

Private Schools in California

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**Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)
3659 Tolman Hall
School of Education
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
Tel#: (510) 642-7223
Fax#: (510) 642-9148**

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PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN CALIFORNIA

Executive Summary

This PACE paper provides information regarding the number and types of private schools in California as well as their enrollments, size, and geographic distribution. It also summarizes current state regulations for private schools and highlights areas in which information gaps exist. Finally, the paper suggests possible ways in which existing private schools might expand or new private schools might enter the marketplace.

This report describes the following major findings:

- Private schools enroll nearly 10 percent (9.6%), or approximately 554,000, of California's K-12 students.
- California has 3,839 private schools, of which 2,707 enroll 25 or more students.
- Two-thirds of California's private school students attend school in urban areas.
- Information regarding tuition costs in private schools is not collected by any agency. Thus, it is not possible to provide data about average tuition costs.
- Private schools enroll fewer students per school than public schools. Catholic schools are larger than other private schools.
- Forty-five percent of private school students enrolled in schools of 25 or more attend Catholic schools; 38 percent attend other religious schools; and 17 percent attend independent schools.

Introduction

On November 2, 1993, Californians will vote on Proposition 174. If enacted, the proposition would change the California constitution, establish a school voucher system, and fundamentally alter the nature of education in the state. Under such a system, parents could choose to receive "scholarships," or vouchers, which they could use at participating private schools. Alternatively, parents could continue to send their children to the local public school.

Proposition 174 stipulates that a private school must enroll 25 or more students to be eligible to redeem vouchers and must satisfy the legal requirements which applied to private schools on October 1, 1991. Schools which discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin may not redeem vouchers.

If Proposition 174 is enacted, many existing private schools are expected to become voucher-redeeming schools. New schools are also expected to form in order to serve students with vouchers. Questions have arisen concerning the supply of private schools in California: How many private schools are there? What is their orientation - religious, secular, independent, or other? What is their tuition? How many students attend them? What types of students do private schools serve? Where are the schools located? What is the quality of these schools and what types of standards exist for them? Will there be sufficient space in private schools to accommodate voucher students? What types of new schools are likely to form under a voucher system?

Many of these questions cannot be answered because the information is not available. This paper thus examines the supply of private education from the following perspectives:

- How many private schools are there presently in California? What is known about them?
- What is known specifically about Catholic, other religious, and independent schools?
- If Proposition 174 passes, how might private schools accommodate new demand anticipated to be created by students with vouchers?
- What are the regulations governing private schools?
- What remains unknown about private education in California?

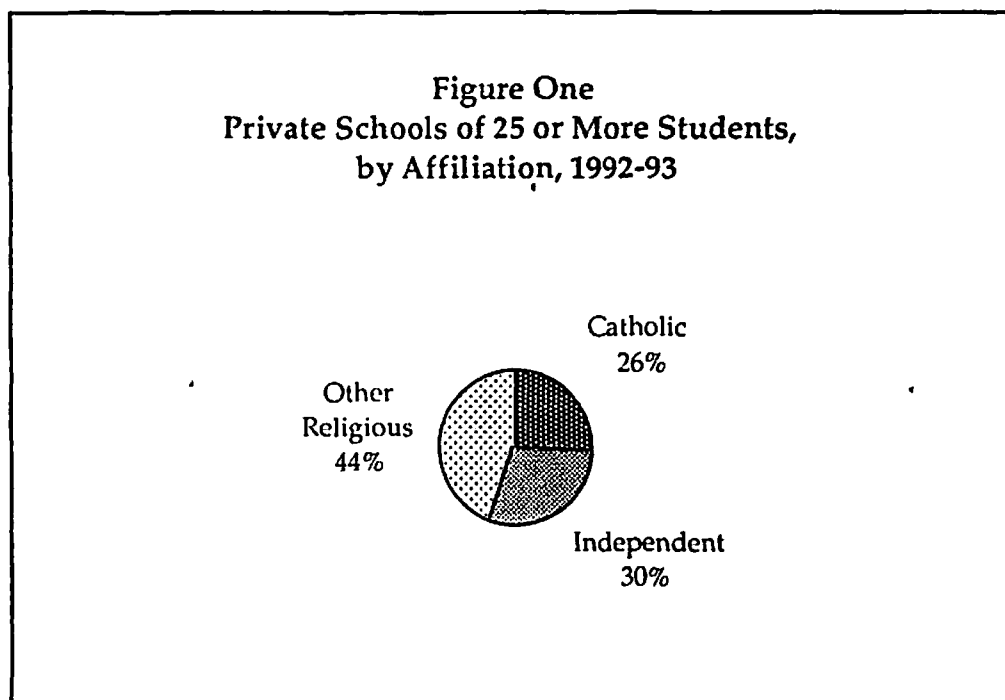
How many private schools are there presently in California? What is known about them?

