

Graduates Speak: New Data Offers Insights on Transforming U.S. Education

Latest Cardus Education Survey finds different school options provide distinct advantages and effects.



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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Amid heated

debate over improving American K-12 education, the latest [Cardus Education Survey \(CES\)](#) reconfirms that different types of U.S. high schools provide distinctive educational experiences for students, which can and do influence graduate outcomes:

- High school experiences and quality: Graduates from Protestant, Catholic, and nonreligious independent schools are significantly more positive in their ratings than those from public schools. Those from Protestant and Catholic schools believe that their schools prepared them well to have a vibrant spiritual life.
- Educational attainment and employment outcomes: Graduates from Catholic or nonreligious independent schools are more likely to attain a graduate degree and have higher income levels. Those from Protestant and Catholic schools are more likely to value having a job that is directly helpful to others.
- Civic behaviors and values: Graduates from Protestant schools and homeschooling have higher rates of charitable giving, regardless of income, and are more likely to volunteer than are graduates from public schools. Graduates from nonreligious independent schools are more likely to cite community involvement and tolerance as very important.
- Mental health and well-being: Graduates who were homeschooled report the lowest levels of depression and anxiety.
- Faith formation: Graduates from Protestant schools or homeschooling are much more likely to report that they believe in God and life after death and regularly engage in religious practices.

In identifying these differences, the CES is helpful for families in making schooling decisions for their children, as well as for policymakers working to make a range of schooling options accessible for families.

“Traditional public schools remain important and essential to the common good in the United States, but CES results have consistently shown that for many common-good outcomes, other school sectors match—and in many cases, outperform—public schools,” says Dr. Lynn E. Swaner, Cardus President – US and a report co-author.

“This suggests that transforming education in the U.S. must include increasing educational pluralism, access, and opportunity for students and families.”

Background on the CES:

The CES has been conducted four times in the United States: in 2011, 2014, 2018, and in 2023. It examines a range of outcomes for a nationally representative sample of high school graduates aged 24 to 39 across public schools, Protestant schools, Catholic schools, nonreligious independent schools, and homeschooling. One of the most comprehensive surveys of its kind, the CES seeks to understand school-sector influence on a range of academic, spiritual, cultural, civic, and relational outcomes for graduates, as well as to assess graduates’ life patterns, views, and choices and their contribution to the common good. The 2023 iteration of the CES also includes a new, explicit focus on mental health as well as questions about respondents’ personal values.

School-Sector Influence on Graduate Outcomes and Flourishing: Findings from the 2023 Cardus Education Survey was written by Dr. Lynn E. Swaner, Cardus President – US; Albert Cheng, PhD, a Cardus senior fellow and assistant professor in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas; and Jonathan Eckert, EdD, the Lynda and Robert Copple Professor of Educational Leadership at Baylor University.

Read and download the CES report [by visiting the Cardus website](#).

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