



Office of the Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement
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Private Elementary and Secondary Education, 1983
Enrollment, Teachers, and Schools

As a part of its legislated mandate to report on the condition of American education, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has surveyed American private elementary and secondary schools¹ several times over the past decade. The most recent survey, conducted in the fall of 1983, revealed that the past few years have been a period of growth for private elementary/secondary education, both with respect to numbers of schools and numbers of students.

According to the revised figures² for 1980 (table 1), private school enrollments at the prekindergarten through the 12th grade levels were 11.5 percent of the total enrollment at these levels. By 1983 this percentage had reached 12.6. Taking into account the revised data, the pattern of growth is consistent with data from earlier years.³ Thus, private education is assuming an increasing share of the American educational effort at the elementary and secondary levels.

A similar picture of recent growth characterizes the number and percentage of private schools. Revised 1980 figures estimated the number of private schools at 24,500 or about 22.2 percent of all elementary/secondary

¹For the purposes of the NCES survey, an eligible school met three criteria: 1) it included a 1st or higher grade; 2) it was housed in a facility other than a private home; and 3) it provided 4 or more hours of education per day for a minimum of 160 days per year. Children attending day care centers, nursery schools, and institutions without a 1st grade were not included.

²Earlier surveys produced data which are not strictly comparable to those collected in the fall of 1983 because available lists of schools were incomplete. However, the 1983 methodology was such that retrospective revisions of the next most recent data (1980) could be made. Unfortunately, no such corrections could be applied to years before 1980.

³U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private Schools in American Education, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.

schools. By 1983 these figures had reached 27,700 schools and more than 24.6 percent. However, as individual schools, private schools tend to average only about half the enrollment size of their public sector counterparts.

The following table summarizes these figures. Original figures for 1980, although not strictly comparable, are shown to illustrate the magnitude of the revision.

Table 1. -- Private and public schools and enrollments, elementary/secondary: U.S. totals, fall 1980 and 1983

	Total	Public	Private	Percent private
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Schools ¹				
Original 1980	106,700	85,900	20,800	19.5
Revised 1980 ²	110,400	85,900	24,500	22.2
Current 1983	³ 112,700	³ 85,000	27,700	³ 24.6
(In millions)				
Enrollment ⁴				
Original 1980	45.9	40.9	5.0	10.9
Revised 1980 ²	46.2	40.9	5.3	11.5
Current 1983	45.2	39.5	5.7	12.6

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²Private school figures revised from earlier publications.

³Preliminary estimate.

⁴Includes prekindergarten through grade 12.

Note. -- Totals may not agree because of rounding.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, surveys of private elementary and secondary schools; Digest of Education Statistics, 1983-84. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984; and The Condition of Education, 1984. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984.

Previous NCES surveys of private education used lists of private schools supplied by the Council on American Private Education and the National Catholic Education Association, supplemented by State education agency and other organizational directories, as a basis for the survey universe of schools. However, there has been continued concern that such lists might not be comprehensive. In order to meet this concern, NCES employed a complex new methodology in designing its 1983 survey. In addition to sampling schools from a "list" universe comparable to those used in earlier surveys, NCES constructed an additional sampling frame based on a group of geographic areas selected from among Census units. Within each of these selected units a search for uncounted private schools was conducted. For 1983, this previously uncounted segment of the universe was estimated to be 6,000 schools, 600,000 students, and 44,000 full-time-equivalent teachers. Additional methodological information is provided in the appendix.

Other Findings

In addition to providing the basis for a more accurate 1983 survey, the new methodology included provisions for retrospective revision of the previous (1980) survey data. By including a question in the survey as to whether or not the school had been in existence in 1980, it became possible to revise the 1980 survey results. The impact of the revisions is shown in the following table along with a disaggregation of the data by religious affiliation.

Historically, Catholic private education has accounted for the largest portion of the American private education effort. While this is still true, table 2 shows that by 1983 both "other affiliated" and "non-affiliated" segments of the private education enterprise had assumed considerably larger portions of private education activity. The Catholic share decreased correspondingly.

