California's Private Schools:
A Portrait of Enrollment – 2010-2011

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Schools and Students[1]

In the 2010-2011 academic year, the state of California counted 3,358 private schools enrolling a total of 515,143 students in grades kindergarten through twelve. One of every four schools offering instruction in grades K-12 in the state of California was a private school. On average, private schools enrolled 153 students. This figure varied considerably, however, when different school types were taken into account.

For-Profit and Non-Profit Schools

68.7 percent of all private schools in California were constituted as non-profit entities (Table 1).[2] The remaining 31.3 percent operated on a for-profit basis. As a percentage of the total, the number of for-profit private schools increased 1.6 percent between 2009-10 and 2010-11 after increasing by 2.8 percent from 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Private schools that operate on a non-profit basis tended to enroll substantially more students than for-profit private schools (Table 2). The average enrollment among non-profit schools was three-and-a-half times that of for-profit schools (198 students compared to 56). The difference in median[3] enrollment was more pronounced, with a non-profit school enrollment midpoint (141 students) that was more than seven times greater than that of for-profit schools (20 students).

Table 1. Non-Profit and For-Profit Private Schools in California

	Number	Percentage
Non-Profit Schools	**2,308**	**68.7%**
For-Profit Schools	**1,050**	**31.3%**
Total	**3,358**	**100.0%**

Table 2 shows that 87 percent of all private schools operating on a for-profit basis enrolled fewer than 100 students. Of all private schools enrolling 200 or more students, 94 percent were non-profits. Among private schools with enrollments exceeding 500 students, 93 percent operated on a non-profit basis.

Table 2. Enrollment in Non-Profit and For-Profit Private Schools

	Number of Schools	
Enrollment	**For-Profit**	**Non-Profit**
<100	**918**	**958**
100-199	**70**	**488**
200-499	**54**	**677**
500-999	**5**	**147**
>1000	**3**	**38**
	Total Student Enrollment	
	For-Profit	**Non-Profit**
	59,155 (11.5%)	**455,988 (88.5%)**

[1] All numerical information contained in this report, unless otherwise noted, is derived from affidavit data submitted to the California Department of Education and reported as of August, 2011.
[2] Non-profit private schools typically incorporate as tax-exempt organizations in accordance with Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code, or operate under the aegis of a non-profit parent (most often a religious) organization.
[3] The median is that point in a given distribution at which exactly half the scores or values fall above and half fall below.

Secular and Religiously Affiliated Schools

Table 3. Secular and Religiously Affiliated Schools by For-Profit and Non-Profit Status

	For-Profit	Non-Profit	Row Total
Secular	713	556	1,269
Religiously Affiliated	337	1,752	2,089
Column Total	1,050	2,308	3,358

In 2010-2011, 62.2 percent of all California private schools were religiously affiliated and the remaining 37.8 percent were secular in orientation (Table 3). The data also reveal that non-profit private schools were considerably more likely to operate as religiously affiliated schools than were for-profit schools (76% versus 24%).

Table 4. Enrollment in Secular and Religiously Affiliated Schools

Enrollment	Number of Schools	
	Secular	Religious
<100	942	934
100-199	150	408
200-499	153	578
500-999	17	135
>1000	7	34
	Total Student Enrollment	
	Secular	Religious
	119,427	395,716

Religiously affiliated schools tended to enroll more students than secular schools (Table 4). While comprising fewer than 2/3 of all private schools, religiously affiliated schools accounted for more than 3/4 of the total private school enrollment (76.8 percent). The average religiously affiliated school enrollment (189 students) was double that of private, secular schools (94). The median enrollment in religiously affiliated schools (129 students) was three-and-a-half times that of schools with a secular orientation (36).

Elementary and Secondary Schools

It is not possible to classify all private schools into distinct categories on the basis of the grade level configurations they provide. This is so because private schools offer a great many combinations of lowest and highest grades offered. Some schools offer instruction in kindergarten through grades 2, or 3, or 4; others offer instruction in grades 4, 5, 6, or 7 through grade 12. For the purpose of examining distributive tendencies, Table 5 classifies schools into one of the following four categories:

- Elementary Schools — Schools offering grades K-5 or K-6 — 315 schools
- Elementary/Middle Schools — Schools offering grades K-8 — 1,112 schools[4]
- Secondary Schools — Schools offering grades 9-12 — 218 schools
- Comprehensive Schools — Schools offering grades K-12 — 675 schools

Collectively, 2,320 schools matched one of the above-listed grade level classifications and enrolled a total of 455,246 students, accounting for 69 percent of all private schools in California and 88 percent of the total private school K-12 enrollment. Nearly nine of every ten private school students attended a school whose grade level structure conformed to one of the four categories listed above.

