

# Students Achievements In English At Jordanian Private And Public Schools And Parents Attitudes Towards Teaching Their Children At Private Ones: A Comparative Study

Amal Al-Natour, Al Yarmouk University, Jordan  
Dima Hijazi, Al Yarmouk University, Jordan

## ABSTRACT

*This study aimed at comparing private and public schools in terms of students' achievement in English Language and parents' attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools. To achieve the aim of the study the researchers conducted a test to measure students' achievements in English language and they also distributed a questionnaire among the parents of the students in private schools. The sample of the study consisted of 165 students from two public schools and two private schools, and 66 parents. Means, standard deviations and T-test were used to analyze the results. Results showed that there are statistically significant differences in students' achievement in English language between students of private and public schools in favor of private schools, it also shows that there are statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ) in the parents' attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools due to the academic level, gender, and financial level variables.*

**Keywords:** Private Schools; Public Schools

## INTRODUCTION

Illiteracy is a major obstruction to economic development in several countries. In the fight against poverty, expanding access to primary schooling is a widely accepted priority. However, developing countries encounter a daunting task in their efforts to expand the delivery of educational services due to rapidly expanding populations and tight government budgets. In addition, public educational expenditures are sometimes used inefficiently, providing school buildings where they are unneeded. The amount of pay given to the teachers who are unqualified or who do not perform, and the supplies that are provided to the school are inadequate and ill-timed.

Parents, increasingly, are responding to perceived inadequate public education via enrolling their children in private schools. Kingdon (1996a) explains, the extent of this phenomenon in developing countries may be under-appreciated. Governments sometimes prohibit, often regulate, and frequently ignore private schooling. As a result, data on the extent and distribution of such schooling are rarely collected by statistical agencies. Yet, as Hammer (1997) argues in the case of health investments, the impact of public investments can only be fully assessed in light of an understanding of private alternatives.

A main reason for the hesitance of governments to recognize private education as taking part in the overall educational policy is a concern for equity: equality of access to schooling may reduce earnings inequality without the need of controversial asset or income transfers, it is not clear that poor households can afford the alternative of

high-quality private schools. On the other hand, private schools that can deliver services at fees sufficiently low to attract poor families may not deliver services of adequate quality. Some contend that private schools that cater to the poor are exploiting low income, often illiterate, parents who are not capable of assessing whether their children are learning.

The consensus from studies of the relative effectiveness of public versus private schools in developing countries is that the predicted performance of children in private schools is higher than predicted performance in government schools (Cox and Jimenez 1991, Jimenez, Lockheed, and Paqueo 1991, Kingdon 1996b). Before one can advocate policies to expand private delivery of education, however, one needs to know how fees quality or distance affects education or learning of the children not currently in school. Unfortunately, most existing studies of public-private choice do not include the option of not attending school and thus do not shed light on this key group of children.

Conversely, studies that examine how fees, distance or school quality affect the likelihood of the no school option do not address public versus private delivery. Moreover, most do not have a direct measure of costs.' For example, Gertler and Glewwe (1990) ask how distance to local schools as well as the quality of local teachers influences the choice of going to no school, local secondary school, or boarding school. In the absence of direct information on fees, however, this rests on the assumption that parents treat the travel time of their children exactly how they treat out-of-pocket fees.

During the 1970s Jordan actively encouraged private schooling, to the point of nationalizing many private schools. Although this policy was reversed in the following decade, the trend towards secular (often English medium) private schools has accelerated in recent years; between 1991 and 1996 the percentage of children enrolled in private schools in the cities increased by 8 percentage points.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study stems from the importance of private schools in promoting and developing students' English language performance which is reflected positively on their achievements as proved in many related studies.

In fact this study presents the merits of such schools, that is, when given a choice, parents choose what they think is the best-performing school for their children. School performance generally depends on the quality of instruction provided, the backgrounds of individual students and the composition of the school's student body.

