

STUDIES OFFER INFORMATION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

What is the value of a Christian school education? Parents choose Christian education for their children for a variety of reasons. Researchers have studied the ways in which Christian schools impact the lives of their students; below are summaries of two such studies. These researchers may have something to say about the tangible and intangible benefits of Christian education.

Study Supports the Importance of Religious Education

By ROXANNE HOLCOMB

Selecting an elementary school for their children can be one of the most important decisions parents will make. Early education lays the foundation for the child in many ways: academically, socially, and developmentally. Because all schools focus on these things, and because most schools use many of the same materials and standardized tests, it is not necessarily curriculum that differentiates the success of one school over another. What, then, sets one school apart from another? A recent study indicates a relationship between high levels of Bible literacy and academic performance.

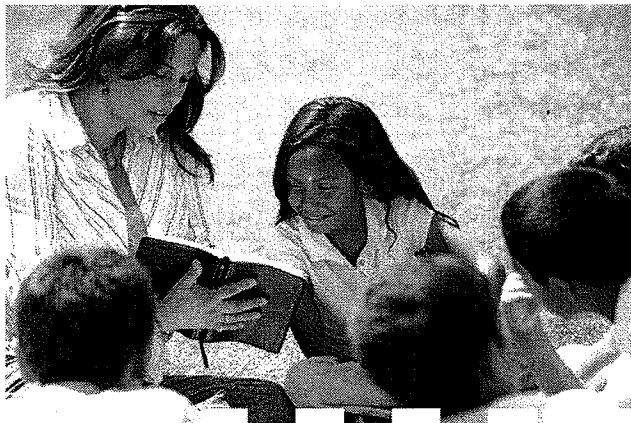
William Jaynes, California State University professor and senior fellow for Princeton's Witherspoon Institute, conducted a meta-analysis of 90 studies on the effects of schools. Jaynes writes, "The meta-analysis yielded some amazing results.

Not only did it indicate a powerful relationship between high levels of Bible literacy and strong scholastic results, but also of all the studies that have been undertaken on this topic not even one of them indicated a negative or neutral relationship. Every single study indicated that there existed a positive relationship. Such an overwhelming association is almost unheard of in the research world."¹

"To the extent that neither traditional public schools nor charter schools are succeeding on a broad scale, it appears that the best hope for American education is religious private schools," Jaynes said. "Not only are they considerably more economically efficient, but their students obtain better results; the nation should rethink its strategy of espousing charter schools and overlooking the benefits of faith-based education.

"The results indicate that attending private religious schools is associated with the highest level of academic achievement among the three school types [religious, public, and charter], even when sophisticated controls are used to adjust for socioeconomic status," said Jeynes. "I was quite surprised that students from charter schools did no better than their counterparts in traditional public schools."²

Jeynes reported that examining evidence from all 90 studies revealed that "students who attend religious schools score at an academic level about 12 months ahead of their counterparts. One of the most interesting findings in this study is that the achievement gap, as measured both by ethnicity/race and socioeconomic status, is roughly 25 percent narrower in faith-based schools than in public schools." And when a two-parent family and religious education are involved, there is absolutely no disparity between the races, according to Jeynes.



The study also examined student behavior and determined an even greater advantage for religious schools. "Students who attend religious schools have fewer behavioral problems than their counterparts, even when adjusting for socioeconomic status, race, and gender," Jeynes reported.

According to Jeynes, religious schools "have higher expectations of students and encourage them to take hard courses; students are often capable of achieving more than they realize."

Jeynes contends that "religious education is a vibrant part of the education system in the United States" and has called for further study on "why students from religious schools outperform students in public schools."³

Jeynes has participated in a conference call with the Department of Education about the quality of education in America, and he has been asked by the Obama Administration to come to Washington this fall (2013) to share more about his findings from this research. "I am hopeful that this study will

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cause the government to reconsider what is best for children," Jeynes said. "I would also like to see Christians develop more of a commitment to Christian education. Churches close Christian schools because they impede the economic growth of the church. We need to realize that we are educating future adult

church members. It is expensive to run a Christian school, and it is difficult for parents to pay tuition because we are an over-taxed society. The church needs to recommit itself to the value of Christian education," Jeynes said.

