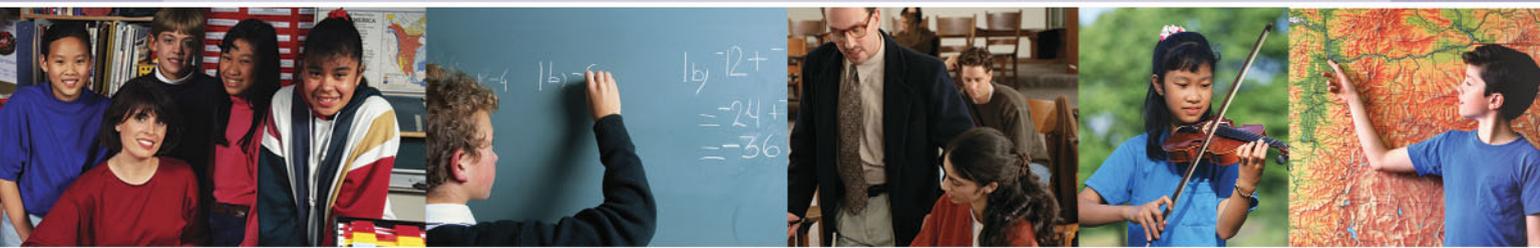


# Values Added: The Lifelong Returns of an Independent School Education



## WHAT IS NAIS?

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) is a voluntary membership organization of more than 1,200 independent schools and associations in the United States and abroad. NAIS acts as the national voice of independent pre-collegiate education and as the center for collective action on behalf of its membership. It serves and strengthens its member schools and associations by articulating and promoting high standards of educational quality and ethical behavior, by working to preserve their independence to serve the democratic society from which that independence derives, and by advocating broad access for students in affirming the principles of equity and justice.

To be eligible for membership in NAIS, schools must be 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations that are fully accredited and nondiscriminatory in hiring and admission.

## WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL?

- Independent schools are private, pre-collegiate learning institutions, each with a unique mission.
- Independent schools are governed by independent boards of trustees.
- Independent schools are nonprofit institutions that are primarily supported through tuition payments, charitable contributions, and endowment income.
- Independent schools uphold high standards of educational quality.
- Independent schools are publicly accountable to parents, communities, and the agencies that accredit them.



## An Education That's Value Added and *Values Added*

Americans are intelligent consumers who seek value for every dollar they spend. We study the marketplace, look for the best returns, and make every effort to secure a strong future for ourselves and our children. We invest time and money in professional training to build long and rewarding careers. We purchase good cars backed by excellent performance ratings and safety records. And we invest in good homes that enhance our quality of life and provide our loved ones with essential space to grow.

As parents, we also seek exceptional schools for our children: schools with excellent teachers and a strong academic commitment, schools that are rich in values. The National Association of Independent Schools' (NAIS's) 1,200 member schools know that quality education is more than a value-added proposition. They recognize that exceptional schools prepare our children not just for this year's tests, but for all of life's tests. And they understand that the best education is a values-added experience that provides a structured, nurturing environment where young people learn not only reading, math, and science, but also the importance of hard work, leadership, personal responsibility, and good citizenship.

## NAIS Students Measure Up to All of Life's Tests

New data from the U.S. Department of Education show that NAIS schools excel in offering young people exactly this kind of values-added education. In 1988, a nationally representative sample of eighth graders drawn from a wide range of schools (classified as public, Catholic, NAIS, and other private schools) was selected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to participate in the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS). This major federally sponsored study was designed to track student outcomes over more than a decade, and NELS has produced valuable information on student progress toward lifetime goals.

While most comparisons of student performance offer only "snapshot" evaluations of academic performance based on data drawn from a single test administered on a single day, NELS traced the life experiences of students who were eighth graders in 1988 into the 21st century. The first three follow-up assessments, conducted in 1990, 1992, and 1994 — when most of the participants were still in school — included scores from achievement tests in reading, social studies, math, and science, as well as the SAT. In these evaluations, NAIS students performed well above their NELS peers, with 71.7 percent achieving 1100 or better on the SAT — a score that would qualify most students for admission to highly selective colleges and universities. By comparison, 20.2 percent



of public school students and 20.6 percent of Catholic school students achieved 1100 or better.<sup>1</sup>

But NELS also analyzed important social, economic, and educational indicators. Participants reported on their progress in high school, their success in getting into college, their satisfaction with work and family life, and their goals for the future. They also provided reports on their hobbies and social activities as well as information on personal habits like smoking, drinking, and drug use.

The NELS research findings offer an invaluable opportunity to see how NAIS schools and other schools measure up in preparing their students for the opportunities and challenges of life in the 21st century.

## What NELS Says About NAIS Students

In 2000, the final NELS assessment studied outcomes for the original cohort as its members were entering their mid-20s and facing the opportunities and challenges of adulthood. The data from this follow-up have just been released by NCES, and the results show that students who attended NAIS schools have experienced remarkable success relative to their peers.