The California Department of Education collects information on the number of private schools, their enrollments by grade level, their religious or secular orientations, and their locations. Some important questions, however, cannot be answered because the state does not collect the data. For example, it is not possible to determine the average tuition in California's private schools.

Private School Enrollment

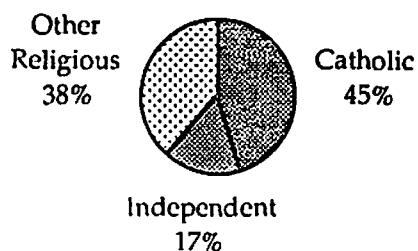
There are nearly 4,000 private schools in California (3,839), of which 2,707 enroll 25 or more students. Thirty percent of the private schools enrolling 25 or more students are independent private schools, 26 percent are Catholic schools, and 44 percent are other religious schools (Figure 1).

Private schools of all kinds enroll nearly 10 percent (9.6%) of California's students. In other words, more than 554,000 students attend private schools in California. Nearly 540,000 students attend schools that enroll 25 or more students.¹ Forty-five percent of students enrolled in schools of 25 students or more attend Catholic schools, 38 percent attend other religious schools, and 17 percent attend independent schools (Figure 2). The Department of Education estimates that an additional 10,000 students are educated at home or in schools of fewer than six students, but the Department maintains no enrollment records for these students.



¹ Almost 30 percent of private schools enroll fewer than 25 students. These schools account for only 3 percent of private school students, however. Half of all private school students attend schools of 300 or more.

Figure Two
Enrollment in Private Schools of 25 or More
Students, by Affiliation, 1992-93



Source: California Department of Education

School Size

Catholic schools tend to be larger than other private schools. The average Catholic school with 25 or more students enrolls 342 students, compared with other religious schools, which enroll 171 students, and independent schools, which enroll, on average, 114 students. As a point of comparison, the average public school enrolls 678 students. Figures 3, 4, and 5 display relative enrollments by type of school.

Figure Three
Number of Catholic Schools of 25 or More
Students, by Size of School, 1992-93

