

K-12 Independent Education on Virginia's Peninsula



K-12 INDEPENDENT EDUCATION ON VIRGINIA'S PENINSULA

This is the segment of education today that really is growing. They frequently take some of our better students.
– A Peninsula school principal

This chapter is the first of a two-part look at K-12 independent (private) education in our region. This year, we examine independent school options for students on Virginia's Peninsula, including Gloucester, Hampton, James City County, Newport News, Williamsburg and York County.

As Table 1 reports, approximately one in 10 children in Virginia (and throughout the U.S.) attends independent schools.

Parents enroll their children in independent schools for many different reasons, including the desire for a religious education, more individual attention and smaller class sizes, or the promise of stricter discipline and enhanced academic rigor. Test scores and other studies consistently indicate that the academic achievement of independent school students exceeds that of their public school counterparts.¹ The reasons for this achievement gap, however, remain a topic of debate. School choice advocates point to the greater independence and flexibility of private schools, while others suggest that the achievement gap may be more indicative of outside factors such as socioeconomic status, school admission policies and parental involvement.

Although independent schools typically offer some form of tuition assistance to students demonstrating economic need, the cost of a private school education remains beyond the reach of many families. Annual tuition and fees at independent elementary schools on the Peninsula typically range between \$4,000 and \$10,000. The cost of an independent high school education is still higher, ranging from \$6,000 to \$15,000.

The Commonwealth of Virginia does not provide tuition vouchers to students who attend independent schools, although the introduction of vouchers and voucher-like programs has been debated often in the General Assembly. In February 2011, the House approved, but the Senate's Finance Committee

ultimately rejected, a proposal that would have given tax credits to businesses that fund independent school scholarships. Proponents of the measure argued that it would provide lower-income students with greater educational opportunities; opponents countered that the state should not subsidize independent institutions at a time when public schools are struggling for funding.

	Number	Percent
Public School	1,231,987	90.0%
Private School	116,934	8.5%
Home School	20,694	1.5%
Totals	1,369,615	100.0%

Sources: Virginia Department of Education, at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/enrollment/index.shtml
Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results from the 2007-08 Private School Universe Survey (March 2009), at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009313>

Identification And Accreditation

Using data from the Virginia Council for Private Education (VCPE) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), we identified 35 independent schools on the Peninsula. Graph 1 shows their approximate locations and Table 2 reports publicly available information about them. (Our list includes only those schools that cover at least three years on the K-12 spectrum.)

¹ See, for example, "Student Achievement in Independent Schools: Results from NAEP 2000-2005" at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2006459.pdf>

Of these 35 schools, 14 responded to our request for supporting information through a mailed survey. Building a comprehensive portrait of the region's independent schools is a less straightforward undertaking than many readers might expect. Some institutions have a well-established presence in our region; others are recent startups, or may not advertise widely for students.

State regulation of independent schools is minimal and therefore they are not compelled to report test scores or other information that is required of their public school counterparts.

There is, however, an optional accreditation process for Virginia independent schools. Since 1985, the Virginia Board of Education has authorized the VCPE, an independent nonprofit organization, to oversee this process. The VCPE works cooperatively with other nonprofit organizations that have been designated as Approved State Recognized Accrediting Members. There are currently 13 VCPE-member organizations whose accreditation procedures are recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Five of these organizations accredit schools on the Peninsula:

- Association of Christian Schools International
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Council on Accreditation and School Improvement
- Virginia Association of Independent Schools
- Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities
- Virginia Catholic Education Association.

All meet a core set of standards delineated by the VCPE. These organizations must, for example, have a racially nondiscriminatory membership policy, and they must perform comprehensive on-site evaluations of their member schools every five to 10 years.

Of the 35 independent schools examined in this report, only 15 possess state-recognized accreditation. This does not, however, mean that the other 20 are inferior or unsafe. Several are, in fact, members of state-recognized associations like the American Montessori Society (AMS) or the Association of Classical & Christian Schools (ACCS); others are affiliated with established churches in our

region. For parents considering independent schools, therefore, accreditation might best be thought of as a kind of insurance. As explained to us by VCPE President George McVey, accreditation ensures that there is an informed, impartial observer “looking over a school’s shoulder,” monitoring its adherence to quality standards and its commitment to continuous improvement. Students who attend an accredited school know that their records will be safely retained if the school closes, and that their course work will be recognized if they transfer to a public school.