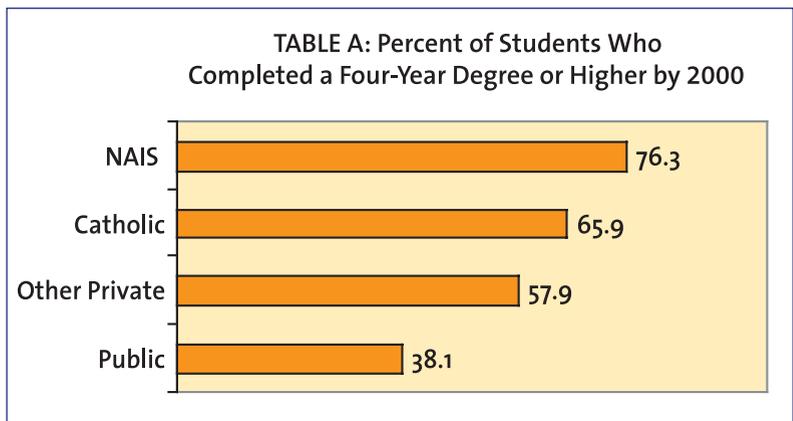
### 1. NAIS Graduates Lead the Nation in Postsecondary Achievement

When asked in 1988 about whether they planned to go on to college, two-thirds of all NELS eighth graders placed a high priority on attaining higher education. As of 2000, two out of five had achieved the goal of a four-year college degree.

But success in higher education became a reality for the vast majority of NAIS school graduates — more than three-quarters graduated from a college or university by their mid-20s. (See Table A.) This figure includes two-thirds who completed at least a four-year college degree, 8 percent who completed master's degrees, and 1.5 percent who achieved a Ph.D. or professional degree (e.g., M.D. or LL.B.).

Almost one quarter (23.7 percent) of NAIS school graduates had completed the coursework for an associate's degree or professional certificate or pursued some post-secondary education without yet completing a degree.

The overall results indicate that nearly all NAIS students in the NELS study pursued postsecondary education by 2000, an impressive indicator of achievement that outpaced results for graduates of public,



<sup>1</sup> NCES. "Making the Cut: Who Meets Highly Selective College Entrance Criteria?" (April 1995), data table 1.

Catholic, and other private schools by a wide margin.

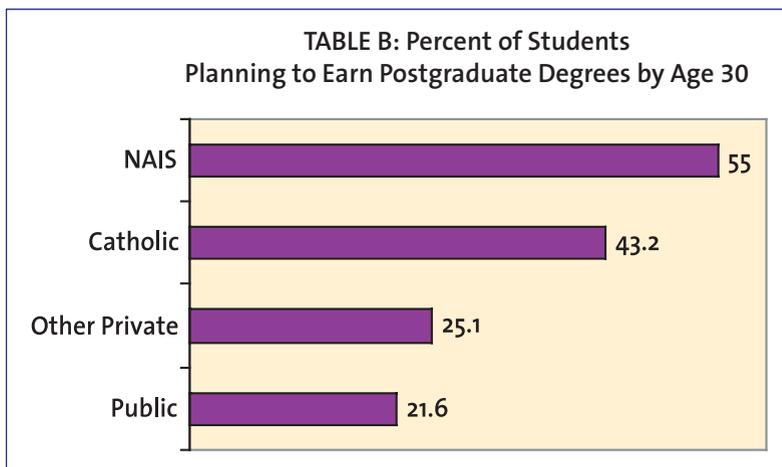
## 2. NAIS Graduates Pursue a Rich Variety of Majors While Setting Strong Professional Goals

Another factor that distinguished NAIS students from their peers was their choice of college majors. The NELS survey tracked college majors in 115 fields of study ranging from accounting to zoology. It found that the most popular college majors across the entire cohort were in fields geared toward preparing students with professional skills. Business and accounting was the most popular category (17.1 percent), followed by health-related fields (12.1 percent), education (7.4 percent), engineering (6.4 percent), and the biological sciences (5.3 percent).

NAIS graduates had pursued a much more diverse range of college majors in the liberal arts, social sciences, and natural sciences. Their preferred choices were liberal arts (12.9 percent), history (7.9 percent), the biological sciences (7.8 percent), visual and performing arts (7.6 percent), psychology (6.8 percent), business/accounting (5.8 percent), and journalism/communications (5.1 percent).

The data show that NAIS graduates' studies in the traditional disciplines were complemented by a strong focus on preparation for the future. The majority (55 percent) said they intend to complete a master's degree, Ph.D., M.D., LL.B., J.D., or D.D.S. by the age of 30, a figure that was significantly higher than the

professional-development aspirations of other NELS participants. (See Table B.) More than 30 percent of NAIS graduates were planning to pursue business degrees, 7.7 percent were planning for law school, and 7.2 percent wanted to pursue medicine. By contrast, less than 3 percent of the total NELS cohort said they would



follow medical careers, and 24 percent expressed interest in obtaining a business degree.

## 3. NAIS Graduates Typically Attend Independent Colleges

NAIS students were much more likely than their NELS peers to attend private, independent colleges rather than public institutions. Nearly two-thirds of NAIS students attended private colleges and universities (64 percent), compared to one-fifth (21.5 percent) of all students, while slightly more than one-third of NAIS students attended four-year public institutions (34.4 percent), compared to nearly half (44.9 percent) of all students.



#### 4. NAIS Graduates Express Strong Satisfaction with Their Careers and Confidence in Opportunities for Further Training

In terms of overall job satisfaction, nine out of 10 (90.8 percent) NAIS graduates expressed satisfaction with their jobs, compared with 84.4 percent of all students. And NAIS graduates were also extremely optimistic about their opportunities for training, with 80.3 percent saying they expected these opportunities, versus 77.3 percent of their NELS peers.