Throughout Jordan, schools – whether public or private – that serve successful students tend to have access to more resources for education and to suffer less from teacher shortages. In addition, advantaged students tend to have more positive attitudes towards education, so the disciplinary climate in classes populated by these students is generally more conducive to learning.

So preferring a private school over a public school for their child, parents are selecting the greater probability that their child will attend classes with peers of similar or higher socio-economic status, that the resources devoted to those classes, in the form of teachers and materials, will be of higher quality, and that those classes will be orderly and even inspiring.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem of this study stems from the fact that there are some differences in the performance of students in English language in private schools if compared with public ones, therefore, the question that should be tackled in this respect is, what are the reasons behind such differences. In fact, many parents think thoroughly if it worth to enroll their child in a private school. For parents, public schools do not provide a particular kind of instruction that is available in private schools. Parents may also feel that they are providing the best possible education for their child especially that private schools attract higher-performing students and better teachers than public schools.

Some school systems also promote private schools under the assumption that, with the flexibility that accompanies autonomy in designing curricula and allocating resources, private schools may be seen as stimulating innovation in the school system. And since that innovation helps private schools to compete for students, public schools may then have to re-think their own approaches to education to remain competitive.

Detractors of private schooling argue that private schools segregate students and reinforce inequities in educational opportunities, particularly when those schools charge parents a fee. With greater financial resources, detractors argue, these schools can afford to attract and recruit the best students and teachers.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to compare private and public schools in terms of students' achievement and parents' attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools, and to know the effect of academic level, gender, and financial level on parents' attitudes.

### **QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY**

- 1- Are there any statistically significant differences between the achievement of private schools' students and public schools' students in English language?
- 2- What are the attitudes of the parents of private schools' students towards teaching their children in private schools?
- 3- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the parents of private schools' students due to their academic level? (Bachelor degree or above, less than bachelor degree)
- 4- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the parents of private schools' students due to their gender?(male, female)
- 5- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the parents of private schools' students due to their financial level? ( high, middle)

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There is an extensive research literature that treats questions related to comparisons of public and private schools. An excellent review is provided by McEwan (2000), who argues that, with a few exceptions, there is generally insufficient evidence to reach strong conclusions with regard to such comparisons. Methodological difficulties found in this literature include the size and nature of the available samples of schools and students (e.g., small sample sizes, self-selection into public or private schools), as well as key student, family, school, and community variables that remain unmeasured but may be associated with both public versus private school attendance and student achievement.

A previous National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report on the achievement of students in private schools (Perie, Vanneman, and Goldstein 2005) compared the NAEP reading and mathematics performance of fourth-, eighth-, and (for some findings) twelfth-grade students attending public and private schools. Results were also presented disaggregated by type of private school. In general, the average scores in reading and mathematics of students in private schools were found to be higher than those of students in public schools.

A natural question is whether these differences can be accounted for by differences in the populations of students attending the various kinds of schools. The previous NAEP report also presented results disaggregated both by school type and by a single student characteristic such as race/ethnicity, gender, or student reported parents' highest level of education. Generally, the differences between public and private school student performance were diminished somewhat in these disaggregated analyses, but the average scores of private school students remained higher than those of comparable public school students; for example, students of the same race/ethnicity. The further question remains, however, as to whether these observed differences would persist if the comparisons were made between subgroups of private school and public school students who were similar with respect to several characteristics at once, for example, race/ethnicity, gender, and parents' education.

One recent study (Lubienski and Lubienski 2006) also employed hierarchical linear models to examine public versus private students' performance on the 2003 NAEP assessment. The general conclusion from that study was "... that demographic differences between students in public and private schools more than account for the relatively high raw scores of private schools. Indeed, after controlling for these differences, the presumably advantageous 'private school effect' disappears, and even reverses in most cases" (Lubienski and Lubienski 2006, p. 3). The analyses conducted for the current report differ from those reported by Lubienski and Lubienski in two main respects. First, they focused exclusively on mathematics in grades 4 and 8, while the current report has a dual focus on reading and mathematics. Second, they divided public school students into those attending charter schools and those attending public non charter schools.