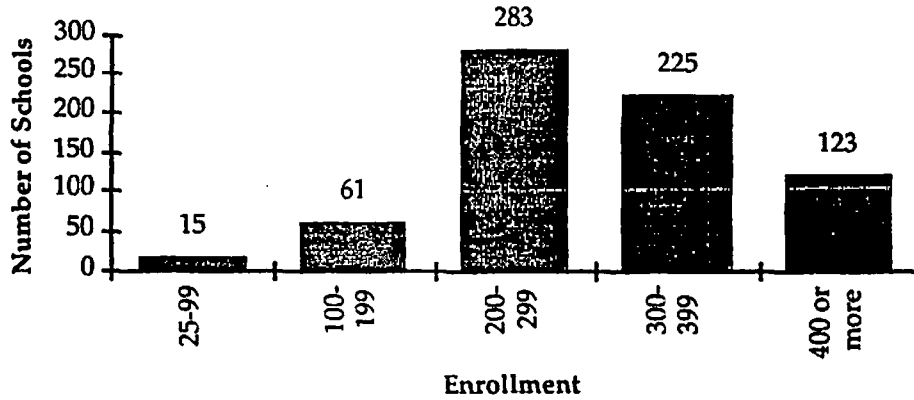
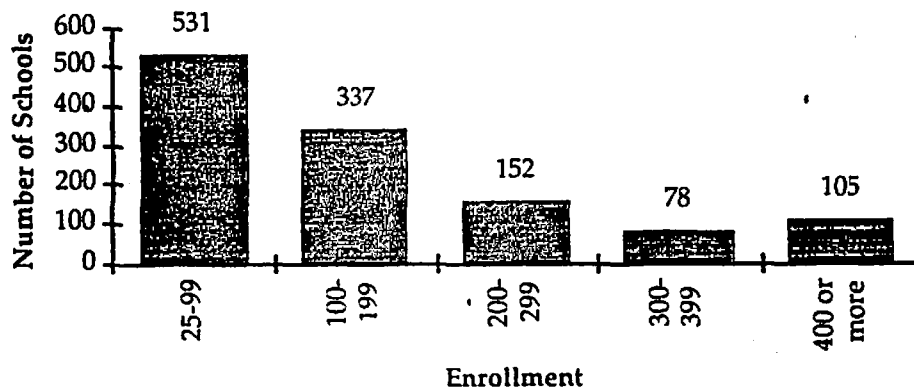
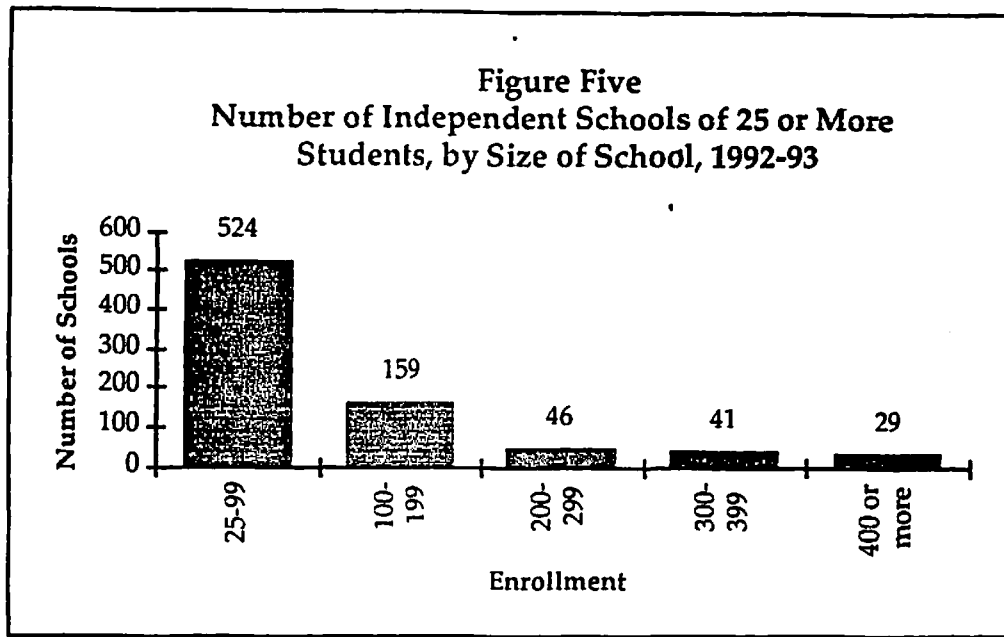


Figure Four
Number of Other Religious Schools of 25 or
More Students, by Size of School, 1992-93





Source: California Department of Education

Grade Level Enrollments

Figures 6, 7, and 8 display private school enrollments by grade level. As the figures indicate, one-third (33%) of Catholic school enrollments are in grades kindergarten through three. In independent and other religious schools, nearly half the enrollment is accounted for by grades kindergarten through three (49% and 47% respectively). Catholic school enrollments increase somewhat for grades four to eight (from 33% in K-3 to 40% in 4-8). However, both independent and other religious schools experience enrollment declines after grade 3.

All private schools - Catholic, independent, and other religious - show significant enrollment decreases for the high school years.