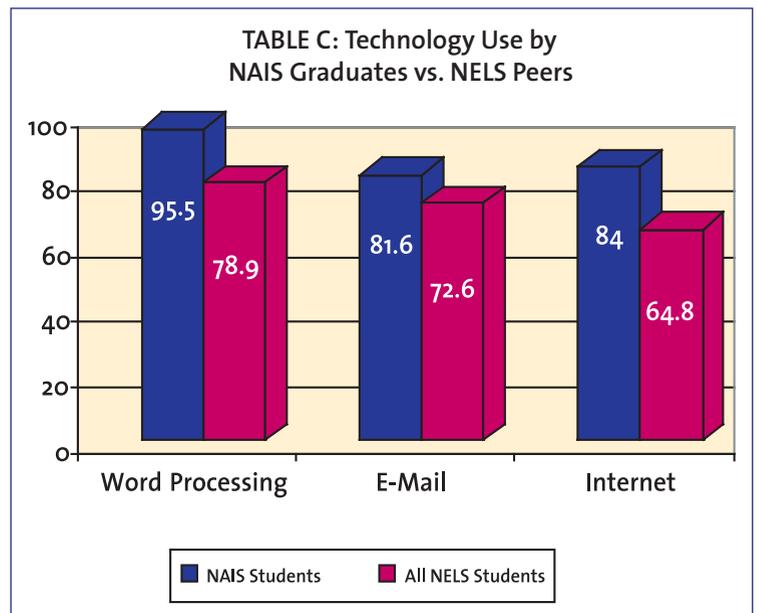
#### 5. NAIS Graduates Are Skilled in the Technology of the 21st-Century Workplace

The teenagers of the 1980s were the first generation of Americans to grow up with computers, but familiarity with technology does not always translate into mastery. The 2000 NELS follow-up shows, however, that NAIS students are extremely skilled with computers and are adept navigators of the Internet.

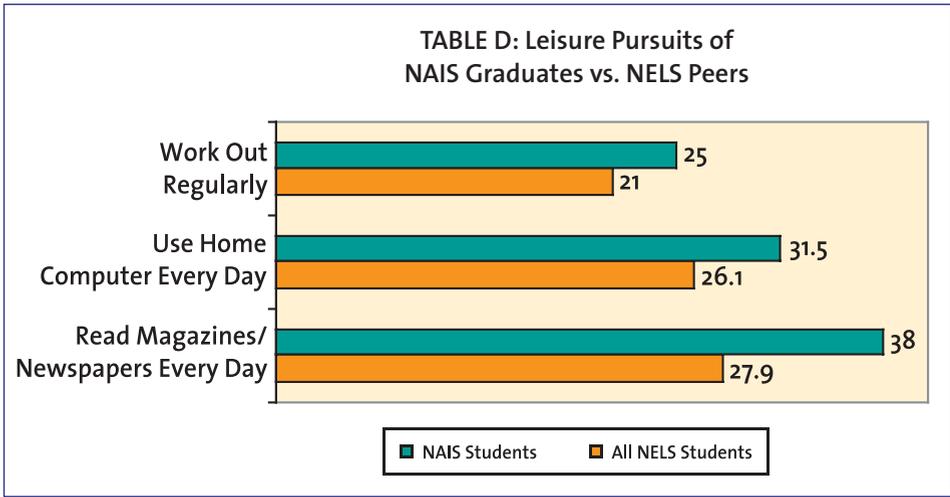
Virtually all NAIS graduates (95.5 percent) said they use word processing at work, versus 78.9 percent of the total NELS cohort. Similarly, 81.6 percent regularly use e-mail, compared with 72.6 percent of all study participants. And 84 percent of NAIS students use the Internet and know how to perform Internet searches, whereas just 64.8 percent of the total NELS cohort said they had this facility. (See Table C.)

#### 6. NAIS Graduates Pursue Healthy, Active Adult Lives

The NELS data also show that NAIS school graduates have gone on to achieve healthy adult lives and pursue a more



active range of personal interests than their NELS peers. They read newspapers, books, and magazines more frequently and are more likely to use computers at home. They go to plays, concerts, and community events more often and are more committed to regular exercise and personal fitness. (See Table D.)

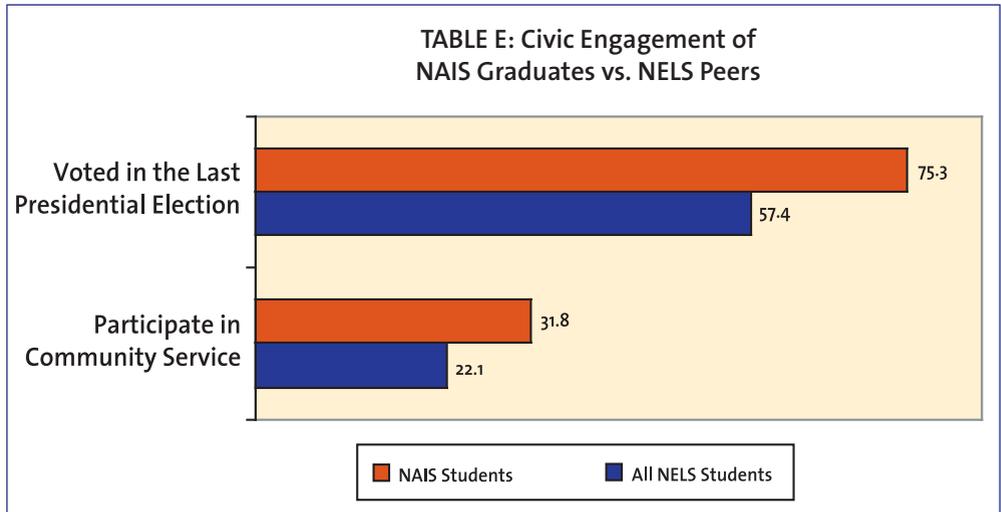


**7. NAIS Graduates Place Higher Value on Community Service and Civic Participation**

Perhaps the most significant factor that distinguished NAIS graduates from others in the 2000 follow-up survey was the strength of their commitment to community service and active civic participation.