## **DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Population of the study**

The population of the study consisted of all public and private schools in Irbid the First Directorate of Education.

### **Sample of the study**

The sample of the study comprised of (165) sixth grade students from four schools, and 66 parents of private school students, a questionnaire was distributed among them.

### **Instrument of the study**

Achievement test was conducted to check public and private schools students' achievement in English language, A questionnaire was distributed among the parents and this questionnaire was designed by the researcher herself, it consisted of 20 items. Many variables were included such as the gender of the parents', academic level of the parents, and also the financial level of the parents.

### **Reliability of the instrument**

To ensure the questionnaire reliability, the researcher applied it to a pilot sample of (10) parents excluded of the study sample in the same schools from which their children were studying with a two-week period between the first and second time it was distributed. The reliability of the test was calculated using correlation coefficient.

### **Procedures of the study**

This study was conducted over two month's period. This study was quantitative and qualitative in nature. At the beginning of the study, achievement test was conducted to measure public and private students' achievement in English language, then a questionnaire about parents' attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools was given to 165 parents of private school students. After that the researcher collected the questionnaires and collected data, and then this data was analyzed statistically.

### **Statistical analysis**

The results were analyzed for each item in the questionnaire using suitable statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation. The researcher also used figures to clarify the results more.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to compare private and public schools in terms of students' achievement and parents' attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools, and to know the effect of academic level, gender, and financial level on parents' attitudes. The researcher conducted a test to measure students' achievement. Therefore, the means, standard deviations and Two-Way ANOVA analysis of variance were used to analyze data. The results were displayed based on the questions of the research.

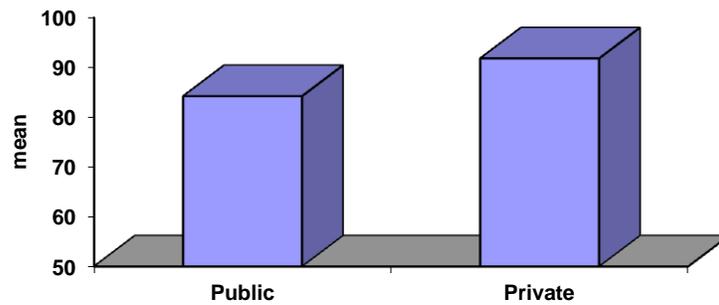
To determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the achievement of private and public schools students' in English language, a t-test for independent samples was conducted. Table 2 shows the results.

**Table 1: T-Test Results of the achievement of the two Groups on the test.**

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Ach	Public	94	84.23	8.91	-5.878	163	.000
	Private	71	91.83	7.20			

Table 1 shows that there is a statistically significant difference at  $\alpha=0.05$  between the achievement of the private and public schools' students on the test in favor of the private school students. This difference indicates that parents' choice to involve their children in private schools may have had a positive effect on students' achievement. The mean score for the private schools' students on the test was 91.83 while that of the public schools' students was 84.23.

Table 1 also shows that there is a statistically significant difference in standard deviation between the private schools and the public schools students' achievement on the test, was significantly better than that of the public school students, the results were 8.91, and 7.20.



**Diagram 1: private and public schools students' mean in the test**

To answer the second question about parents' attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools: What are the attitudes of the parents of private schools' students towards teaching their children in private schools? A questionnaire was distributed among them and means and standard deviation were calculated. Results were shown in table 2

Table 2 shows there are statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes towards private schools. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (20) parents about their attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that question 11 got the highest mean which was (4.53); question 16 comes next with a mean of (4.39).

Standard deviation for the eleventh question was (0.789) which is higher than ( $\alpha \leq 0, 05$ ) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for the sixteenth question was nearly the same; it was (0.857) which is also statistically significant.