Accreditation is just one of many factors for parents to consider when selecting an independent school. School size and location, educational philosophy, tuition, extracurricular opportunities and accommodations for special needs may also play a role. No one school – independent or public – is optimal for everyone. Considered as a group, however, the independent schools in our region offer a rather wide array of options for students and their families. This chapter provides an overview of these options, using data from the VCPE, the NCES and the schools themselves. We’ll see how independent school offerings on the Peninsula compare to those throughout the United States, and we’ll also look at these schools’ racial diversity. We do not attempt to rate our region’s independent schools or address the quality of education they provide.



FIGURE 1



TABLE 2

INDEPENDENT K-12 SCHOOLS ON VIRGINIA'S PENINSULA

School	City	ZIP Code	Estab.	Grade Span	Typology	State-Approved Accreditation	Other Memberships	Student/Teacher Ratio	Total Students (non-pre K)	K Tuition + Fees **	Grades 1-5 Tuition + Fees **	Grades 6-8 Tuition + Fees **	Grades 9-12 Tuition + Fees **	
** These are approximate figures, based upon the available information from each school. The actual cost of tuition and fees can depend on variables such as church membership, financial need, the type of payment plan selected or how many students from one family are in attendance. Services such as transportation and extended care are generally offered at additional expense.														
1	Saint Mary Star of the Sea School	Hampton	23663	1923	PK-8 (Elementary)	Catholic	SACS-CASI, VCEA	NCEA	17.2	193	\$4,740 - \$6,360	\$4,740 - \$6,360	\$4,740 - \$6,360	N/A
2	Our Lady of Mount Carmel School	Newport News	23601	1954	PK-8 (Elementary)	Catholic	SACS-CASI, VCEA	NCEA	20.0	383	\$4,872 - \$7,050	\$4,872 - \$7,050	\$4,872 - \$7,050	N/A
3	Peninsula Catholic High School	Newport News	23601	1903	8-12 (Secondary)	Catholic	SACS-CASI, VCEA	NCEA	11.0	276	N/A	N/A	\$6,820	\$9,190 - \$10,220
4	Walsingham Academy	Williamsburg	23187	1947	PK-12 (Combined)	Catholic	SACS-CASI, VCEA	NCEA	10.5	308 (Upper School only)	\$10,395	\$10,395	\$11,898	\$12,634
5	Majesty Christian Academy	Gloucester	23061		PK-9 (Combined)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI	4.3	33				
6	Calvary Christian Academy	Hampton	23666	1991	PK-5 (Elementary)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI	7.6	84	\$3,785	\$4,440	N/A	N/A
7	Calvary Classical School	Hampton	23666		PK-6 (Elementary)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI, ACCS, HRACS						
8	Faith Outreach Education Center	Hampton	23666	1979	PK-12 (Combined)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI	7.4	56				
9	First Friends Christian Academy	Hampton	23666	2001	PK-5 (Elementary)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI			\$5,000	\$5,080	N/A	N/A
10	Hampton Christian Schools	Hampton	23666		PK-12 (Combined)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	ACSI	HRACS	10.2	537	\$4,173	\$4,810	\$5,018 - \$6,013	\$6,013

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11	Victory Baptist School	Hampton	23663		PK-12 (Combined)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACE	4.4	22				
12	Denbigh Baptist Christian School	Newport News	23602	1968	K-12 (Combined)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	ACSI	HRACS	12.0	346	\$3,600 - \$5,325	\$5,325	\$5,825	\$6,000 - \$6,200
13	Denbigh Christian Academy	Newport News	23608	1977	PK-8 (Elementary)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	ACSI		12.5	116	\$3,289	\$4,112 - \$4,164	\$4,080 - \$4,117	N/A
14	Rhema Christian Center Academy	Newport News	23607		PK-3 (Elementary)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI	5.4	38				
15	Warwick River Christian School	Newport News	23602		PK-8 (Elementary)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	SACS-CASI	ACSI, HRACS, MEA	13.4	302				
16	Greenwood Christian Academy	Williamsburg	23185		PK-7 (Elementary)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI	10.0	55	\$5,385	\$6,985	\$6,985	N/A
17	Providence Classical School	Williamsburg	23188	2001	K-10 (Combined)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI, ACCS	12.3	105	\$6,000	\$8,300	\$8,300	\$8,300
18	Williamsburg Christian Academy	Williamsburg	23188	1978	PK-12 (Combined)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	ACSI, SACS-CASI	HRACS	13.0	252	\$6,250	\$7,900	\$8,550	\$9,620
19	Living Word Academy	Tabb	23693	1993	PK-8 (Elementary)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI			\$3,315	\$4,315	\$4,320	N/A