While slightly more than one out of five survey participants reported volunteering for civic events (22.1 percent), nearly one-third of NAIS school graduates (31.8 percent) said that they regularly participated in voluntary activities in their communities.

NAIS students were also nearly twice as likely to volunteer to work for political campaigns and political causes. And NAIS students were committed to exercising their civic duty as voters. Whereas slightly more than half of all NELS participants voted in the 1996 presidential election, more than three-quarters of NAIS school graduates registered their voices. (See Table E.)



## SMALLER CLASSROOMS, CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS HELP ALL STUDENTS SUCCEED

The emphasis on mentoring students as part of regular teaching responsibilities at independent schools plays an essential role in helping students thrive in new learning contexts and social settings.

Vuoch Tan Minnich fled war-torn Cambodia with her family in 1979 at the age of five. After living in refugee camps in Thailand and then the Philippines, Vuoch's family immigrated to Columbus, OH, where her mother and stepfather both worked two jobs to support themselves and their two daughters. Vuoch enrolled in elementary school armed with just a few key English phrases like "Hi, how are you?" "I'm hungry," and "Where is the restroom?" but her quiet determination and inner strength caught the attention of her fourth-grade public school teacher, Beth Craig.

Convinced that Vuoch would benefit from smaller classes and more personal attention from her teachers, Mrs. Craig convinced her to apply to the Columbus School for Girls (CSG). Vuoch did poorly on her CSG admission test, but her interview won over CSG's admissions director, Terrie Hale Scheckelhoff, who recognized a young girl who could offer CSG as much as the school could give her. Vuoch entered that year with a full scholarship and soon encountered terrors and uncertainties that — from her own experience — rivaled anything she had ever experienced. Beyond mastering English, she was asked to attend school functions, play sports, go

to socials, and attend her classmates' birthday parties. Her peers practiced a unique and exotic array of social customs that were nearly incomprehensible.

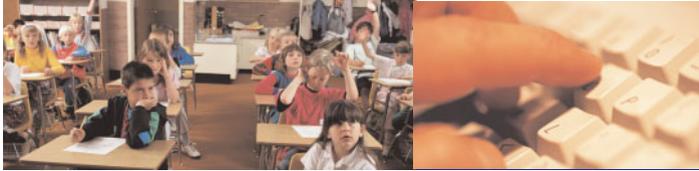
Yet Mrs. Craig's hunch about CSG paid off for Vuoch. Ms. Scheckelhoff became Vuoch's personal tour guide through the mysteries of Americana, translating everything from the rules of the school dress code to the subtext of a Wendy's value meal. Vuoch befriended CSG's librarian, who provided her not just with books but also with answers to key questions about American ways of interacting and living.



*Terrie Hale Scheckelhoff and Vuoch Tan Minnich in 2003*

Today Vuoch is married and has a daughter of her own. She is also a graduate of Kenyon College, a successful financial advisor, and the upcoming chair of CSG's jubilee fund drive. She credits her experience at CSG with helping her reach her full potential. "CSG was a safe and encouraging environment for me,"

she notes. "My teachers were so much more than just teachers. They were my mentors and friends. They noticed my weaknesses and strengths, and they approached me with sincerity when I needed help. CSG provided an opportunity for me to learn from other people and for others to learn from me. It essentially gave me the necessary ingredients to embrace life's journey."



## The Elements of Independent School Success

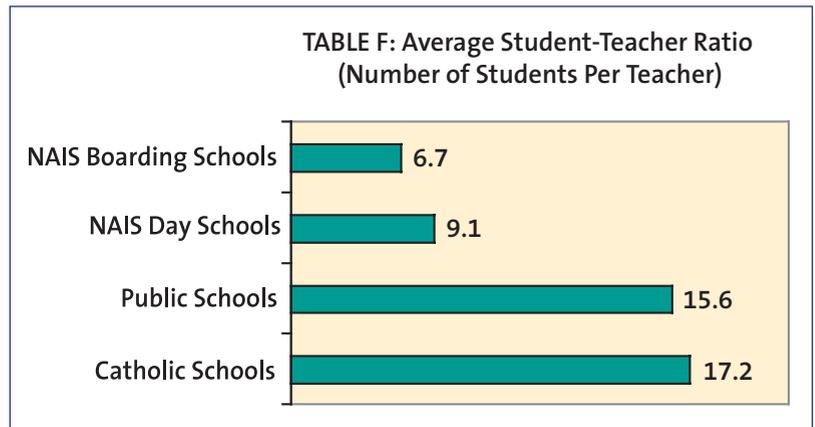
The results of the NELS survey demonstrate that NAIS students receive a quality education that adds value to a student's academic preparation and adds values that transform young people into healthy, active, and engaged adults. But why do NAIS schools excel as learning institutions for so many students, and what are the specific features of their classrooms, teaching philosophies, curricula, and approaches to child development that distinguish them from public, Catholic, and other private schools?

First and foremost is their commitment to providing small learning environments that foster curiosity and active participation. The average enrollment of an NAIS school is 483 students, and the median enrollment is 394 students.<sup>2</sup> Many larger NAIS schools function as small schools (often by separating the lower school, middle school, and upper school), where faculty and administrators know all of the students within their divisions.

