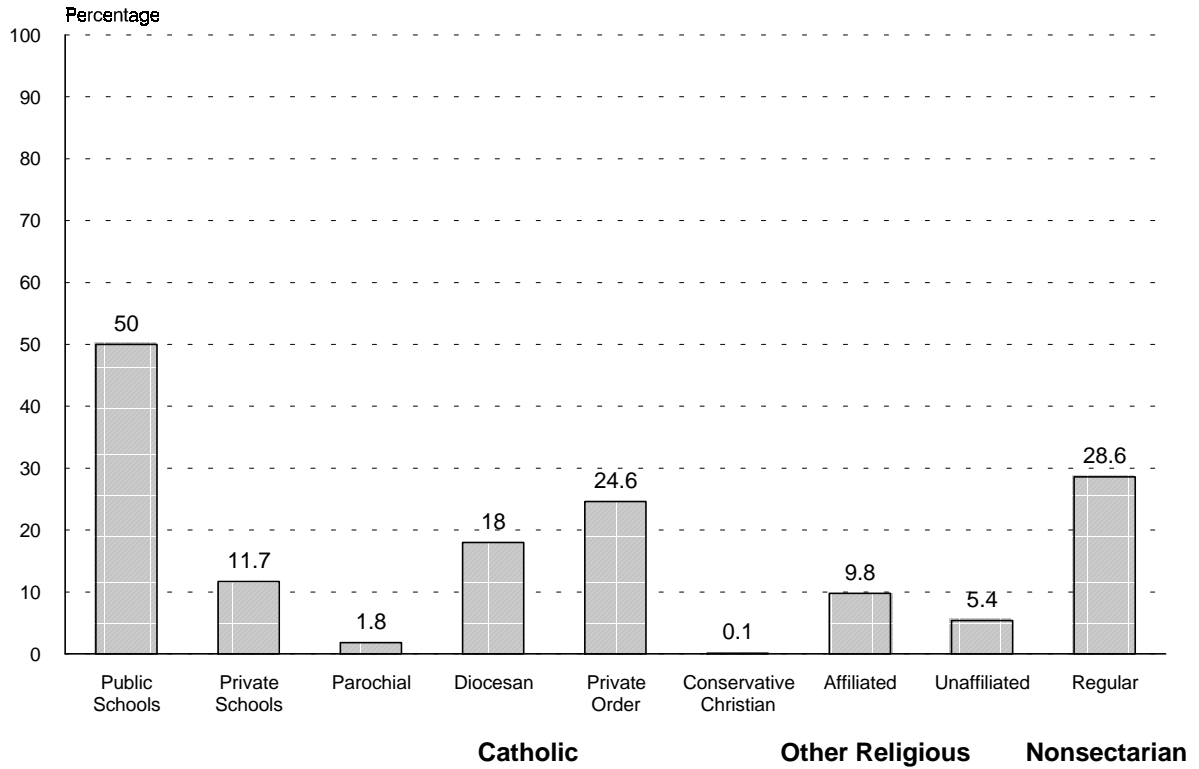


NOTE: Median salary is in bold.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire for Public School Districts and Private School Questionnaire).

A description of three main employee benefits (medical insurance, pension contributions, and housing) offered by schools is shown in table 5. Almost all public schools offer medical insurance, while just two-thirds of private schools offer this benefit. Similarly, two-thirds of public schools make contributions to teachers' pensions, but only about 4 out of 10 private schools make such contributions. Although there is a clear difference between public and all private schools across the three benefits, there is considerable overlap between parts of the public and private sectors. Like public secondary schools, almost all schools in each Catholic sub-sector offer medical insurance, and many Catholic schools make pension contributions. Few Catholic schools provide housing as a benefit. But some private schools do provide in-kind compensations such as housing to their teachers, and this may reduce the substantial difference in salaries (McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995).

Figure 8. Percentage of secondary schools equal to or above the median public school highest salary step (\$37,083), 1990-91



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire for Public School Districts and Private School Questionnaire).