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** These are approximate figures, based upon the available information from each school. The actual cost of tuition and fees can depend on variables such as church membership, financial need, the type of payment plan selected or how many students from one family are in attendance. Services such as transportation and extended care are generally offered at additional expense.														
20*	Summit Christian Academy	Yorktown (Upper School)	23693		PK-12 (Combined)	Other religious (Conservative Christian)	No	ACSI, ACCS, HRACS	N/A	213 (Grammar School only)				
20**	Summit Christian Academy	Newport News (Grammar School)	23601											
21	Calvary Seventh-Day Adventist School	Newport News	23605		K-8 (Elementary)	Other religious (Seventh-Day Adventist)	No	GCSDAC	6.0	18				
22	Saint Andrew's Episcopal School	Newport News	23601	1946	PK-5 (Elementary)	Other religious (Episcopal)	VAIS	NAIS, NAES	10.3	123	\$7,350	\$8,280	N/A	N/A
23	Resurrection Lutheran School	Newport News	23601	2001	PK-2 (Elementary)	Other religious (Lutheran)	No	LEA	5.9	47	\$4,350	\$4,350	N/A	N/A
24	Gloria Dei Lutheran School	Hampton	23669	1973	PK-5 (Elementary)	Other religious (Lutheran)	No		15.2	343				
25	Trinity Lutheran School	Newport News	23607	1960	PK-8 (Elementary)	Other religious (Lutheran)	VAIS		8.5	221	\$6,795	\$7,390 - \$7,420	\$7,965	N/A
26	New Mount Olive Christian Day Care and Academy	Hampton	23666		PK-4 (Elementary)	Other religious (Unaffiliated)	No		4.6					
27	Gethsemane Baptist Christian Academy	Newport News	23607		K-4 (Elementary)	Other religious (Unaffiliated)	No		N/A	22				
28	Parkview Christian Academy	Newport News	23605	1968	PK-3 (Elementary)	Other religious (Unaffiliated)	No		1.9	22				
29	Ware Academy	Gloucester	23061	1949	PK-8 (Elementary)	Nonsectarian (Regular)	VAIS	NAIS	8.1	134	\$8,164	\$8,838	\$8,838	N/A
30	Hampton Roads Academy	Newport News	23602	1959	PK-12 (Combined)	Nonsectarian (Regular)	VAIS	NAIS	10.1	571	\$8,760	\$8,760 - \$10,460	\$13,835	\$15,055

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** These are approximate figures, based upon the available information from each school. The actual cost of tuition and fees can depend on variables such as church membership, financial need, the type of payment plan selected or how many students from one family are in attendance. Services such as transportation and extended care are generally offered at additional expense.														
31	Academy at Newport News Behavioral Health Center	Newport News	23603		K-12 (Combined)	Nonsectarian (Special education)	VAISEF							
32	East End Academy	Newport News	23607	1996	K-12 (Combined)	Nonsectarian (Special education)	VAISEF	7.6	38					
33	Gloucester Montessori School	Gloucester	23061	1979	Ages 3-12 (Elementary)	Nonsectarian (Special emphasis)	No	AMS	11.3	52				
34	Hampton Roads International Montessori School	Newport News	23606	1991	Ages 2½-12 (Elementary)	Nonsectarian (Special emphasis)	No		4.4	47	\$6,800	\$7,200	N/A	
35	Williamsburg Montessori School	Williamsburg	23188	1982	Ages 1½-15 (Combined)	Nonsectarian (Special emphasis)	No	AMS, VAIS	11.1	100	\$7,550	\$8,550 - \$8,900	\$9,700	
Organizational Acronyms	ACCS	Association of Classical & Christian Schools						NAES	National Association of Episcopal Schools					
	ACE	Accelerated Christian Education						NAIS	National Association of Independent Schools					
	ACSI	Association of Christian Schools International						NCEA	National Catholic Educational Association					
	AMS	American Montessori Society						SACS-CASI	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools - Council on Accreditation and School Improvement					
	GCSDAC	General Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church						VAIS	Virginia Association of Independent Schools					
	HRACS	Hampton Roads Association of Christian Schools						VAISEF	Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities					
	LEA	Lutheran Education Association						VCEA	Virginia Catholic Education Association					
	MEA	Mennonite Education Agency												

Sources: 2007-08 Private School Universe Survey, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/>
 Virginia Council for Private Education, at <http://www.vcpe.org/>
 Private schools of northern Hampton Roads

Varieties Of Independent Schools

The National Center for Education Statistics' Independent School Universe Survey identifies three main categories of independent schools: Catholic, Other Religious and Nonsectarian (see Table 3). All three types are present on the Peninsula.