NAIS schools are marked by their dedication to providing rigorous instruction in core subjects guided by teachers who focus on inspiring students to perform beyond even their own goals. And NAIS schools create safe communities that offer structured opportunities for children to grow personally and socially, take on leadership roles and new responsibilities, and learn essential life skills both inside and outside the classroom.

## Small Classrooms with Big Goals

NAIS schools make it difficult for children to hide from challenge or lose themselves in the shuffle. When students don't prepare their homework or fail a pop quiz, they attract an immediate and focused response from their teachers. According to the latest figures from the U.S. Department of Education, the average student-teacher ratio in most public schools is 15.6:1, and it is 17.2:1 in Catholic schools.<sup>3</sup> At NAIS schools, however, the average student-teacher ratio is just 8.7:1 (6.7:1 at boarding schools and 9.1:1 at day schools).<sup>4</sup> (See Table F).



As Arthur G. Powell of Brown University's Annenberg Institute for School Reform has noted, this context provides NAIS teachers with both the time and space they need to assess the academic progress of every student in their class on a day-to-day basis. It allows teachers to monitor subtle indicators of performance like facial expression, lapses in attention, or a student's willingness to volunteer responses for some questions but not for others. It trims the quantity of the

<sup>2</sup>NAIS Statistical Indicators, 2002-2003. <sup>3</sup>NCES. *Private Schools: A Brief Portrait. Findings from the Condition of Education 2002*, p. 6.  
<sup>4</sup>NAIS Statistical Indicators, 2002-2003.



average instructor's teaching load so that attention can be given to quality feedback and timely remediation. It gives teachers more time to correct homework assignments so that they can provide detailed commentary on the best strategies for factoring equations or ensuring subject/verb agreement, rather than quickly administered checks and minuses. And it gives teachers opportunities to prepare detailed report cards that keep parents informed of every dimension of their children's progress and provide students with a clear sense of expectations.<sup>5</sup>

Small classroom settings also allow NAIS teachers much more flexibility in choosing curricula and materials that address the diverse learning needs of their individual students. Recent data from NCES show that independent school teachers feel more empowered than their peers in other schools in setting the curriculum they teach.<sup>6</sup> (See Table G.)

This environment encourages students of average ability to learn more and study more than they normally would, because teachers can evaluate the individual strengths and weaknesses of every student's learning process and design targeted interventions that push them toward higher achievement without generating a sense of failure or discouragement. NAIS schools understand that students have multiple intelligences and different styles of learning that require close engagement at an individual level, and small classrooms provide every student with opportunities to set and accomplish big academic goals.

These are the benefits of small classrooms that parents and students value most, and it helps explain why the American public gives NAIS schools such high marks for teacher quality. A nationally representative poll conducted by NAIS in 1999 revealed that independent schools were identified over public schools by a factor of more than two to one for the quality of their teachers (47 percent of survey respondents thought this described independent schools, compared to 22 percent who thought it described public schools) and the ability of teachers to keep students motivated (41 percent independent, 14 percent public). Moreover, independent schools were identified over public schools by a ratio of three to one for their capacity to challenge students to do their best (46 percent independent, 12 percent public) and by a ratio of four to one for their efforts in encouraging parental involvement (48 percent independent, 12 percent public).<sup>7</sup>

**TABLE G: Percent of Teachers Who Said They Have a Lot of Influence in Establishing Curriculum**



Source: NCES, 2002.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur G. Powell, *Lessons from Privilege: The American Prep School Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 164-238. <sup>6</sup>NCES. *Private Schools: A Brief Portrait. Findings from the Condition of Education, 2002*, pp. 13-14. <sup>7</sup>NAIS. *1999 National Public Opinion Poll on Perceptions of Independent Schools*. This statistically significant national poll was commissioned by NAIS and conducted by Accurate Data.

## BUILDING DYNAMIC LEARNING COMMUNITIES THROUGH FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

NAIS schools have long recognized that investments in faculty development encourage teaching excellence and create dynamic learning communities where all children can succeed. In Seattle, the University Child Development School's (UCDS) focus on faculty has produced measurable results, not only for UCDS students but also for students across the city.

UCDS is guided by the principle that all children learn differently. Its teachers recognize that students in the same class are often at different places in their personal development and come from diverse backgrounds. Finding innovative ways to engage students' multiple intelligences is thus essential to helping children make sense of the world, and UCDS teachers have developed a dynamic philosophy of instruction that concentrates on crafting personalized lesson plans that leverage a young person's curiosity and creative energy.

Close faculty partnerships are essential to translating this philosophy into practice. UCDS serves 300 students from preschool through fifth grade, and its 30 full-time teachers work together on a day-to-day basis. They co-teach every class and conduct weekly two-hour planning meetings where the successes and failures of specific lesson plans are discussed. Faculty design curriculum extensions for children who are having difficulty mastering core concepts.

"Our teachers believe that there is no such thing as a perfect curriculum — a magic bullet that works for every student," says UCDS head of school Paula Smith. "That's why we focus on setting benchmarks of core knowledge rather than instituting a fixed curriculum plan. The job of our teachers is to work together, study what goes on in the classroom, and figure out the approaches that work best for each student. Every day we talk with each other about whether a lesson worked, and that's the best possible professional development program that I can imagine."

Recognizing the strength of UCDS's innovative approach to curriculum development and evaluation, the University of Washington's Applied Math Department approached Smith three years ago about collaborating on a National Science Foundation grant to implement more effective math teaching in Seattle's low-performing schools. Smith jumped at

the chance, recognizing that it offered UCDS not just an opportunity to extend its commitment to the community, but also a new learning context for her colleagues. Six teachers volunteered to work with their peers at the Seattle School District's Thurgood Marshall Elementary School on ways to implement a more collaborative teaching style for math instruction.