Table 5— Percentage of public and private secondary schools providing selected benefits to teachers, 1990-91

	Medical insurance	Pension contributions	Housing
Total public schools	94.8	66.7	2.3
Total private schools ¹	66.7	41.4	12.2
Private school type ¹			
Catholic			
Parochial	100	70.6	5.7
Diocesan	97.5	88.2	1.2
Private order	95.0	69.8	4.1
Other Religious			
Conservative Christian	59.6	13.7	8.3
Affiliated	62.9	51.9	21.6
Unaffiliated	42.7	29.5	19.1
Nonsectarian			
Regular	70.9	61.6	17.5

¹ Schools classified as Nonsectarian Special Emphasis and Special Education are not included.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1990-91 (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire for Public School Districts and Private School Questionnaire).

Size of Administrative Staff

One major characteristic of organizations is the size of their administration. All complex organizations require administrative management to operate, but the size and nature of administration can vary greatly across organizations, even when organizations are of equal size. The school restructuring movement often alludes to differences between public and private schools in the size of administration and the nature of administrative control. In this report, sector differences in the size of administrative staffs within schools are examined, and sector differences in administrative control and decentralization are taken up in the following section.

Reported here are administrative staff ratios only within the school itself. Unfortunately, SASS does not provide information about the degree to which various administrative tasks are done outside of the school by staff at the district level for public schools or at supra-administrative units for private schools, such as diocesan offices for Catholic schools. But SASS does provide a detailed account of the size of the on-site administrative staff. To control for differences in the size across schools, we examine administrative staff size relative to the number of teachers in the school.

Table 6 displays the ratio of administrative staff to every 10 instructional staff (teachers) within the school. The administrative staff includes principal(s), assistant principal(s), guidance counselors, vocational counselors, and other professional staff such as curriculum specialists, administrative and business staff, social workers, and health professionals. Also, table 6 shows for comparison the ratio between three types of other personnel (teacher aides, librarians, and counselors) and teachers.

The first column of the table shows a clear sectorial difference with private schools having, on average, 1.3 more administrative staff per 10 teachers than public schools in the school building. But at the same time, interesting differences are found in the relative size of administrations among private school types.⁸ Catholic parochial and diocesan secondary schools have average administrative staff ratios similar to public schools, which could in part be a function of administrative control at the district or diocesan level. Private order Catholic schools, which do

⁸ Since SASS did not ask all types of administrators whether or not they play multiple roles, such as assistant principal and teacher of history, one may wonder if part-time administrators playing several roles is unevenly distributed across sectors and thus a source of bias in the administrative staff/teacher ratios reported in table 6. Additional analyses show that the ratios calculated on just full-time administrators were very similar to those reported in the table: School type (full-time ratio, mean number of full-time admins., mean number of part-time admins.), total public (1.4, 5.3, 1.0), total private (3.0, 3.7, 1.2), Catholic-parochial (1.7, 4.0, 1.9), diocesan (1.5, 5.0, 1.8), priv. order (2.4, 6.7, 1.6), conser. Christian (3.2, 1.7, 1.2), affiliated (2.5, 3.0, 1.4), unaffiliated (3.8, 3.1, 0.08), nonsectarian-regular (2.8, 6.7, 1.2).

not fall under the direct control of diocesan education offices, and some other religious schools (conservative Christian and affiliated religious schools) have higher ratios. The ratios between other types of personnel and teachers vary little either across sectors or among just private schools.⁹

Table 6— Mean ratio of administrator and other staff per 10 teachers in public and private secondary schools, 1990-91¹

	Administrative ² staff/teacher ratio	Teacher aides/ teacher ratio	Librarian and library aides/ teacher ratio	Counselor/ teacher ratio
Total public schools	1.7	1.2	0.4	0.6
Total private schools ³	3.0	1.1	0.4	0.6
Private school type ³				
Catholic				
Parochial	1.9	0.9	0.6	0.7
Diocesan	1.7	#	0.5	0.6
Private order	2.4	0.1	0.5	0.7
Other Religious				
Conservative Christian	3.6	1.8	0.3	0.8
Affiliated	2.7	0.8	0.4	0.5
Unaffiliated	4.0	1.1	0.4	0.3
Nonsectarian				
Regular	2.4	0.6	0.5	0.5

The entry is < 0.05 but >0.

¹ The number of half-time staff and teachers was divided by 2 and added to the full-time staff and teachers.