Table 2: parents' attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	4.12	.851
Q2	4.18	.858
Q3	3.17	1.061
Q4	3.20	.996
Q5	4.14	.910
Q6	3.15	1.218
Q7	3.24	1.216
Q8	4.18	1.036
Q9	3.18	1.335
Q10	4.05	.999
Q11	4.53	.789
Q12	2.85	1.193
Q13	3.61	1.299
Q14	2.88	.937
Q15	4.00	1.095
Q16	4.39	.857
Q17	3.45	1.230
Q18	3.00	1.038
Q19	4.15	.881
Q20	4.33	.829
QALL	3.69	.187

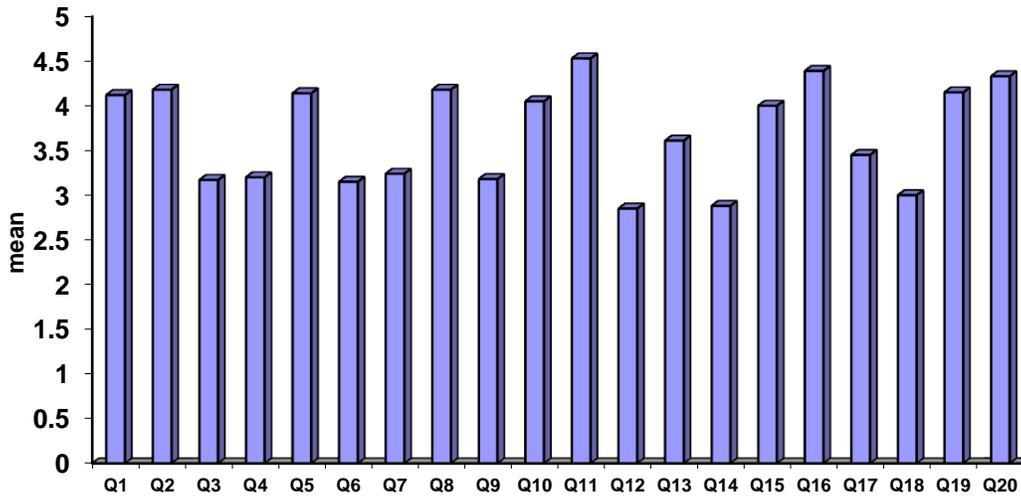


Diagram 2: parents' attitudes towards private schools

It is clear in the diagram that the mean of question 11 was the highest mean, question 16 comes next. The mean of the (1, 2,4,8, and 20) are nearly the same, so parents' attitudes towards private schools are positive attitudes.

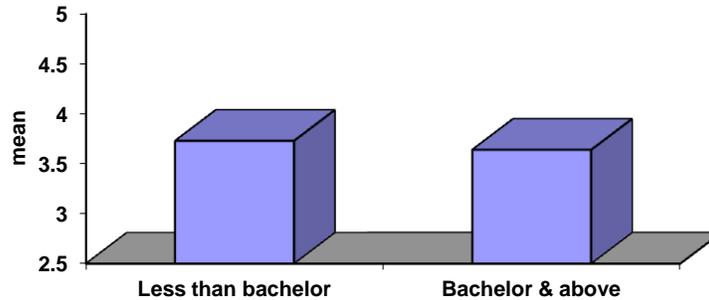
To answer the third question about parents' attitudes and the Academic level: Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the parents of private schools' students due to their academic level (Bachelor degree or above, less than bachelor degree)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 3 shows the results.

**Table 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to Academic level variable**

	Educational level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Att	Less than bachelor	36	3.73	.199	2.033	64	.046
	Bachelor & above	30	3.64	.162	2.071	63.980	.042

Table 3 shows there are statistically significant differences due to academic level variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (20) parents about their attitudes towards private schools. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that parents whose educational level less than bachelor degree got a higher mean than parents whose academic level is bachelor degree or above which was (3.73, and 3.64) respectively; this indicates that the academic level have an effect on teachers attitudes.