Building a connection with Thurgood Marshall's teachers was a challenge at first because many regarded the initiative as an unwelcome district imposition and a judgment on their skills as instructors. But trust developed over the first year when it became clear that UCDS's teachers were focused on trading experiences and sharing ideas about best practices. And their focus on encouraging feedback and pursuing benchmarks rather than a pre-set curriculum quickly caught on. By the end of the first year, instructors from UCDS and Thurgood Marshall were co-teaching lessons, developing new strategies for breaking down faculty isolation, and concentrating on student performance.

"I think when they realized that we saw them as teaching experts who possessed knowledge and experience that we wanted to tap into, the walls came down," Smith notes. "I think they also appreciated us for recognizing that their kids were smart and believing that they could achieve."

But just how much Thurgood Marshall's students could achieve with a new approach to faculty development surprised everyone. As a result of the partnership, the school's fourth graders advanced from none of the students passing the state math proficiency exam before the program began to nearly 60 percent passing three years after the program's inception — a figure that places the inner-city school significantly above the state average.

In accounting for the success of the project, Smith credits a process that engages teachers as experts in what they do. "If teachers are given an established curriculum and told to stick to the program, it does not engage their creativity or recognize them for their key role in improving the science of learning," she explains. "There is no one-size-fits-all curriculum, and teachers will feel more empowered and help their students achieve more if they are recognized for what they can contribute."



## A Focus on Core Knowledge

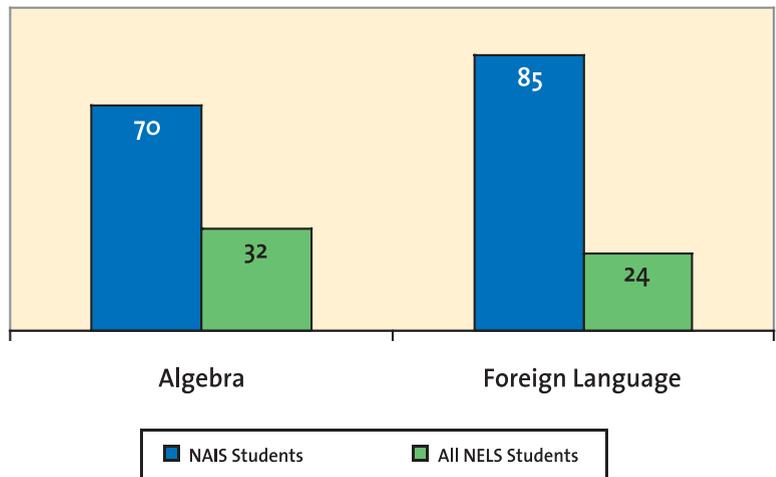
Another key element of NAIS schools is their emphasis on providing a rigorous curriculum that encourages students to master core knowledge at an early age and acquire advanced skills in math and language that pave the way for success in college. NAIS schools provide an atmosphere of high personal expectations complemented by a structure of mandatory course requirements for graduation that do not offer students ready opportunities to opt out of taking essential classes. The ultimate success of this educational system depends on quality teaching and small learning environments, but it is further reinforced by a commitment to providing multiple sections of core classes like Algebra I or Spanish as opposed to a much broader range of course electives.<sup>8</sup>

This situation allows teachers to assess the skills and preparation of individual students and place them in sections that will test their abilities without overwhelming them. It also encourages collegiality and creative curriculum development among faculty who teach the same subject. Finally, the commitment of NAIS schools to core requirements fosters an egalitarian sense of community among students based on shared learning experiences that often can take on the aura of rites of passage. Young scholars often

form study groups to prepare for tests, while older students who have mastered the material provide impromptu help and counsel. The end result is a context that focuses student attention on mastering each course requirement so that they can move on to the next academic challenge.

The success of NAIS schools in creating environments where students rise to meet high expectations and challenges is demonstrated by the fact that NAIS school students are twice as likely to take algebra by the eighth grade compared with their peers in all schools. The percentage of NAIS students who study a foreign language by the eighth grade is also extremely high by national standards. (See Table H.) Indeed, the percentage of NAIS students who study a foreign language *before the eighth grade* (85 percent) exceeds the national average of students who study a foreign language *before graduating from high school* (82.6 percent).<sup>9</sup>

TABLE H: Percent of Students Who Studied Core Subjects by Eighth Grade



Source: NELS 1988 Survey

## SAN FRANCISCO UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL BUILDS BRIDGES TO THE CITY

San Francisco University High School (SFUHS) was established in 1973 by a group of parents and community leaders who saw the need for a strong, academically oriented, independent, coeducational secondary school in the city. With an enrollment of 415 students, SFUHS has built an impressive reputation for excellence in college preparation, but it also stands out for its commitment to service learning and for building bridges of opportunity for underserved San Francisco youth.

Part of SFUHS's mission is to engage students in an education that fosters responsibility and challenges each individual to live a life of integrity, inquiry, and purpose larger than the self. The school's Community Service Learning (CSL) program reflects this belief. The guiding principles of CSL are to provide service in the community, to reflect on the personal significance of that service, and to understand the political and public policy issues related to that service. The four-year developmental curriculum engages 100 percent of the student body in service learning: Freshmen participate in service-learning projects, sophomores take a social issues class, and juniors and seniors submit action plans and learning contracts for service-learning projects and then write about their experiences. Students work with more than 50 different nonprofit organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area and play instrumental roles in a number of large-scale community initiatives for social change.