² Administrative staff include principal(s), assistant principal(s), guidance counselors, vocational counselors, and other professional staff such as curriculum specialists, administrative and business staff, social workers, and health professionals.

³ Schools classified as Nonsectarian Special Emphasis and Special Education are not included.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1990-91 (School Questionnaire).

⁹ One interesting exception is the very small number of teacher aides in Catholic diocesan and private order schools as compared to other private schools.

School-Based Control

Another major component of how a school is organized is the degree to which its on-site administration controls its own major educational decisions about faculty, students, and curriculum. In general, it has been argued that more school-based control and less “outside” control over such decisions produces more flexible and ultimately more effective schools (e.g., Rogers and Chung 1983; Gittell et al., 1972; Malen and Ogawa 1988), although other researchers question the positive effects of decentralization on schools (Cohen 1990). As noted above, public and private school comparisons have contributed to the support for school-based management reforms (e.g., Chubb and Moe 1990; Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993).

SASS asked school principals to indicate the influence various decisionmakers have on three important educational policies: teacher hiring, student discipline, and establishing the curriculum. Three types of decisionmakers are examined here: two located inside the school—principals and teachers—and one outside the school—the board of education or school board.

Figures 9-11 present a cross-sector comparison of decisionmaking. Principals reported that on all three types of policies, decisionmaking in private secondary schools is dominated by principals. Private school principals are more likely to have a greater influence over establishing the curriculum than public school principals.¹⁰ However, both private and public school principals have a great deal of influence on hiring (93 versus 84 percent) and disciplinary policy (91 versus 88 percent). Teachers in only a few schools in both sectors have a great deal of influence on hiring policies. Over half of schools in both sectors allow teachers to greatly influence disciplinary policy. About two-thirds of private schools have important input from teachers into curricular decisions, compared to just over half of public schools.

School boards have a similar impact on teacher hiring across public and private sectors, but there is variation among private school types. For example, boards of conservative Christian, affiliated, and unaffiliated religious schools are more likely to be important in setting hiring policies than boards of other private schools.¹¹ Public school boards are more likely to have an influence on curricular and disciplinary policies than private school boards. Again, there is variation among private school types. Conservative Christian school boards are more influential than Catholic diocesan, private order, and nonsectarian private schools in setting curricular and discipline policies.

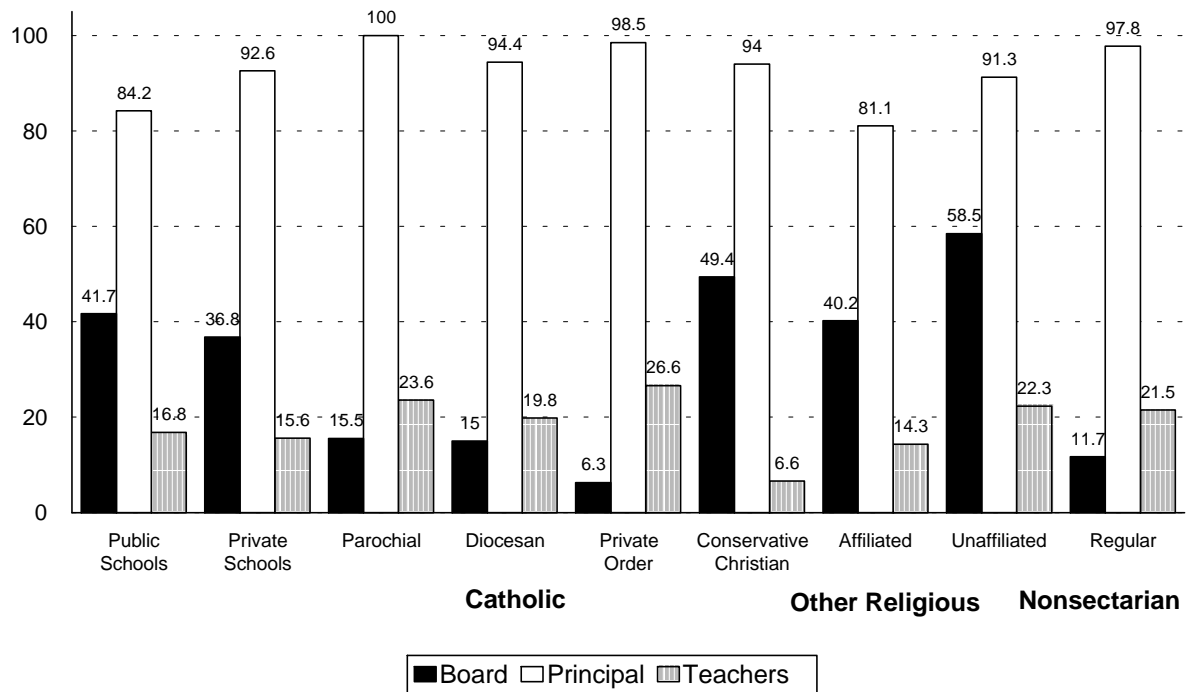
Decisions about organizational policy related to the educational functioning of the school tend to be more influenced by on-site personnel in private schools than in public schools. There are clear differences between the public and private sectors in the governance environment of schools. At the same time, not all types of private schools are alike in the degree to which principals and teachers influence key policies. Further, not all public schools lack a school-based