Standard deviation for parents whose academic level less than bachelor degree was (0.199) which is higher than ( $\alpha \leq 0, 05$ ) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for parents whose academic level is Bachelor degree or above was lower; it was (0.162) which is also statistically significant. So, table 5 shows there are statistically significant differences due to academic level variable in favor of less than bachelor degree.



**Diagram 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to academic level variable**

Diagram 4 shows that parents whose academic level is bachelor degree or above got lower positive attitudes towards private schools than those whose academic level is less than bachelor degree.

To answer the fourth question about parents' attitudes and their educational level: Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the parents of private schools' students due to their gender (Male, female)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 4 shows the results.

**Table 4: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to gender variable**

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Att	Male	29	3.61	.154	-3.455	64	.001
	Female	37	3.76	.187			

Table 4 shows there are statistically significant differences due to gender variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (20) parents about their attitudes towards private schools. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that male parents got a lower mean than female parents which was (3.61, and 3.76) respectively; this indicates that gender have an effect on teachers attitudes.

Standard deviation for male parents was (0.154) which is higher than ( $\alpha \leq 0, 05$ ) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for female parents was higher; it was (0.187) which is also statistically significant. So, table 6 shows there are statistically significant differences due to gender variable in favor of female parents.

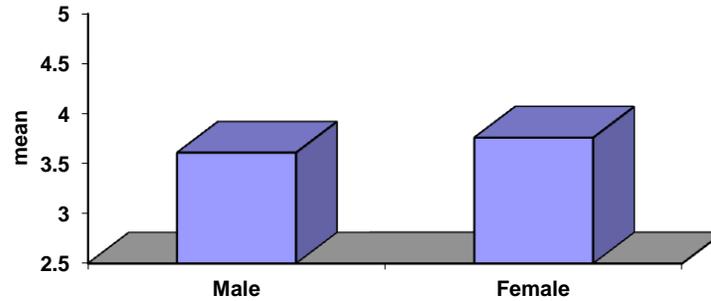


Diagram 4: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to gender variable

Diagram 4 shows that female parents got more positive attitudes towards private schools than male parents.

To answer the fifth question about parents' attitudes and their financial level: Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the parents of private schools' students due to their Income (high, middle)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 5 shows the results.

Table 5: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to financial level variable

	Financial level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Att	High	45	3.73	.197	2.809	64	.007
	Mid	21	3.60	.125			

Table 5 shows there are statistically significant differences due to financial level variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (20) parents about their attitudes towards private schools. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that mid income parents got a lower mean than high income parents which was (3.60, and 3.73) respectively; this indicates that financial level have an effect on parents attitudes.

Standard deviation for high income parents was (0.197) which is higher than ( $\alpha \leq 0, 05$ ) so it means that it is not statistically significant. Standard deviation for mid income parents was lower; it was (0.125) which is also not statistically significant. So, table 7 shows there are statistically significant differences due to financial level variable in favor of high income parents.

So, table above shows there are statistically significant differences in parent's attitude due to Income variable in favor of High income.

Diagram 5 shows that high income parents got more positive attitudes towards private schools than mid income parents.

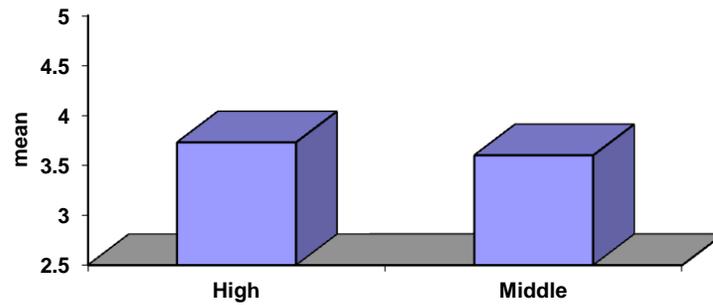


Diagram 5: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to financial level variable

## DISCUSSION

The anticipated school choice equation shows that parents respond to school quality. It is reasonable to assume that the response to quality measures is due to presumptions of improved educational outcomes. This has been verified using a study of subset of the children who were in the third grade was given a test of Urdu language and mathematics (Alderman, Orazem, Patemo 1996}." In general, it has proven difficult to measure the impact of school inputs on performance in either developed (Hanushek 1996) or developing countries (Hanushek 1993; Kremer 1993), Although there are many reasons for this, one is the potential importance of intangibles embodied in the management of the school.