Figure Six
Catholic School Enrollments by Grade
Level, 1992-93

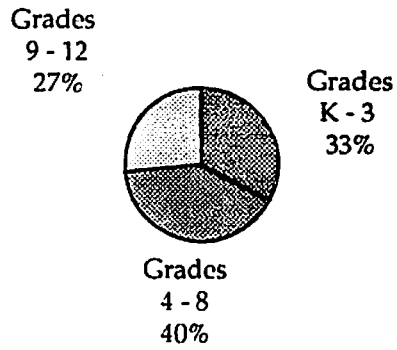
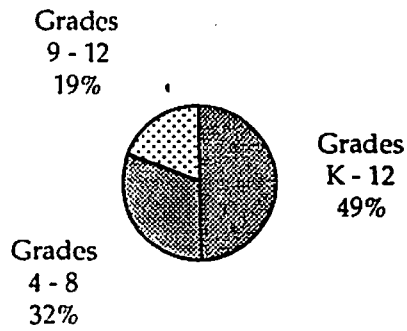
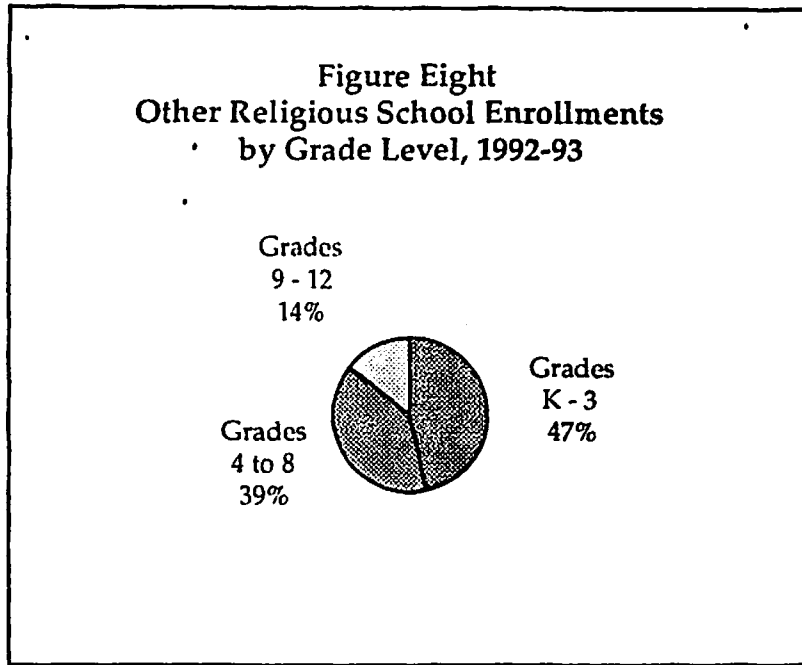


Figure Seven
Independent School Enrollments by
Grade Level, 1992-93



**Figure Eight
Other Religious School Enrollments
by Grade Level, 1992-93**



Source: California Department of Education

Geographic Distribution of Private School Enrollment

Two-thirds of California's private school students attend schools in California's urban counties. San Francisco County has the highest private school enrollment of any urban county in the state: 28 percent of San Francisco's students attend private school. The private school enrollment rate is much lower in Los Angeles County (13 percent). However, due to its enormous population, Los Angeles accounts for 38 percent of California's private school students. Table 1 displays private school enrollment distribution in the state's urban counties.

Table One: Private School Enrollment in Urban Counties, 1992-93

County	Private School Enrollment Rate	Percent of State's Private School Enrollment
Alameda	12%	5%
Fresno	4%	1%
Los Angeles	13%	38%
Orange	10%	8%
Sacramento	10%	4%
San Diego	8%	6%
San Francisco	28%	4%

Source: California Department of Education

Overall, 11% of students in urban counties are enrolled in private schools and 67% of private school students are enrolled in schools in urban counties.

Trends in Private Education

Private school enrollments grew by approximately 4 percent between 1982 and 1992. Public school enrollment increased by nearly 28 percent over this same period. Within the private sector, Catholic school enrollments declined by 6.7 percent. Data are not available to separate independent schools from other religious schools to determine their individual enrollment growth rates.

The California Department of Education has forecast that public school enrollment will grow by approximately 4 percent per year between 1992 and the year 2002. Private school enrollment is projected to grow at 2 percent per year.²

What is known more specifically about Catholic, other religious, and independent schools?