CATEGORY ONE: ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Peninsula is home to four Catholic schools:

- Saint Mary Star of the Sea School (Hampton, PK-8)
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel School (Newport News, PK-8)
- Peninsula Catholic High School (Newport News, 8-12)
- Walsingham Academy (Williamsburg, PK-12).

The two elementary/middle schools are affiliated with specific parishes, while Peninsula Catholic is a regional school overseen directly by the Diocese of Richmond. Walsingham Academy is affiliated with the Sisters of Mercy.

All four institutions are among the oldest of our region's independent schools and were founded between 1903 and 1954. Catholic schools long dominated K-12 independent education in the United States. Until the late 1980s, more students attended Catholic schools than all other independent schools combined. The ongoing integration of American Catholics into mainstream society has contributed to Catholic schools' diminishing influence, as has the proliferation of other religious and nonsectarian independent schools. Today, Catholic institutions comprise approximately 22 percent of U.S. independent schools and 43 percent of U.S. independent school students. The comparatively small number of Catholic schools in northern Hampton Roads may be attributable to a smaller Catholic population on the Peninsula than in other regions of the country.

The cost of a Catholic school education has risen over time, in part because fewer nuns now serve as teachers and administrators. Today, most Catholic

school tuitions are comparable to those at other independent schools, although at least some need-based financial aid is available at every institution. **Walsingham Academy – self-described as “the premier independent school in the Williamsburg area” – ranks among the most expensive schools in the region; admission is selective and dependent upon standardized testing.** Tuition at the region's other three Catholic schools is more moderate, with significant discounts offered for practicing Catholics, as well as for families with more than one child attending school.

All Catholic schools in the Diocese of Richmond possess state-recognized accreditation through the Virginia Catholic Education Association (VCEA) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS-CASI). These schools likewise share common curriculum standards, which may be accessed on the website of the Diocese of Richmond's Office of Catholic Schools. Student assessment data, indicating a high overall level of academic achievement, are also available online. Catholic schools tout an academically rigorous, disciplined learning environment that is grounded upon church tradition. **In 2003 and 2009, Walsingham Academy Lower School and Our Lady of Mount Carmel School were designated as high-performing “Blue Ribbon Schools” by the U.S. Department of Education.**

CATEGORY TWO: OTHER RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

More than two-thirds of northern Hampton Roads independent schools are classified as “other” religious schools. All, however, are rooted in Protestant Christian church traditions.

Conservative Christian Schools

As defined by the Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 16 of the 24 “other religious” schools are “conservative Christian.” **Enrollment in conservative Christian schools has risen consistently over the past two decades and now represents 15.2 percent of all U.S. independent school students. On the Peninsula, this percentage appears to be much higher.** The common bond of conservative Christian

TABLE 3

INDEPENDENT K-12 STATISTICS: PENINSULA AND THE UNITED STATES

Selected Characteristic	United States				Peninsula	
	Number of Schools	Percent	Number of Students	Percent	Number of Schools	Percent
Total	33,740	100.0	5,072,451	100.0	35	100.0%
Catholic	7,507	22.2	2,156,173	42.5	4	11.4%
Other Religious	15,403	45.7	1,930,707	38.1	24	68.6%
Conservative Christian	5,106	15.1	772,951	15.2	16	45.7%
Other Affiliated	2,741	8.1	452,787	8.9	3	8.6%
Unaffiliated	7,555	22.4	704,969	13.9	5	14.3%
Nonsectarian	10,830	32.1	985,571	19.4	7	20.0%
Regular	5,603	16.6	670,057	13.2	2	5.7%
Special Emphasis	3,691	10.9	209,094	4.1	3	8.6%
Special Education	1,536	4.6	106,420	2.1	2	5.7%
School level						
Elementary	21,870	64.8	2,513,099	49.5	21	60.0%
Secondary	2,932	8.7	826,905	16.3	1	2.9%
Combined	8,938	26.5	1,732,447	34.2	13	37.1%
Sources: Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results from the 2007-08 Private School Universe Survey (March 2009), at http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009313 2007-08 Private School Universe Survey, at http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/ Virginia Council for Private Education, at http://www.vcpe.org/ Private schools of northern Hampton Roads						

schools in our region is membership in either the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) or Accelerated Christian Education (ACE), two of four organizations cited by the PSS as an identifier of a conservative Christian school. Fifteen schools in northern Hampton Roads are ACSI members; five have been formally accredited by ACSI as well. Self-described as a “worldwide community uniquely positioned to deliver the message of Christ through education,” ACSI comprises more than 5,900 member schools in over 100 countries. In addition to school accreditation, ACSI offers an extensive menu of additional services, including professional training, legal/legislative support, and textbooks and other resources available through the Purposeful Design publishing house.