Another is the importance of inputs provided at home. Thus, in anticipating the impact of school attributes on achievement, we control for parental inputs and private school status. Finally, there is a need to control for nonrandom assignment into private schools. This was done using the estimated predicted probability of private school enrollment.

School quality was found to have mixed effects on student achievement. High pupil-teacher ratios were found to have a uniform negative effect on student achievement, with the effect being particularly pronounced on language skills. This is also consistent with the large negative effect of pupil-teacher ratios on probability of selecting government schools.

Finally, private schools were found to have better outcomes than government schools. This observation is consistent with the apparent revealed preference for private schools over government schools, even by low income households facing higher costs for private schooling.

To conclude, this study demonstrates that schooling choices of poor families are very sensitive to school fees, proximity, and quality. Rather than being exploited by private schools, evidence suggests that strong demand for private schools is in response to better quality and learning opportunities offered by private schools.' The lower cost of operation and higher achievement tests for private schools suggest that public financial support of private schools are a practical option for increased delivery of schooling services to poor families.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

- Conducting other studies to investigate parents' attitudes towards teaching their children in private schools.
- Encouraging students and parents to engage private schools.

**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

**Dr. Amal Al-Natour**, United Arab Emirates University, United Arab Emirates. E-mail: Amal\_natour13@yahoo.com

**Dr. Dima Hijazi**, Al Yarmouk University, Jordan. E-mail: Deemahijazi2233@yahoo.com. Corresponding author.

**REFERENCES**

1. Aldetrnati, Harold, Jerc Bchrm.tn, D. Ross, and R. Sabot. 1996. "Decomposing the Gender Gap in Cognitive Skills in a Poor Rtiral Economy." *Journal of Human Resources* 32(1): 229-254.
2. Cox, Donald, and Emmanuel Jimenez. 1991. "The Relative Effectiveness of Private and Public Schools: Evidence from Two Developing Countries." *Journal of Development Economics* 34:99-121.
3. Gertkr, Paul, and Paul Glewwe. 1990. "The Willingness to Pay for Education in Developing Countries: Evidence from Rural Peru." *Journal of Public Economics* 42:251-75.
4. Hammer, Jeffrey. 1997. "Economic Analysis for Health Projects." *World Bank Research Observer* 12(1):47-72.
5. Hanuihek, Eric. 1996 "Measuring Inputs in Education". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. IO(4K9-3.
6. Hanuihek, Eric .1993. "Interpreting Recent Research on Schooling in Developing Countries." *World Bank Research Ohser'er* 10(2):227-46.
7. Jimenez, Emmanuel, Marlaint- E. Lockheed, and Vicente Paqueo. 199L "The Relative Ef- Hc ency ol Private and Ptibic Schools in Developing Countries." *The World Bank Research Observer* 6(2):2()5-18.
8. Kingdom, Geeta. 1996a. "Private Schooling in India: Size, Nature, and Equity Effects." London: *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(51), 21 December.
9. Kingdom, Geeta. 1996b. "The Quality and Efficiency of Private and Public Education: A Case Study of Urban India." *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 58(1):57-S2.
10. Lubienski, C., and Lubienski, S.T. (2006). Charter, Private, Public Schools and Academic Achievement: New Evidence From NAEP Mathematics Data. New York, NY: Columbia University.
11. McEwan, P.J. (2000). The Potential Impact of Large- Scale Voucher Programs. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(2): 103–149.
12. Perie, M., Vanneman, A., and Goldstein, A. (2005). *Student Achievement in Private Schools: Results From NAEP 2000–2005* (NCES 2006-459). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.