Catholic Schools

There are three types of Catholic schools in California: parish schools and diocesan schools, both of which are considered "parochial" schools, and religious order schools, which are considered "private." Parish schools typically serve elementary students and are presided over by the head of the parish, the pastor. Diocesan schools are usually secondary schools, presided over by the head of the diocese, the bishop. Religious order schools are governed by a board of directors or by the head of the sponsoring religious order, such as the Jesuits or the Sacred Heart. Catholic religious order schools tend to charge higher tuition than other Catholic schools, and often have more selective admissions requirements.

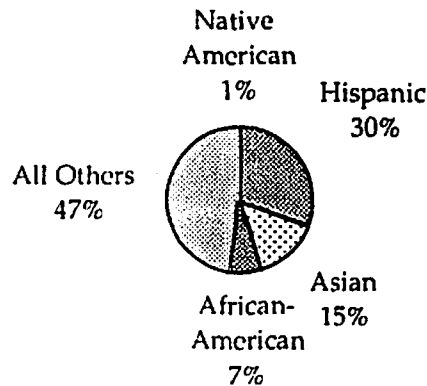
Catholic school enrollments declined 6.7 percent from 1982 to 1992. Between 1989 and 1992 alone, 14 Catholic schools in California closed. Six of these schools were in the San Francisco diocese.

Many Catholic schools are located in central city areas. As their Catholic parishioners gradually migrated to the suburbs, Catholic schools came to serve a greater proportion of non-Catholic students who resided in central cities. Many of these students are minority group members. As a result, minority enrollment accounts for 52 percent of the state's Catholic school students.³ Hispanics are the largest non-white ethnic group in the Catholic schools, comprising 30 percent of Catholic school enrollments. Figure 9 displays Catholic school enrollment by race and ethnicity.

² These projections were made without considering the effects of the passage of Proposition 174.

³ Minority enrollment in California is slightly underestimated because Pacific Islanders and Filipinos are grouped with white students in the "all other" category.

Figure Nine
Catholic School Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity,
1992-93



Source: California Catholic Conference

All Catholic schools in California are accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the Western Catholic Educational Association (WCEA). The WASC accreditation process requires a school to complete a comprehensive self-examination to evaluate its performance along a number of dimensions, and requires an evaluation by an independent committee of representatives from educational organizations. WASC also accredits public secondary schools and public and private colleges.

Data are not available to determine the average cost of Catholic school tuition in California. What is known is that religious order schools tend to charge higher tuition than parish or diocesan schools. Tuition is often higher for non-Catholic students and for students from other parishes. Many Catholic schools also provide tuition assistance for low income students.

Other religious schools

The category "other religious" schools includes all non-Catholic religious schools. Table 2 depicts the types and numbers of "other religious" schools. Conservative Christian schools, which are fundamentalist or evangelical in nature, are a subset of all Christian schools, and are believed to comprise a large portion of the "other religious" category. However, it is not possible to determine the number of conservative Christian schools because they cut across denominations and are not separable from non-conservative Christian schools.

Table Two: Other Religious Schools Enrolling 25 or More Students, 1992-93

Denomination	Number of Schools
Baptist	166
Lutheran	158
Seventh Day Adventist	100
Assembly of God	72
Episcopal	37
Jewish	30
Nazarene	23
Pentacostal	23
Apostolic	22
Presbyterian	15
Foursquare	13
Methodist	12
Brethren	11
Calvary Chapel	11
Interdenominational	34
Other Church-Affiliated	191
Religious, Not Church-Affiliated	283
Total	1,201

Source: California Department of Education

No statistics are collected concerning the minority enrollments of schools in the “other religious” category.