Anisha Desai, director of CSL, writes, "We are a school in the city and of the city, and we are dedicated to creating responsible young adults who will engage actively with the community around them. Our relationship with organizations and their clients is a mutually beneficial one — they benefit from the humanpower and other resources that our

students and faculty bring, and we benefit immensely from their stories and experiences."

Recent SFUHS graduate Julia Shalen agrees that CSL repays the time, energy, and commitment that it requires. "I personally feel that CSL gives more to students than almost anything else at the school," she says.

SFUHS also reaches out to underserved and academically under-challenged San Francisco youth through its Summerbridge Program, which was first launched in 1978. The program is a year-round, tuition-free academic support and enrichment program for Bay Area public and parochial school students in grades seven through nine. Serving approximately 100 students each year, Summerbridge seeks highly motivated students with a compelling need for the challenges and support that the program offers.

Applicants to Summerbridge commit to attend two years of a six-week summer program and year-round after-school tutorials and enrichment classes. Many students attend the optional third summer. The classes are taught by SFUHS students and other academically advanced high school and college students from around the country. The program's philosophy of "students teaching students" ensures that Summerbridge remains an energetic, exciting, and creative learning community, and 90 percent of its participants go on to attend a four-year college.

"At Summerbridge, I learned how to appreciate much more than the value of my own personal education," says recent graduate Caleb Jonas. "I learned how important it is to provide all students with opportunities for growth, both academically and personally."



“NAIS schools don’t teach a heterogeneous connection of nonacademic courses,” says A. Graham Down, former president of the Council for Basic Education. “There is a clarity of mission and a core academic program. Everyone agrees on the purpose — to get students into good colleges, to develop character and leadership, and to focus on values and participation in democracy.”

The core curriculum of independent schools also prevents struggling students from being tracked into lower-level courses, notes Pearl Kane, associate professor of education and director of the Klingenstein Center for Independent School Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. “Because NAIS schools tend to be small, they don’t track students into particular levels of learning. All students take a core curriculum that fits with the mission of the school. If students don’t do well, they can’t take lower-level courses. Instead they get more help.”

## **A Measurable Commitment to Diversity**

Perceptions of NAIS schools are often shaped by Hollywood myth-making. Movies featuring Robin Williams and Kevin Kline as gifted teachers inspiring quiet revolutions at 1950s- or 1970s-era boarding schools help reinforce the idea that independent schools are exclusive training academies for young white men from affluent families. But the reality of NAIS schools in the 21st century is quite different.

American society has changed dramatically over the past half-century, and NAIS schools have embraced this change.

NAIS schools have expanded their long-standing commitment to providing low- and middle-income students with affordable access to a quality education, and they have made a measurable commitment to improving the racial and ethnic diversity of their campuses. Whereas minority students in 1993 made up just 16 percent of NAIS students, students of color now represent 20 percent of NAIS school enrollments, a 25 percent jump over a 10-year span<sup>10</sup> and a figure that is rapidly approaching the national average for people of color. Indeed, the percentage of students of color at NAIS day-boarding schools (26 percent) and boarding schools (31 percent) already exceeds national averages for racial and ethnic diversity.

NAIS schools see their commitment to diversity as much more than a matter of social equity, however. They recognize that diverse learning environments are essential to giving all children the preparation they need for productive careers in the global workplace of the 21st century. And NAIS schools recognize that students from various backgrounds enrich learning communities by contributing multiple talents and life perspectives.

## AN EXEMPLARY DIVERSITY PROGRAM FOR PHILADELPHIA

Many students credit their experience at NAIS schools with providing them with access to small, safe communities that offer big views of the world ahead. To provide more economically disadvantaged students and students of color with exceptional opportunities for personal growth, NAIS schools have implemented a broad range of outreach programs in their local communities.

NAIS recently honored Germantown Friends School (GFS) in Philadelphia, for its efforts to bring more students from the city into its halls. In 1965, recognizing that academic excellence and diversity are complementary — and that both are essential parts of the American dream that started in Philadelphia — GFS wanted its student body to reflect the social, economic, racial, and religious diversity of the city. To move the process forward, GFS created the Community Scholars Program, an endowment that offers scholarships for four students of color every year in grades six through nine.

The GFS Community Scholars Program strengthens the school's diversity goals and offers opportunities to underprivileged students in Philadelphia. The number of students of color who attend GFS has since risen from just 5 percent of the student body in 1965 to more than 26 percent today. This investment in the children of Philadelphia has strengthened GFS's historic bond to the city, and the endowment has repaid its initial investment many times over by producing graduates who now enjoy successful careers in law, medicine, education, politics, and business and who honor their alma mater by sending their own children to the school. The landmark success of the GFS program demonstrates the long-term rewards of a focused commitment to diversity and provides a model for similar community outreach programs by NAIS schools across the United States.



## An Education for the Whole Child

NAIS schools believe in educating the whole child. They are deeply committed to preparing every one of their students with the essential knowledge and skills they need to thrive in future educational endeavors and to succeed in the workplace. That's why they emphasize a rigorous curriculum built around core courses in English, math, natural science, social science, and foreign language.

But NAIS schools also know that young people learn some of life's most important lessons outside the four walls of the classroom. They recognize that an individual's growth toward adulthood cannot be measured by a single test or graded by a single standard. And one of the signature qualities of NAIS schools is their commitment to providing safe, structured communities that engage students in positive social situations and provide space for personal development.

By participating in weekly school events, group projects, team athletics, extracurricular activities, and community service, NAIS school students learn the value of cooperation, the importance of reaching beyond themselves, and the value of building relationships with others. Each of these activities is made possible by a commitment to small learning environments where faculty double as coaches, advisors, and counselors.