Our region’s ACSI-member schools are a diverse group, spread throughout the Peninsula’s localities. Most were founded in the 1970s or later. All enroll elementary students, and six offer a complete K-12 education. Among the largest of these schools are Hampton Christian Schools, Denbigh Baptist Christian School (Newport News) and Warwick River Christian School (Newport News), each enrolling more than 300 students. Several schools are quite small, with just a few students per grade. Approximately half of the schools are associated with a particular congregation; Warwick River Christian School represents the Mennonite faith. The rest are independent or nondenominational, including three classical Christian schools.

Classical Christian schools are comparatively new to our region, but they are grounded upon medieval European traditions, including an emphasis on history and classical literature, the study of Latin and the organization of learning into three stages (grammar, logic and rhetoric) known as the trivium. Interestingly, today’s classical Christian schools often identify these stages with the elementary, middle and high school levels. Although some classical schools are nonsectarian, those affiliated with the Association of Classical & Christian Schools (ACCS) are explicitly Christian. Membership in ACCS has grown from 10 schools in 1994 to 229 schools in 2011. Calvary Classical School (Hampton) joined ACCS in 1995, Summit Christian Academy (Newport News/Yorktown) in 1998 and Providence Classical School (Williamsburg) in 2001.

Other Affiliated and Nonaffiliated Schools

The PSS identifies the remaining “other religious” schools as affiliated or nonaffiliated, depending upon their membership in religious school organizations such as the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (GCSDAC) or the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES). In northern Hampton Roads, these institutions are chiefly elementary schools associated with a church in Hampton or Newport News. Baptist, Church of God, Episcopal, Lutheran and Seventh-day Adventist traditions are represented. Saint Andrew’s Episcopal School and Trinity Lutheran School (both in Newport News) possess state-recognized accreditation through the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS). Trinity Lutheran School is the only independent school in our region that participates in the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IBPYP); currently a candidate school, it anticipates full authorization in IBPYP by 2013.

CATEGORY THREE: NONSECTARIAN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Nonsectarian schools comprise about 20 percent of independent schools on the Peninsula. According to PSS definitions, the region has three special emphasis, two special education and two regular nonsectarian independent schools.

There are numerous kinds of special emphasis schools – vocational/technical, performing arts and so forth. On the Peninsula, all schools classified in this way promote the Montessori educational method. Grounded upon the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, these schools promote interdisciplinary, student-directed learning, with an emphasis on hands-on experimentation and the use of concrete learning materials. Montessori classrooms feature multi-age groupings, rather than traditional divisions by grade level. The Gloucester Montessori School, Hampton Roads International Montessori School (Newport News) and Williamsburg Montessori School educate elementary students through age 12. The Williamsburg school also operates a middle school for students ages 12-15 at the Watermen’s Museum in Yorktown.

Newport News is home to the region’s two special education schools. The Academy at Newport News Behavioral Health Center “provides alternative educational programs for students age 5-21, in a highly structured therapeutic

environment who have emotional, learning and mental disabilities,” according to the institution’s website. East End Academy serves students with disabilities and at-risk youth; “small class sizes, individualized instruction and highly structured behavior-management programs are the hallmark of East End, Inc.,” as stated on its website. Both schools are accredited by the Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities (VAISEF).

Peninsula “regular” nonsectarian schools are those without a Montessori or special education focus. **Ware Academy (Gloucester, PK-8) and Hampton Roads Academy (Newport News, PK-12) are among the region’s oldest independent schools, founded in 1949 and 1959. Both are college preparatory schools with spacious campuses; they emphasize academic rigor, a well-rounded curriculum with extensive extracurricular opportunities and the promotion of values such as integrity and compassion. Admission is selective, based upon factors such as testing, recommendations and a school visit.** Unsurprisingly, Ware Academy and Hampton Roads Academy are among the most costly independent schools in our region, although some financial aid is available at each institution. Both possess state-recognized accreditation through VAIS.