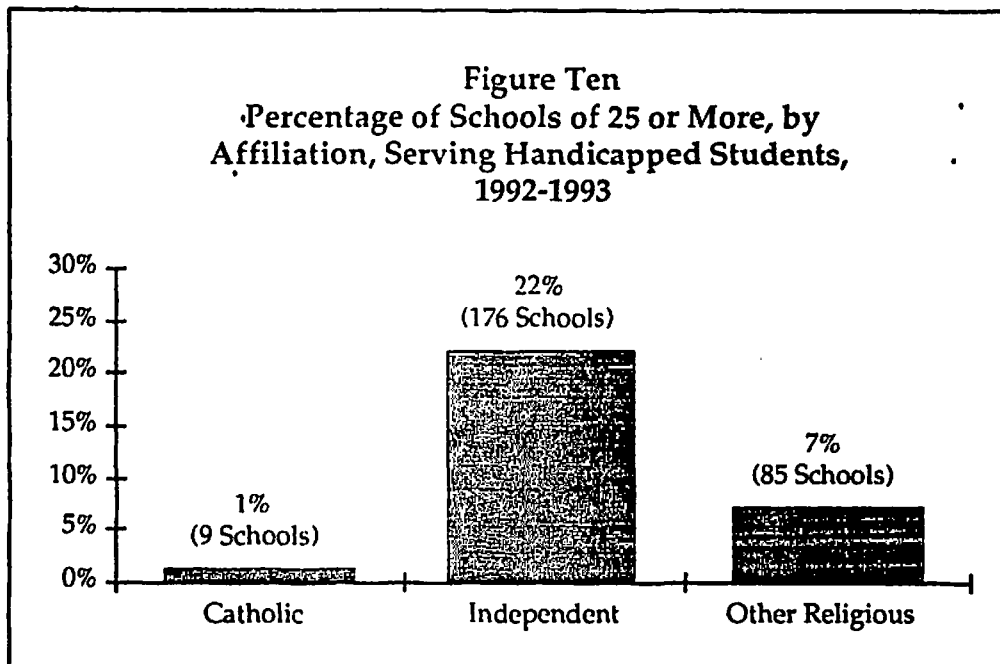
Likewise, data are not collected on the percentage of Christian schools that are accredited. Christian schools that seek accreditation may be accredited by WASC or by one of the Christian school organizations, such as the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). Joint accreditation is also possible.

Tuition data for other religious schools are not available.

Independent Schools

Independent schools are secular private schools that maintain autonomous governing bodies. There is a broad range of types of independent schools. They may be proprietary or non-profit, boarding or day schools, and may serve college-bound students or students with disabilities.

Among California private schools, independent schools serve the largest number of children with disabilities. Of the 270 private schools of 25 students or more that offer services for handicapped students, 65 percent are independent schools, a significant number of which serve only handicapped students. Figure 10 displays the percentage of private schools, by affiliation, which serve handicapped students.



Source: California Department of Education

Data concerning minority enrollments in independent schools are not available.

Independent schools in California may seek accreditation from WASC or from the California Association of Independent Schools. Often schools seek joint accreditation.

The average tuition of independent schools is unknown.

How might private schools accommodate new demand arising from students with vouchers?

The amount of space in private schools that would be available for voucher-redeeming students is highly uncertain. Students who transfer from public to private schools may be accommodated into the private sector in the following ways: by utilizing existing capacity in private schools, by expanding existing private schools, or by creating new voucher-redeeming schools. Little data exists to inform an actual estimate of the number of new private school slots that would become available under a voucher system.

A study by the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) in spring 1992 attempted to measure the unused capacity in existing private schools, and to identify whether private schools were likely to expand to serve voucher students. The SWRL study estimated that 2 percent of public school students might be accommodated by utilizing and expanding existing private schools. The study encountered one of the primary difficulties of such an undertaking: identifying the proper individuals who would be able to make an expansion decision. For example, SWRL surveyed private school principals. However, in many private schools, the principal does not have the authority

or the information to make enrollment expansion decisions. A Catholic diocese, for example, may have capacity in a closed school, a matter about which an individual principal would have little knowledge. As a result, the SWRL study may not completely portray the ability of existing private schools to serve voucher students either by increasing enrollments within existing space or expanding current schools by acquiring additional (or reopening closed) facilities. However, the SWRL research is the only empirical study conducted on this topic.

Finally, new schools may be created to accommodate voucher students. Existing private school administrators may open new schools, private business ventures may spring up, current providers of auxiliary educational services may expand their offerings, or community or other groups may form schools. Again, no data are available to inform an estimate of the number of new schools that might be created under a voucher system.

What regulations govern private schools?