¹⁰ Influence is defined as 5 or 6 on a scale of 1 (none) to 6 (a great deal of influence).

¹¹ This is not true in the one case of affiliated compared to parochial schools.

approach to decisionmaking; for hiring and discipline policies, a substantial number of public schools have significant input from principals. Curricular policy is less a within-school decision in the public sector than in the private, but even so, half of public schools have major input from either the principal or the faculty.

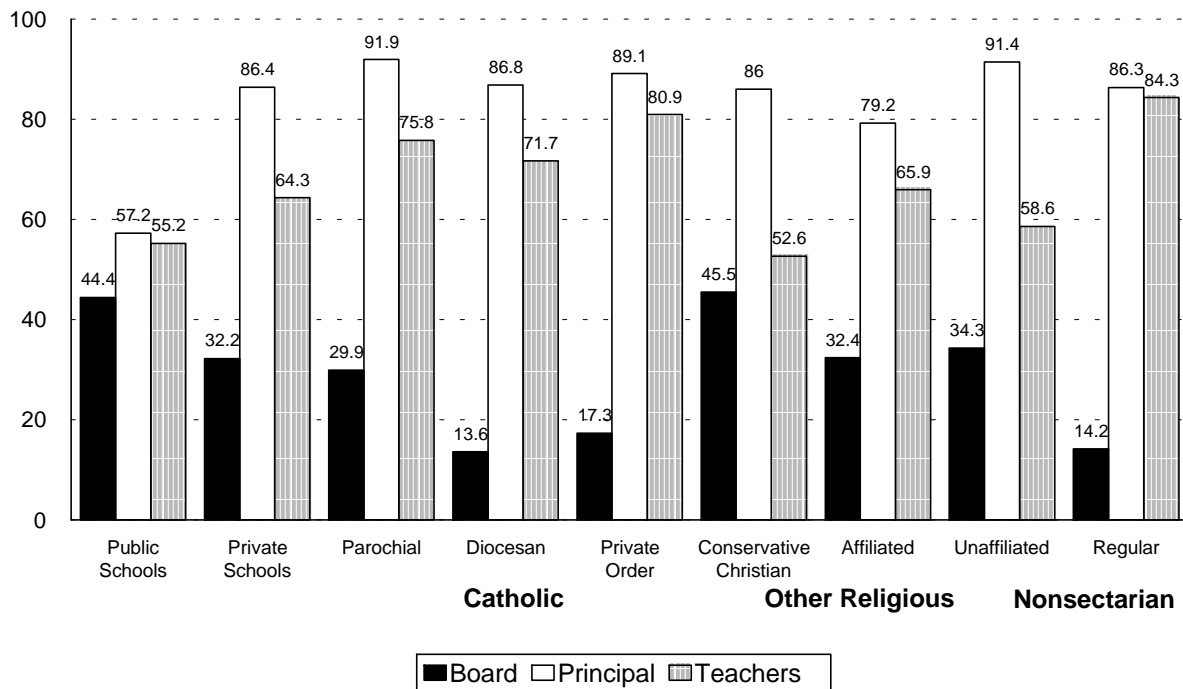
Figure 9. Percentage of public and private secondary school principals reporting a specific group having a great deal of influence over hiring policy, 1990-91