The NCES data on hand do not permit an examination of the growth in private education by grade level, since the previous NCES surveys did not collect enrollment by individual grades. However, as table 3 shows, Bureau of the Census data suggest strongly that much of the growth in Private education has been taking place at the lower levels of the system. These data reveal that enrollments in grades 1 through 12 have remained relatively stable over the last few years, while kindergarten and nursery school enrollment have shown steady increases. (In the further analysis of NCES data for 1983, limiting the public-private enrollment comparisons to grades 1 to 12, the percentage of private school enrollment is 12.0 percent, as compared to 12.6 percent when prekindergarten to grade 12 are included in the total. This is evidence that private schools accommodate a relatively higher proportion of prekindergarten and kindergarten pupils.)

Table 2. -- Private education statistics, original and revised 1980 data, elementary/secondary, by affiliation: 1980 and 1983

	Number of schools	Enrollment ¹ (In millions)	Number of FTE teachers ²
Total			
Original 1980	20,800	5.0	277,400
Revised 1980	24,500	5.3	301,000
Current 1983	27,700	5.7	337,200
Catholic			
Original 1980	9,600	3.1	145,800
Revised 1980	9,900	3.4	149,300
Current 1983	9,700	3.2	147,300
Other affiliated			
original 1980	6,500	1.0	62,300
Revised 1980	8,300	1.1	70,600
Current 1983	10,000	1.4	88,900
Non-affiliated			
Original 1980	4,700	0.8	69,400
Revised 1980	6,200	0.9	81,100
Current 1983	8,000	1.2	101,000

¹Includes prekindergarten through grade 12.

²Number of full-time-equivalent teachers, i.e., the number of full-time teachers plus the number of full-time positions accounted for by the aggregated effort of all part-time teachers.

Table 3. -- Private education enrollments, U.S. Bureau of the Census¹

Grade level	1979	1980	1981 ²	1982	1983 ³
(In thousands)					
1-12	4,231	NA	4,156	4,149	4,212
Kindergarten	432	486	545	553	656
Pre-K (Nursery)	1,233	1,354	1,396	1,423	1,541

NA - Not available

¹See section on Data Accuracy.

²Beginning with the 1981 data, the Census Bureau based its sample weights on the 1980 rather than the 1970 decennial census.

³Unpublished communication.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "School Enrollment - Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1982," Current Population Reports. Series P-20, No. 392, table 1 data for 1979 through 1982. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984.

As has been true in the public sector over the last few years, pupil-teacher ratios appear to have dropped in private education. Relatively speaking, Catholic schools have the highest ratios, followed by other affiliated and non-affiliated. The following table summarizes these results. Although not comparable, original 1980 data are presented to illustrate the impact of the revisions.

Table 4. -- summary of pupil-teacher ratios by affiliation, elementary/
secondary private education: 1980 and 1983.

	Total public	Total private	Catholic	Other affiliation	Non- affiliation
Original 1980	18.9	17.9	21.5	16.5	11.5
Revised 1980	--		22.5	15.7	10.6
Current 1983	18.6	16.9	21.7	15.3	11.6

--Not applicable.

Note. -- Data were not broken out by full- and part-time enrollments and thus ratios may be understated to an unknown degree. Ratios were computed from unrounded data.

Data Accuracy

The data presented in this bulletin were derived from a sample survey and are subject to sampling errors. They are also subject to non-sampling error of various kinds to an unknown degree. Such non-sampling errors may originate from confused or non-comparable responses to questions and procedures, self-selection factors, and the like. Sampling errors arise from the chance departure of the sample from representativeness of the population from which it is derived. Estimates of sampling errors for key statistics in this bulletin are found in the attached appendix.