California private schools are governed by regulations in the California Education, Administrative, Revenue and Taxation, Health, Vehicle, and Penal Codes. These regulations, outlined below, touch on the areas of student attendance, maintenance of records, instruction and curriculum, and safety.

Compulsory education

Private school students fall under California's compulsory education laws. Full-time education is required for all children ages 6 to 18 (EC 48200). Students may attend public schools, do independent study under the supervision of a certified employee of a school district (EC 51745), be tutored by a credentialed teacher at home for 175 days at three hours a day (EC 48224), or attend a private school that is registered with the Superintendent of Public Instruction (EC 48222, 33190, 48415). Children who meet none of these conditions are considered truant (EC 48260).

Annual report to the state (EC 33190)

In order for students to meet the compulsory education requirements, every "person, firm, association, partnership or corporation offering or conducting private school instruction on the elementary or high school level" must report to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction annually between October 1 and 15. This report must contain the names and addresses of the administrators and directors of the school, and the address at which records, including criminal record summaries, are kept. The report must also indicate school enrollment by grade, number of teachers, whether the school is co-educational or single sex, and whether the school maintains boarding facilities. Schools must state that records are kept of courses of study and that names, addresses, and qualifications of the faculty are maintained, but schools are not required to report this information to the state.

The law is clear that receipt of a private school report "shall not be construed as an evaluation recognition, approval or endorsement of any private school or course."

School day and year

Private schools serving children ages 6 to 16 must be "full-time day" schools (EC 48222). The lengths of the day and the year are not specified (EC 48222), although the law states that instruction must occur during the time between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. (EC 48224).

Attendance

Each private school must keep records of attendance, noting which pupils are absent for half or more of the school day (EC 48222). The school is not required to transmit these records to the state.

Student Records and Requirements

Students' written records are confidential, but must be provided to the requesting public school district or private school if a student transfers (EC 49068). Parents have the right to a copy of these records (EC 49069) as well as the right to a hearing to challenge the contents (EC 49070).

All students must be immunized for diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, and measles before being admitted to school (Health and Safety Code 3380-90).

Teachers and other school personnel

Teachers in private schools must be "capable of teaching" (EC 48222). Only those in schools or programs for "exceptional" (i.e., handicapped) children supported by public funds are required to have state teaching credentials. As of January 1, 1993, each private school must have and publicize a policy against sexual harassment. Employees hired after July 1, 1985 must indicate that they know the Penal Code requirement to report observed or suspected child abuse by phone immediately or in writing within 36 hours (PC 11166). Teachers (but not tutors) hired after October 1, 1985 must submit fingerprints for a check on their criminal record (EC 44237).

Instruction and curriculum

English must be the basic language of instruction in all private school classrooms. Bilingual instruction is permitted. In addition, "gifted" students may be taught in a foreign language if at least half of the instructional day is in English (EC 48222, 48223).

The Education Code refers to "branches of study" which should be included in the curriculum of private schools (EC 48222). However, the Code does not define this term. State law specifies no graduation requirements for private school students.

Special education

Schools serving "physically handicapped or mentally impaired" children must be licensed by the Department of Health (EC 56365, HSC 1500-1566.8), and, if they receive public funds, must be certified by the California Department of Education (EC 56365, 3061-3069 Title 5 CCR). Every private school must report to the county instances in

which it refuses to admit or dismisses a physically handicapped, mentally retarded, or multiply handicapped child (EC 48203).

Facilities and equipment

All schools must meet state fire, safety, health and sanitation standards as well as requirements of local city and county ordinances. A school with more than one classroom or with an enrollment of 50 or more students must have a fire warning system (EC 32001) and must develop an earthquake preparedness plan (EC 35296-35297). A school that is enclosed by walls or fences must have gates for access by ambulance, fire, or police vehicles (EC 32020). Although not subject to the construction requirements of the Field Act for earthquake safety, the Private School Safety Building Act of 1986 lists requirements for the planning and building of facilities (EC 39160-39176).

Church-affiliated schools are exempt from requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

School buses are subject to state regulations (EC 39830, Title 5 14100-14103, Title 13 CCR), and drivers must meet state bus driver certification regulations (VC 12517).