NOTE: Great deal of influence is defined as responses of 5 or 6 on a 1 to 6 scale.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

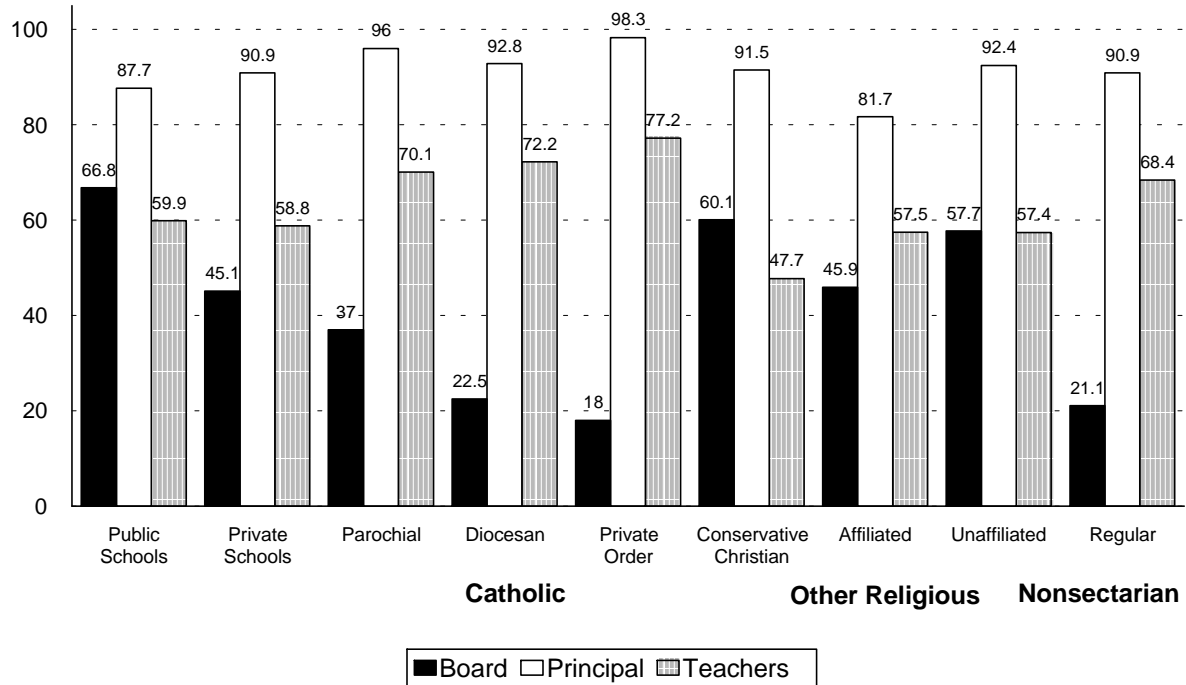
Figure 10. Percentage of public and private secondary school principals reporting a specific group having a great deal of influence over establishing curriculum, 1990-91



NOTE: Great deal of influence is defined as responses of 5 or 6 on a 1 to 6 scale.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

Figure 11. Percentage of public and private secondary school principals reporting a specific group having a great deal of influence over disciplinary policy, 1990-91



NOTE: Great deal of influence is defined as responses of 5 or 6 on a 1 to 6 scale.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Administrator Questionnaire).

Curriculum Emphasis

The amount of academic coursework a secondary school requires for graduation is one indicator of the school's general curricular emphasis. As noted above in the section on educational goals, schools in both the public and private sectors can have differing educational emphases. Specific academic requirements that schools maintain can further define the educational organization of the school. The National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended that college-bound students should take 4 years of English; 3 years of social studies, mathematics, and science; one-half year of computer science; and 2 years of foreign language.¹²

¹² These are only nominal requirements and do not include information on the level of curricular content of course, which could vary across sectors.

Table 7 shows that although private schools require more math and science, the differences are small, and in general public and private secondary schools have similar graduation requirements with the exception of foreign language. Although on average private schools require 1 school year more of foreign language instruction than public schools, there is variation among private schools in how much curricular emphasis is given to this subject. Private order Catholic and nonsectarian regular schools on average require 2 years, while parochial Catholic and conservative Christian schools require less than 1 year.