Racial Diversity

Like our region’s public schools, some independent schools in Hampton Roads have had a troubled history concerning racial segregation. The U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision ordering the dismantling of separate school systems for blacks and whites, and the Massive Resistance laws subsequently passed in the Commonwealth of Virginia, did not apply to independent schools. **Some Virginia independent schools, especially Catholic schools, integrated voluntarily soon after the Brown decision. In other cases, new independent schools for whites, so-called “segregation academies,” were established in order to avoid compulsory integration.**

White students in Virginia received state tuition grants to attend segregated independent schools until 1964, when such grants were declared illegal. Nearly 50 years later, these past injustices continue to inform present discussions about the public support of independent schools, as demonstrated by reactions to this year’s proposal to award tax credits to Virginia businesses that fund independent school scholarships. As portrayed by *The Washington Post* in February 2011, “the debate over school choice and voucher-like programs has split the African American community along generational, and perhaps, class lines.”² **While some black elders have worried that independent school vouchers and the rallying call of “school choice” would represent a step back toward resegregation, younger African Americans have been more apt to embrace the reforms as a welcome means of escaping troubled school districts.**

Today, all accredited Virginia independent schools must possess racially nondiscriminatory admission policies. Many institutions – for example, all VAIS-member schools – place these policy statements prominently on their websites and in other promotional materials. Even so, despite such good intentions, the available statistics indicate that nearly all independent schools on the Peninsula are somewhat

² Frederick Kunkle, “Va. African Americans split in battle for school choice,” *The Washington Post* (Feb. 26, 2011), at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/24/AR2011022403688.html>

segregated. According to data from the Private School Universe Survey (PSS) and from our communications with the schools themselves, a majority of the region’s independent schools have student bodies that either are overwhelmingly white, or overwhelmingly black. The predominantly black institutions tend to be small elementary schools affiliated with a particular church. The broad cross-section of the region’s independent schools has student bodies that are predominantly white.

A few words of caution are merited in interpreting the numbers in Table 4 regarding enrollment by race/ethnicity. Independent schools are not required to report the racial or ethnic backgrounds of their students to the NCES. Indeed, only 28 of 35 independent schools on the Peninsula supplied this information on the most recent PSS. In 2007-08, the PSS provided a choice of five racial/ethnic categories for identifying students – American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White – but four schools responded to our request for updated enrollment information with additional categories such as Multi-Racial, Mixed Race and Middle Eastern (all represented as “Other” in Table 4). Other schools in our region also may have students who could be represented in this way, although this was not reflected in the PSS.

Given our region’s legacy of racial segregation, there is reason to focus on the relative enrollments of white and black students. A school’s diversity can, however, be measured in other ways and is not limited to race. Hampton Roads International Montessori School (Newport News), for example, advertises that “six of the seven continents” are represented among its students and faculty, which include “families from 18 countries with approximately 13 native languages spoken.”

