

Private School? Public School? Students Do Better in Private Schools, Researchers Find

A Harvard University study concluded that private schools perform better in 11 of 12 categories when compared with public schools, countering an Education Department report last summer that suggested parity.

The study, led by Paul Peterson at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, used the original data from the report that the department's National Center for Education Statistics issued July 14 and "an improved methodology" for interpreting the data, Harvard said in a statement.

Peterson and colleague Elena Llaudet "identified a consistent, statistically significant private school advantage," Harvard said.

The Harvard study counters critics of the Bush administration, including teachers unions, which argued that the original study showed that instead of spending public money on private schools-as supported by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings - the government should give more money to public schools. Spellings was criticized for not paying more attention to the study.

Peterson's study is an attempt by a "full-fledged, unabashed voucher advocate" to undermine the center's conclusions, union spokeswoman Janet Bass said. "Don't be fooled by the Harvard halo," she said.

The Center's study found that fourth and eighth grade public school students performed comparably with private school students in reading and math when variables such as income and race were factored out. It involved comparisons of 2003 test results from more than 5,000 public schools and more than 500 private schools. The Harvard researchers, under their interpretation of the center's figures, found private schools performing better in 11 of 12 instances, including in eighth-grade and fourth-grade reading.

Source: Detroit Free Press