Table 7— Mean years of academic instruction required for graduating in public and private secondary schools, 1990-91

	English	Math	Computer sciences	Social studies	Science	Foreign language
Total public schools	3.8	2.4	0.3	2.9	2.1	0.3
Total private schools ¹	3.8	2.8	0.5	3.1	2.5	1.2
Private school type ¹						
Catholic						
Parochial	3.9	2.6	0.6	3.0	2.3	0.8
Diocesan	4.0	2.7	0.4	3.2	2.4	1.3
Private order	4.0	3.0	0.5	3.0	2.5	2.0
Other Religious						
Conservative Christian	3.7	2.7	0.5	3.1	2.4	0.6
Affiliated	3.9	2.9	0.5	3.3	2.7	1.4
Unaffiliated	3.9	2.9	0.6	3.2	2.6	1.1
Nonsectarian						
Regular	3.9	3.1	0.7	3.1	2.6	2.0

¹ Schools classified as Nonsectarian Special Emphasis and Special Education are not included.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1990-91 (School Questionnaire).

WHAT IS THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SECTOR AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION CONTROLLING FOR OTHER SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS?

Organizational structure is shaped by multiple factors, both internal and external, and this is true for schools as organizations (Scott and Meyer 1988). Along with sector membership, organizational features of schools can be structured by such things as the size of their enrollment, the type of students and families they serve, the type of community they serve, and so forth. As shown above, whether a school is public or private, as well as what kind of private school, can also be associated with some key organizational differences. It is, however, not possible from the descriptive analysis above to see how much of the observed sector differences are due to sector membership after taking into account other determining factors that happen to vary by sector. For example, private secondary schools on average enroll fewer students than public schools, and an organizational domain may be related to enrollment size as well as which sector a school is in (McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995).¹³

One way to assess the relative association between sector membership and school organization is to compare the strength of the relationship between sector and key domains after controlling for other school characteristics. In this report, this is done for selected indicators of each of the six key organizational domains of schools. The sector analysis for each of the organizational domains is done for the following indicators:

- 1) Educational Goals: three variables—whether or not a school holds basic skill enhancement, academic excellence, religious development as their primary educational goal
- 2) Professionalization of Principals: the principal's level of education
- 3) Teacher Compensation: starting teacher salary schedule
- 4) Size of Administration: ratio of school-building administration to 10 teachers
- 5) School-based Control: degree of principal influence over curricular decisions
- 6) Curriculum Emphasis: number of years of mathematics and science required to graduate

The first step of the sector analysis examines the relationship between relevant school characteristics and each indicator of a selected organizational domain. This is carried out in a multiple regression format, which provides information about the association between school

¹³ There are other forms of relationships between variables that the following analysis controls for, such as the classic spurious relationship, which in this case would mean that an organizational domain varies by enrollment size and not sector membership (see Simon 1971).

characteristics and a selected organizational domain in the form of a prediction equation.¹⁴ For example, this technique indicates the degree to which one could accurately predict a school's starting teacher salary knowing other characteristics about the school such as its enrollment size, location, type of community served, and so forth. The more accurate the statistical prediction, the stronger is the association between characteristics and salary level.

The second step adds in sector membership in the same fashion. An assessment is then made as to how the addition of sector membership improves the prediction of organizational domains beyond what is gained from knowing the other characteristics of a school. The more that sector information adds, controlling for other school characteristics, the more central is the relationship between sector and school organization. In each case, sector information includes public school and the seven private school types. The other relevant school characteristics, against which sector membership is compared, are: enrollment size; student/teacher ratio; school type (secondary, combined); community type (urban, suburban, and rural); geographical region (Northeast, Midwest, West, and South); size of minority enrollment; proportion of students applying to college; single-sex or coeducation status; parent influence; and degree of volunteer support from the community.¹⁵

Table 8 presents summary statistics for equations predicting each selected organizational domain from school characteristics and school sector. The first column shows the variation between schools on the organizational domain explained (on a scale of 0 to 100) using just school characteristics, and the second column shows the amount of variation explained when school sector membership is added.¹⁶ The third column presents the improvement in explaining variation between schools on each indicator of an organizational domain (i.e., "reduction in erroneous predictions") when school sector membership is added to the analysis.