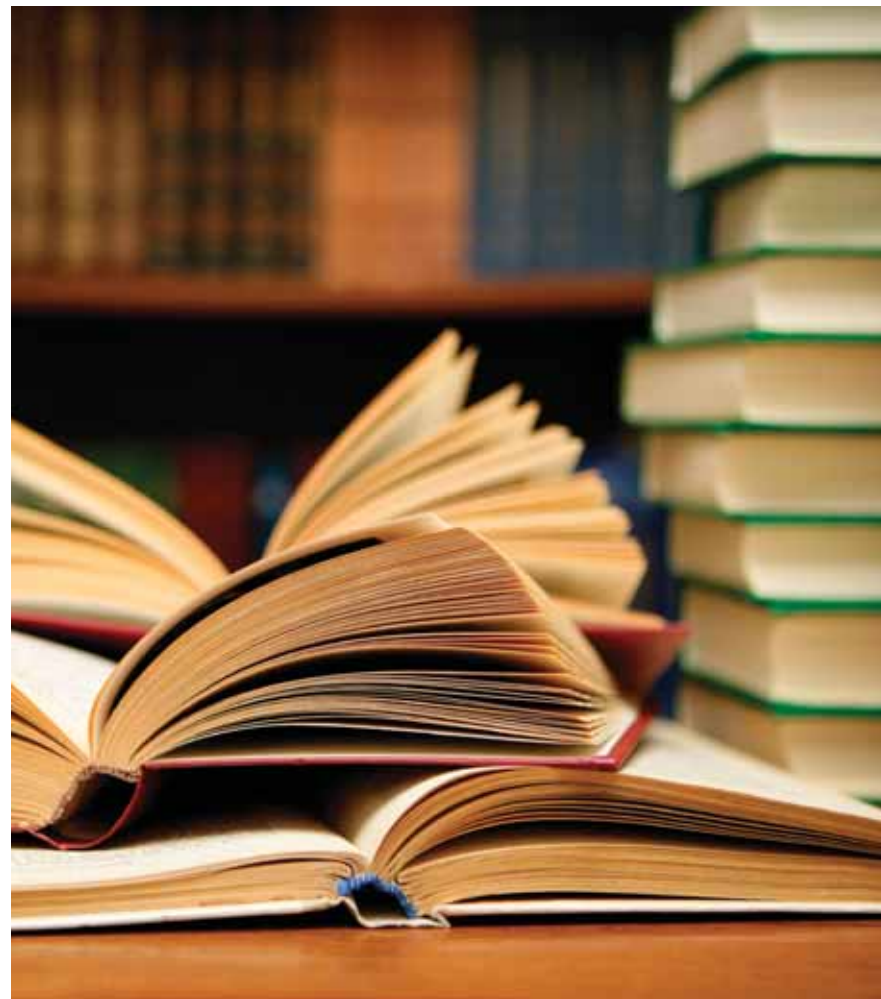


TABLE 4

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN K-12 SCHOOLS: PENINSULA AND THE UNITED STATES

School	City	ZIP Code	American Indian / Alaskan	%	Asian	%	Black	%	Hispanic	%	White	%	Other	%	Total	
1	Saint Mary Star of the Sea School	Hampton	23663	0	0.0%	24	12.4%	9	4.7%	17	8.8%	143	74.1%		193	
2	Our Lady of Mount Carmel School	Newport News	23601	3	1.1%	8	2.9%	21	7.7%	7	2.6%	233	85.7%		272	
3	Peninsula Catholic High School	Newport News	23601	0	0.0%	35	9.1%	5	1.3%	24	6.3%	293	76.5%	26	6.8%	383
4	Walsingham Academy (Upper School only)	Williamsburg	23187	0	0.0%	6	1.9%	1	0.3%	6	1.9%	295	95.8%		308	
5	Majesty Christian Academy	Gloucester	23061	0	0.0%	5	15.2%	1	3.0%	2	6.1%	25	75.8%		33	
6	Calvary Christian Academy	Hampton	23666	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	80	96.4%	3	3.6%	N/A	0.0%		83	
7	Calvary Classical School	Hampton	23666												0	
8	Faith Outreach Education Center	Hampton	23666	N/A	0.0%	1	2.2%	27	58.7%	3	6.5%	15	32.6%		46	
9	First Friends Christian Academy	Hampton	23666													
10	Hampton Christian Schools	Hampton	23666	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A				
11	Victory Baptist School	Hampton	23663	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	13.6%	0	0.0%	19	86.4%		22	
12	Denbigh Baptist Christian School	Newport News	23602	0	0.0%	16	2.9%	17	3.1%	17	3.1%	502	90.9%		552	
13	Denbigh Christian Academy	Newport News	23608	0	0.0%	2	1.7%	56	48.3%	2	1.7%	39	33.6%	17	14.7%	116
14	Rhema Christian Center Academy	Newport News	23607	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	37	97.4%	0	0.0%	1	2.6%		38	
15	Warwick River Christian School	Newport News	23602												0	
16	Greenwood Christian Academy	Williamsburg	23185	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.8%	1	1.8%	53	96.4%		55	
17	Providence Classical School	Williamsburg	23188	0	0.0%	7	6.7%	7	6.7%	1	1.0%	90	85.7%		105	
18	Williamsburg Christian Academy	Williamsburg	23188	0	0.0%	3	1.2%	29	11.5%	9	3.6%	207	82.1%	4	1.6%	252
19	Living Word Academy	Tabb	23693													
20 *	Summit Christian Academy (Upper School)	Yorktown	23693	N/A	0.0%	2	0.9%	12	5.6%	6	2.8%	193	90.6%		213	
20 **	Summit Christian Academy (Grammar School)	Newport News	23601													
21	Calvary Seventh-Day Adventist School	Newport News	23605	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	15	83.3%	1	5.6%	2	11.1%		18	