Jeynes's study was published in issue 3, volume 87 of the *Peabody Journal of Education*.

¹ www.voicescarryblog.com/guest-post-dr-william-jeynes-on-the-bible-in-sd-schools

² CAPE *Outlook* newsletter, May 2013 (www.capenet.org)

³ April 3, 2007, in a speech given at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

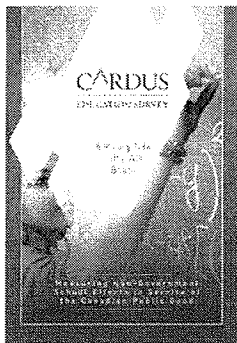
Roxanne Holcomb is the admissions and development director for Bethany Christian School in Oxford, Pennsylvania. She lives in Maryland with her husband, Larry, and has three adult children. Roxanne attended Philadelphia Biblical University, where she received a bachelor's of social work. Prior to that she enjoyed a lengthy backpacking tour of Europe, where she attended Swiss L'Abri.

CARDUS

Cardus Survey Provides Snapshot of Grads

In 2011 Cardus, a think-tank dedicated to social renewal, undertook a comprehensive study intended to measure three outcomes of Christian education: spiritual formation, cultural engagement, and academic development. The Cardus Education Survey studied the alignment between the motivations and the outcomes of Christian education. What follows is extracted from the executive summary of that survey:

Compared to their public school, Catholic school, and non-religious private school peers, Protestant Christian school graduates are uniquely compliant, generous, outwardly-focused individuals who stabilize their communities by their uncommon commitment to their families, their churches, and larger society. Graduates of Christian schools donate money significantly more than graduates of other schools, despite having lower household income. Similarly, graduates of Protestant Christian schools are more generous with their time,



participating far more than their peers both in service trips for relief and development and in mission trips for evangelization.

Administrators of Catholic and Protestant Christian schools both report emphasizing family as one of the most important values in their schools; Protestant Christian schools, however, are more likely to make family the top-ranked emphasis than any of the other options

given. This emphasis seems to be taking hold in Protestant Christian school graduates, who are having more children and divorcing less frequently than their peers from public and Catholic schools.

... Graduates of Christian schools are less engaged in politics than their peers, talking less about politics, participating less in campaigns, and donating less to political causes. Instead of the picture of the Christian positioned on the offense in the "culture war," these graduates harbor distinctive hope and optimism about their lives and their futures, and have the tools to engage in healthy relationships and address the problems in their lives. Protestant Christian school graduates are the only private school graduates more thankful for what they have in life than their public school peers. In addition, Protestant Christian school graduates are the only private school graduates to report greater direction in life than their public school peers, with non-religious private and Catholic school graduates feeling statistically the same as their public school peers. Unlike their peers in other schools, Protestant Christian school graduates do not report feeling helpless when dealing with problems in life.

■ This research finds that Catholic schools are providing higher quality intellectual development, at the expense of developing students' faith and commitment to religious practices.

Yet, despite these positive findings, Protestant Christian schools are experiencing difficulty balancing the various demands of the market. This research finds that Catholic schools are providing higher quality intellectual development, at the expense of developing students' faith and commitment to religious practices. Protestant Christian schools, conversely, are providing a place where students become distinct in their commitment to faith, but are not advancing to higher education any more than their public school peers. Graduates of Catholic schools and non-religious private schools show a significant advantage in years of education, while Protestant Christian school graduates have statistically identical attainment levels as their public school peers.

Additionally, graduates of Protestant Christian schools attend less competitive colleges than both their Catholic and non-religious private school peers. These outcomes closely reflect the val-

ues reported by school administrators: while Catholic school administrators rank university as the top priority more than any other option, more Protestant Christian school administrators rank family as the top emphasis of the school.

In summary, we find the motivations and outcomes of Christian schools to be in large part accurately aligned, but we question whether the motivations of Christian schools ought to be re-evaluated to provide a more comprehensive institutional program for the families which they serve and the communities in which they operate.

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