The indicators are ordered in table 8 from those that are most related to sector membership to those that are least influenced. (Full information about each equation can be seen in Appendices B and D.) Whether or not a school has religious development as its primary goal is almost completely a function of its sector. No public schools can have this as a goal, nor would nonreligious private schools. Contrasted to this, however, is the relatively minor relative association between sector membership and whether or not a school has either basic skills or academic excellence as its primary goal.

Starting teacher salaries are also sharply defined by sector membership. A school's size, location, community, student body make-up, and so forth explains nearly 40 percent of school-

¹⁴ OLS estimates of regression parameters are used in each case. For ease of interpretation, OLS is used for the three categorical dependent variables as well; logit estimates of these three equations showed very similar substantive results.

¹⁵ The following categorical factors are measured as contrast variables with the comparison category in parenthesis: school sector (public); school type (combined); community type (rural); geographical region (South); sex composition (coeducational).

¹⁶ These are R^2 s that estimate the amount of variation for each domain explained by each set of independent variables.

to-school variation in the salaries of starting secondary school teachers, but when sector membership is added, over 60 percent of variation is explained, an improvement of 37 percent. This indicates that after controlling for the other school factors, sector membership is strongly related to starting teacher salary. For example, in table B.5 (Appendix B), the coefficients (effect are in dollars) for sector membership show that each private school type pays teachers less than public schools even after controlling for the other factors. This ranges from almost \$8,000, on average, less for conservative Christian schools to just over \$2,000, on average, less in regular nonsectarian schools.

Although not as large as for the religious development goal and teacher compensation, sector membership does add modestly to predicting a school principal's education level beyond other school characteristics.

The results for the other three organizational domains tell a different story for several reasons. First, the school characteristics are less associated with the other organizational characteristics in general. For example, only 14 percent and 9 percent of all of the variation between schools in administrative/teacher ratios and level of principal influence over curriculum, respectively, is explained by the other school characteristics. Second, adding sector membership to the equation improves explanation by only a small amount across administration size, school-based control and curricular emphasis. Sector membership adds from 1 to 5 percent to the prediction of these indicators. Although sector is related to each domain, it is not nearly as strong an association as with the other three domains.¹⁷

¹⁷ The individual coefficients (displayed in tables B.1 to B.9, Appendix B) show the actual size of any association between sector membership and organizational domain. For example, on average all types of private schools, except for the three types of Catholic schools, have larger relative administrative ratios than public schools. For instance, even after controlling for all other factors in the equation, conservative Christian schools add 1.2 to their ratio beyond the average public school.

Table 8— Comparing association between six organizational domains and school sector versus other school characteristics listed in order of largest sector influence (OLS Estimates)¹

	Percent Variation Explained by:		Proportion reduction in between-school variation on domains after school sector is included
	School characteristics ²	School characteristics plus school sector ³	
<i>Organizational domains</i>			
Educational goals – (religious development or not) ⁴	2	52	40.2 (F=305.1; 7, 3165 d.f.)***
Starting salary	39	62	37.3 (F=253.4; 7, 2983 d.f.)***
Principal education	8	17	7.1 (F=34.6; 7, 3159 d.f.)***
Educational goals – (basic skill or not)	6	9	5.3 (F=25.2; 7, 3165 d.f.)***
Principal influence over curriculum	9	14	5.1 (F=24.2; 7, 3165 d.f.)***
Administrator/teacher ratio	14	20	4.1 (F=19.3; 7, 3165 d.f.)***
Curricular emphasis – (# years math requirement)	18	19	2.1 (F=9.0; 7, 2881 d.f.)**
Educational goals – (academic excellence or not)	7	9	1.3 (F=5.8; 7, 3165 d.f.)**
Curricular emphasis – (# years science required)	7	9	1.0 (F=4.2; 7, 2881 d.f.)**

** $\alpha < 0.01$

*** $\alpha < 0.001$

¹ See Appendix B for variable definitions, actual estimated coefficients for each equation, and formulas used for calculating percent improvement in variation explained (i.e., “reduction in errors”).