TABLE 4

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN K-12 SCHOOLS: PENINSULA AND THE UNITED STATES

School	City	ZIP Code	American Indian / Alaskan	%	Asian	%	Black	%	Hispanic	%	White	%	Other	%	Total	
22	Saint Andrew's Episcopal School	Newport News	23601	0	0.0%	5	4.1%	11	8.9%	1	0.8%	106	86.2%		123	
23	Resurrection Lutheran School	Newport News	23601	0	0.0%	3	6.4%	5	10.6%	6	12.8%	33	70.2%		47	
24	Gloria Dei Lutheran School	Hampton	23669													
25	Trinity Lutheran School	Newport News	23607	39	17.6%	10	4.5%	15	6.8%	4	1.8%	153	69.2%		221	
26	New Mount Olive Christian Day Care and Academy	Hampton	23666	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	22	95.7%	0	0.0%	1	4.3%		23	
27	Gethsemane Baptist Christian Academy	Newport News	23607	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	22	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		22	
28	Parkview Christian Academy	Newport News	23605	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	13	59.1%	0	0.0%	9	40.9%		22	
29	Ware Academy	Gloucester	23061	0	0.0%	1	0.7%	5	3.7%	1	0.7%	127	94.8%		134	
30	Hampton Roads Academy	Newport News	23602	0	0.0%	35	6.1%	37	6.5%	12	2.1%	445	77.9%	42	7.4%	571
31	Academy at Newport News Behavioral Health Center	Newport News	23603													
32	East End Academy	Newport News	23607	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	38	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		38	
33	Gloucester Montessori School	Gloucester	23061	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A				
34	Hampton Roads International Montessori School	Newport News	23606	0	0.0%	5	10.6%	9	19.1%	3	6.4%	30	63.8%		47	
35	Williamsburg Montessori School	Williamsburg	23188	0	0.0%	16	16.0%	5	5.0%	1	1.0%	78	78.0%		100	

Sources: 2007-08 Private School Universe Survey, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/>
Private schools of northern Hampton Roads

Transparency Issues

Virginia is a laissez-faire state in terms of regulation of independent K-12 schools. The commonwealth's independent schools are under no legal obligation to supply many kinds of information to the state, for example, data concerning the qualifications and compensation of faculty, the nature of curricula, standardized tests scores and the like. Consequently, many independent schools do not routinely supply such information, though some (for example, Hampton Roads Academy, St. Andrew's Episcopal School and Trinity Lutheran School) deserve plaudits for doing so, both in their published materials and on well-developed websites. Many of the schools choose to ignore requests for such information.

The upshot is that it is difficult either for outsiders, or for parents of prospective students, to develop informed opinions about these schools. Religious ties often appear to be quite important in determining whether parents send their children to specific schools, and word-of-mouth information often substitutes for more concrete data.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this situation; the proof of the pudding ultimately is in the eating. If parents and students are satisfied with the education provided, then perhaps this is the crucial market test. **However, since the commonwealth does not accredit independent schools, nor require them to submit much information about their activities, it is difficult to reach strong conclusions about the quality of the educational experience being provided at many of the schools. A variety of independent school accrediting bodies exists, and most of the Peninsula's independent schools are affiliated with one or more of these accrediting bodies, but participation is optional in Virginia.**

Clearly, it would be easier to evaluate the quality of independent education everywhere in Virginia if many independent institutions were more transparent about issues such as curriculum, faculty, student performance and the like. However, as a public school principal put it to us, "They're growing very nicely without doing so; they don't have much incentive to change."

Final Thoughts

Virginia's Peninsula is home to an interesting variety of independent, co-educational day schools. (There are no single-sex or boarding schools.) As might be expected, institutions with larger student bodies and more costly tuitions tend to offer a broader curriculum and numerous other activities. Smaller schools offer lower student-teacher ratios and greater individualized attention. Many of the region's independent schools provide transportation or "extended care" programs (at additional cost) before and after the regular school day, helping to accommodate the needs of working families. Our region's independent institutions may be accommodating to students with learning disabilities and other special needs; however, most do not employ special education staff or other related service providers. The independent high schools, in particular, appear to attract and sustain high achievers; promotional materials emphasize impressive test scores, college placement rates and other indicators of academic achievement.

Compared to national statistics, the large proportion of conservative Christian schools is a distinctive feature of K-12 independent education in our region. Virginia's Peninsula offers comparatively few nonsectarian options for families who seek an alternative to the public school system. All of the region's religious schools are Christian schools; no schools grounded in the Jewish, Muslim or other faiths have been established on the Peninsula at this time.

We are richer as a region because of the variety of independent schools that exists in our midst. Their growth in recent years makes it clear that many parents are impressed by their educational offerings.