Funding

The California Constitution prohibits the appropriation of public money for the support of "any sectarian or denominational school, or any school not under the exclusive control of the offices of the public school" (Article IX, Section 8). Proposition 174, of course, would amend this provision of the Constitution.

Currently, elementary (K-8) private school pupils may borrow surplus state-adopted materials such as textbooks, tests, and instructional sets. Visually handicapped pupils are eligible for no-charge loans of specialized instructional materials.

Students in private schools who have special needs, are disadvantaged, or are immigrants may receive federally funded education services (Chapters 1 and 2, ESEA). They also qualify for federal support for vocational education classes.

What remains unknown about private education in California?

Many questions about California's private schools cannot be answered because the data are not available. In order to create an accurate portrait of private education, the following are among the gaps in existing knowledge that must be filled:

- Tuition rates and financial aid availability
- Student achievement levels
- Capacity for enrollment increases

- Ethnic composition of private schools
- Proportion of schools serving limited-English proficient students

Launching a Private School

This paper has attempted to provide information about the supply and composition of California's private independent and religiously affiliated schools. In addition to gathering statistical data, PACE, in preparing this report, also conducted a series of interviews with private school providers to help identify both the necessary steps involved in establishing a private school, as well as the potential barriers.

A Checklist for New School Ventures

Initiating a new private school is a complex undertaking. Among the considerations for school providers are the following:

- *What is the school's mission and purpose? What does the school hope to accomplish? What are its academic goals? What type of student population does it aim to serve? What type of relationship does the school intend to establish with parents and with the community at large? What will be the school's curricular offerings?*
- *What will be the school's governance structure? What will be the composition of and selection process for the board of trustees? What will be the role and function of the school's director, headmaster or headmistress? How will authority be shared, or divided between, the board of directors and the school's chief administrator?*
- *How much startup capital will be needed and how will it be obtained? Will the school need to build a new building, purchase (and perhaps retrofit) an existing structure, or lease existing space? Will the initial budget need to include funds to purchase furniture, playground equipment, textbooks, audio-visual equipment and the like? What portion of the budget will need to be dedicated to advertising and promoting the school? How will the school raise the initial funds needed?*
- *How will the school announce itself and prepare for operation? How and to whom will the school distribute information in an effort to recruit students? How will tuition be set and what will it be? How will the school recruit faculty? How will the school develop specific curricula?*

This is just a sample of the myriad considerations involved in developing and launching a new school. What unanticipated barriers might be encountered?

Barriers to Entering the Marketplace

New school providers may face barriers that could impede or even block their entry into the market. Among the potential barriers are the following:

- ***Credibility***--New schools do not have instant credibility with the public or with parents. Credibility often is achieved only after many years of successful operation. One mechanism by which a school might gain more rapid credibility is through formal accreditation by a recognized accrediting organization. However, achieving full accreditation, for example, from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) or through the California Association of Independent Schools takes six years.
- ***Customer loyalty***--Established schools with which "customers" (students and parents) are satisfied foster loyalty and commitment, creating a potential barrier to new schools which hope to lure these individuals to their new facilities. Moreover, parents will weigh the potential advantages and disadvantages inherent in moving their child to a new school. How far is the new school from home? Does the school offer full day child care?, etc. New schools will need to show that they offer something different, and something desired, if they are to capture a portion of the market.
- ***Capital and cost requirements***--Money is often a difficult barrier for new school providers to overcome. The previous section of this paper outlines some of the startup cost requirements potential school providers need to consider. New schools can founder for want of sufficient initial funds.
- ***General legal requirements***--Although private schools are subject to far fewer governmental regulations than are public schools, private schools are nonetheless obliged to adhere to a number of state and federal statutes. Many of the state codes that apply to private schools are referenced in a previous section of this paper. In addition, private schools are subject to federal statutes pertaining to discrimination. General employment law governs the contractual relationship between a private school and its employees. Private schools also, as previously described, must meet specific fire, safety, health, and sanitation requirements.

The startup checklist and set of potential barriers offered in this section of the paper may present particular challenges to new private school providers. At a minimum, they offer a series of important considerations which must be part of the calculation of individuals seeking to enter the private school marketplace.