Data reported in this bulletin vary from those collected by the Bureau of the Census through its October 1983 Current Population Survey. Preliminary Census enrollment figures (unpublished communication) compared to NCES figures, are as follows:

	<u>1-12</u>	<u>Kindergarten</u>	<u>Prekindergarten (nursery)</u>
Census (1983)	4,212,000	656,000	1,541,000
NCES (1983)	5,004,000	427,000	274,000

These differences have been noted for other recent years. One explanation lies in the definitions used. Census included in its data, children attending schools that operated nursery and/or kindergarten programs even if the schools had no 1st grades. The NCES definition excluded such schools, but included kindergarten and nursery enrollments in those schools that did meet its school definition. Therefore NCES counts at these levels are very different. Another important factor is that the two surveys addressed different groups of respondents. The NCES survey was addressed to the schools and their administrators, while the Census survey was addressed to households. It can be expected that these two respondent groups might well interpret definitions and terminology differently.

For More Information

Additional information from the 1983 survey data will be released in coming publications and in computer data tapes. Descriptions of the survey and its methodology in detail are available from the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Statistics, National Center for Education Statistics, 1200 19th Street NW., Washington, D.C. 20208, telephone: (202) 254-5530.

Appendix

Notes on Methodology

As noted earlier, the 1983 Private School Survey was conducted in two parts, one based on a "list" frame, and one based on an "area" frame. The area frame was used under the assumption that the lists available to NCES were not entirely comprehensive, and that list building techniques applied to a sample of Census areas would reveal some additional private schools.

This methodology, applied for the first time to surveying private education, required strong and effective support from all sectors of the private school community. The success of the survey and the resulting enhancement of the statistics on private education are due in large part to the manner in which all types of schools did lend such support.

List Frame Methods

NCES started with the most complete list available, which was comprised of some 21,000 schools, and conducted an update effort in 1983, based on review of new directories and other published sources. This effort resulted in a list of just under 27,000 schools. This frame was then stratified into 12 strata based on various combinations of religious affiliation and school level. A systematic sample of 1,320 schools was selected with probabilities equal to the square root of the enrollment of the school divided by the sum of the square roots of enrollment for all of the schools in the stratum. Inflating this sample provided an estimation universe, which was subsequently reduced by removing the estimated numbers of duplicates, non-respondents, coding errors, and ineligibles. The final estimated list universe of schools was 21,710. After followup procedures, the final response rate for the information presented here was 93 percent with little variation by affiliation category.

Area Frame Methods

The basic frame for the area sample was a list of all counties reported from the 1980 Census, adjusted so that independent cities were treated as counties and smaller counties were combined with other contiguous counties. This produced a list of 2,497 sampling units. These sampling units were stratified according to the four Census regions, in or out of a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), and above or below the median private school enrollment for that region and SMSA status, yielding 16 strata. The final sample was a systematic one comprised of 75 sampling units, 8 of which were drawn with certainty based upon populations exceeding 1.7 million in the 1980 Census. The remaining units were selected with probabilities proportionate to the square root of the population of the unit within the stratum.

For each of the sampling units in the area design, non-overlapping (with the list frame) schools were sought by reviewing directories of various types, e.g., local, private school organizations, telephone directories, and by telephone contacts with local school officials, churches, chambers of commerce, and selected vendors such as milk companies. These procedures produced 901 schools which met the NCES criteria as functioning private schools. Survey and followup produced a response rate of 88 percent. When weighted, these data inflated to approximately 6,000 schools nationally. Since the area frame was designed to be non-overlapping with the list frame, results for the area sample were combined with those for the list sample.

Estimates for key statistics based on the full, combined sample, along with variance estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals, follow.

1983 NCES private schools survey variance estimation and standard errors

Estimate Title	Estimate	Standard error	<u>95 percent confidence interval</u>	
			Lower	Upper
Total schools	27,700	710	26,300	29,100
Not religiously affiliated schools	8,000	440	7,100	8,800
Affiliated-Catholic schools	9,700	160	9,400	10,000
Affiliated-other schools	10,000	480	9,000	10,900
Total enrollment	5,715,000	120,000	5,479,000	5,951,000
Total FTE teachers	337,200	9,000	319,500	354,800

Note. -- All values are rounded based on the composite, full sample.