This context transforms NAIS school teachers into mentors and allows them to see the whole child — not just the

student behind a desk. It gives instructors insight into the broader dimensions of an individual student's personality and personal development. It lets faculty see what motivates and excites their students to perform well. And it generates teachable moments across a wide array of extracurricular settings that reinforce what young people learn in class.

## A Community of Learners

One important factor that distinguishes NAIS schools from other K-12 institutions is a commitment to providing their students with a strong sense of community beyond the classroom. At NAIS schools, young people are perpetually engaged in a broad range of in-school, after-school, and weekend activities geared toward social engagement and personal development.

These activities can range from lunches and dinners proctored by faculty who sit at the head of every table, to frequent school assemblies where school leaders discuss school concerns and senior students present oral projects, to art shows, theater groups, student writing projects, and weekend sporting events that bring the whole school together to celebrate both individual achievement and the product of group efforts.

The philosophy behind these activities is that young people learn best by doing, and extracurricular contexts provide them with opportunities to explore their talents, apply what they have learned in class to structured activities, and grow in

confidence as they share their work and experience with their peers and teachers. And because NAIS school teachers supervise and participate in these activities, instructors have important opportunities outside of class to evaluate student progress, see students as social actors, and understand what really excites the young people they serve.

## Lessons from the Field

Sports play a big role in the culture of many schools, but sports participation at NAIS schools is nearly universal, and team activities are focused on helping all students draw lessons from the field.

Many NAIS schools field successful varsity teams that send graduates on to the collegiate level and professional sports. But just as the core curriculum of NAIS schools produces an egalitarian sense of shared experience, requirements for participation in team sports give every student new opportunities to learn the value of teamwork, fair play, discipline, and persistence. Whereas 23 percent of all college-bound seniors at public schools did not play sports during high school, that figure is just 6 percent for NAIS school students.<sup>11</sup>

NAIS schools emphasize the character-building dimension of sports rather than idolizing individual talent or touting the final score. They give all students a chance to play every day by creating non-varsity or intramural teams for students with average athletic skills. And coaches focus on the social development dimensions of sport — the importance of effective communication, of transcending

individual performance to achieve team goals, and of developing healthy bodies to complement maturing minds.

## A Commitment to Community Service

One of the benefits of NAIS schools is that they are coherent communities structured around dedicated teachers, strong academic and extracurricular programs, and high expectations. This is the intrinsic value of a small learning environment, and it is important to providing students with a safe setting for growth.

But NAIS schools recognize that they are preparing their students for life in a larger world, and they value their role in the broader communities they serve. Recognizing that true preparation for leadership requires hands-on experience and an appreciation for life's opportunities and challenges, NAIS schools have pioneered dynamic service-learning programs for their students.

Research conducted by NAIS showed that 87.5 percent of NAIS schools had active service-learning programs, and these initiatives had been operating for two decades on average. An additional 10 percent of NAIS schools were planning community-outreach initiatives. More than half of all NAIS schools (56 percent) required their students to participate in community service as a condition of graduation.<sup>12</sup> Many NAIS schools operate programs that meet nationally established criteria for high-quality service-learning initiatives as defined by the National

<sup>11</sup> Arthur G. Powell, *Lessons from Privilege: The American Prep School Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 25-26.

<sup>12</sup> NAIS, *Community Service & Service Learning Initiatives in Independent Schools, 1998*.

Commission on Service Learning. These include programs that offer opportunities for integrated learning where students can apply the knowledge and values they are learning in class to real-life situations; an emphasis on service that meets real needs in local communities; and consideration of student voices in shaping, coordinating, and evaluating service-learning experiences.<sup>13</sup>

The emphasis that NAIS schools place on engaging students with surrounding communities reinforces the lessons that young people learn in class. This focus on educating children in the true values of citizenship may help account for the high levels of civic engagement that NAIS graduates demonstrated on the NELS 2000 follow-up assessment.

The multidimensional aspects of whole-child learning thus provide a vital context for helping NAIS school students build citizenship and leadership. Notes Ronald Wolk, founding editor and publisher of *Education Week* and *Teacher Magazine*, “Preparing leaders for society is one of the greatest contributions of private independent schools. They are successful in doing this because they go beyond academics to address the development of the whole person.”

Wolk says NAIS schools can do this because “faculty get to know students well and bond with them. When asked

what they value most about their educational experience, students put ‘relationships’ high on the list — relationships with faculty and with other students. And because they tend to be small, NAIS schools are effective at forming human communities and lasting relationships.”

## NELS Methodology

Conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) 1988 base-year survey was a clustered, stratified national probability sample of public and private eighth-grade students that included a statistically significant sample of students drawn from NAIS schools. Almost 25,000 students across the United States participated in the original survey. Questionnaires and cognitive tests were administered to each student in the sample, covering school experiences, activities, attitudes, plans, selected background characteristics, and language proficiency. Four follow-up surveys were conducted in 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000.

The fourth follow-up to NELS included interviews with 12,144 members of the original 1988 cohort, 12 years after the base-year data collection, to generate a statistically significant sample. Computer-assisted telephone interviews and computer-assisted personal interviews were used to collect the follow-up data, and interview topics included experiences with postsecondary education, labor market outcomes, job-related training, community integration, and marriage and family information. The fourth follow-up study also collected transcripts from the postsecondary institutions that study respondents reported attending after high school.

Source: NCES, *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988*. Base-Year to Fourth Follow-Up Data File Users Manual (2002).



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