² Variables included: school enrollment, student/teacher ratio, secondary school (vs. combined school), urbanicity (urban and suburban versus rural), region (Northeast, Midwest, and West versus South), parental influence, volunteer service, percent minority student, single-sexed schools vs. co-ed schools, and college application rate.

³ Includes all variables listed in footnote 2 plus private school types (parochial, diocesan, private order; conservative Christian, affiliated, and unaffiliated other religious; nonsectarian regular school versus public).

⁴ All public schools were coded as not having religious development as a primary goal.

CONCLUSION

There are organizational differences between public and private secondary schools, but the differences are not always uniform and pervasive. School sector is not a *simple organizational fault line* running through the nation's schools. There is considerable organizational variation among different types of private secondary schools and some significant overlap in the distributions of organizational features among public and certain types of private schools. It is not just that secondary schools are organizationally diverse—they clearly are—but the distribution of organizational features across sectors is often more complex than a simple public versus private difference.

For example, the patterns reported by principals about their school's most important educational goal reflect this complexity. There is a clear sector difference in that religious development of students is the most important goal among many private schools, but at the same time not all religiously sponsored schools claim religious development as their most important goal. A substantial proportion of Catholic and unaffiliated religious private secondary schools report that academic excellence is their chief goal. Similarly, although most public schools see improving basic academic skills as their chief goal, a substantial proportion of public schools hold academic excellence as their chief goal. And the proportion of public schools with this as their central goal is similar to the proportion among the three types of Catholic schools.

Sector patterns in principal professionalization and the relative size of administrative staff illustrate the organizational diversity of the nation's schools. There is a significant difference between public and private schools in the average level of principal education, but there are also marked differences among types of private schools. Similarly, there is a sector difference in the size of administrative staff within secondary schools, but this is not uniform across all private school types. Like educational goals, some private school types tend to look more like the public sector than other private school types.

The analysis also shows that there can be very little sector difference in some organizational domains. For example, except for foreign language requirements, the average course requirements for graduation vary little across sectors. At the same time, there can be large sector differences. Compensation for teachers and governance environment surrounding educational decisions are two domains with the clearest and most consistent sector differences. But even here, there is more to the picture than a simple public versus private difference. For example, although all types of private schools tend to pay new and experienced teachers less than public schools, there are wider ranges in starting salaries among private schools than public schools. And although the principal serves as a key organizational decisionmaker more often in the private sector, so do the principals in a sizable portion of public secondary schools.

The analysis of the extent to which sector membership explains variation between schools in several key organizational domains, after controlling for other school characteristics, points to the same overall conclusion that sector is not always a simple organizational fault line. Although sector membership explains a substantial amount of between-school variation for one type of primary educational goals and teacher compensation, even after holding many other school characteristics constant, it explains relatively little of the between-school variation for types of

goals, relative administration size, and decisionmaking power of principals. In terms of principal professionalization, sector membership is only modestly related after controlling for other characteristics. For some organizational qualities, sector membership is a major organizational divide, while for others it is only a minor one among many other factors.

Throughout its history, the American educational system has had numerous and diverse sponsorship of schools. Because schooling in the United States has been closely tied to local communities, many groups of Americans produced their own schooling. Religious and nonreligious groups alike have been able to form schools for their own interests and communities just as the more than 17,000 public school districts provide schooling for their local communities. As a result, although the private secondary sector is not particularly large in terms of overall enrollment, the fact that over one out of four secondary schools is private makes it a substantial organizational sector.

Contrary to some of the images emerging from the school reform and school sector debates, diversity in school sponsorship does not necessarily mean that there are uniformly similar organizations of secondary schools along either side of the public and private divide. The analysis here of six central organizational domains shaping secondary schools shows a complex picture of sector differences. Simple differences between public and private sectors are at times overshadowed by differences among private schools themselves. Similarly, there is often considerable overlap between parts of the public sector and parts of the private sector. And in other cases basic organizational features of schools in the United States, such as curricular emphasis, are relatively similar.

Awareness of these organizational patterns among secondary schools is helpful in providing a context to consider studies that compare public and private schools on various secondary school outcomes. Since outcome research has been particularly provocative for reform efforts aimed towards the public sector, a broader understanding of the organizational nature of the nation's secondary schools will inform both policy research and reform efforts undertaken to improve education for all students.

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