[4] The provision of grades K-8 is modal for California's private schools.

Of the entire population of students attending secular schools, 72 percent were enrolled in schools falling into one of the four categories listed above (Table 5). Of the entire population of students attending religiously affiliated schools, 91 percent were enrolled in schools falling into one of the four grade configuration categories.[5]

Table 5. Enrollment in Secular and Religiously Affiliated Schools by Grade Level Classification

GRADE LEVELS	ENROLLMENT		
	Secular	Religiously Affiliated	Total
Elementary	9,440	10,997	20,437
Elementary/Middle	36,299	193,058	229,357
Secondary	7,682	81,520	89,202
Comprehensive	32,017	74,069	106,086
TOTAL	85,438	359,644	445,082

Table 6. Private School Enrollment by Grade Level: 2010-2011[6]

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Enrollment	46,351	40,518	39,872	38,091	37,995	38,188	39,590	39,878	40,390	36,815	37,156	36,866	36,872	508,582

Table 6 presents a breakdown of enrollment by grade level.

Table 7 provides a summary of year-to-year net enrollment gains and declines by grade level.

Net enrollment for both elementary (K-8) and secondary (9-12) grade levels increased in 2010-2011, reversing a previously established trend. High school enrollment showed increases at every grade level.

Table 7. Net Changes in Enrollment by Grade: 2009-2010 to 2010-2011

Grades	Net Change in Enrollment 2009-2010 to 2010-2011	Net Change as % of Prior Year's Enrollment
K	+ 397	+ 0.9%
1	- 426	- 1.0%
2	+ 1,130	+ 2.9%
3	- 213	- 0.6%
4	- 249	- 0.7%
5	+ 220	+ 0.6%
6	+ 94	+ 0.2%
7	- 341	- 0.8%
8	+ 73	+ 0.2%
9	+ 149	+ 0.4%
10	+ 560	+ 1.5%
11	+ 461	+ 1.3%
12	+ 631	+ 1.7%
Ungraded	- 169	+ 0.5%
TOTAL	+ 2,371	+ 0.5%

[5] A proportionately greater number of secular private schools offer grade level configurations other than those represented in the four categories listed above.

[6] In addition to the figures appearing in this table, 1,169 students were enrolled in ungraded elementary schools and 5,392 were enrolled in ungraded secondary schools.

Private School Enrollment by County

As might be expected, the majority of California's private schools are located in the state's most populous counties. California's eight largest counties[7] (Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Bernardino, Santa Clara, Riverside, Alameda and Sacramento) were home to 68 percent of all private schools and 72 percent of the state's total private school enrollment.

Twenty-three counties experienced an increase in the number of private schools situated within their boundaries from the prior year; twenty counties showed a decrease, and fourteen counties reported the same number of schools as in 2009-2010.

Nineteen counties experienced an increase in private school enrollment from the prior year (up from thirteen the previous year); thirty-three counties showed a decrease (down from forty-two the previous year), and five counties reported the same enrollment as in 2009-2010.

Table 8. Total Private School Enrollment by County

County	No. of Schools	Enrollment	County	No. of Schools	Enrollment
Alameda	156	24,251	Orange	290	50,682
Alpine	0	0	Placer	32	2,344
Amador	2	70	Plumas	2	68
Butte	21	1,502	Riverside	140	17,819
Calaveras	2	135	Sacramento	119	20,667
Colusa	2	121	San Benito	6	363
Contra Costa	108	17,249	San Bernardino	155	15,552
Del Norte	2	116	San Diego	251	38,431
El Dorado	19	1,463	San Francisco	97	21,915
Fresno	53	5,346	San Joaquin	46	6,349
Glenn	3	174	San Luis Obispo	23	2,436
Humboldt	15	697	San Mateo	70	15,133
Imperial	9	1,604	Santa Barbara	40	5,132
Inyo	1	25	Santa Clara	178	38,851
Kern	55	5,290	Santa Cruz	30	4,192
Kings	10	904	Shasta	23	1,676
Lake	8	204	Siskiyou	5	95
Lassen	3	24	Solano	25	4,512
Los Angeles	991	164,441	Sonoma	59	5,758
Madera	9	496	Stanislaus	34	4,179
Marin	37	5,880	Sutter	7	599
Mariposa	4	47	Tehama	4	251
Mendocino	8	711	Trinity	0	0
Merced	19	1,488	Tulare	20	2,613
Modoc	3	48	Tuolumne	6	340
Mono	1	6	Ventura	83	13,151
Monterey	23	4,171	Yolo	16	1,812
Napa	22	2,851	Yuba	3	151
Nevada	8	758	TOTAL	3,358	515,143

[7] By population.

On a year-to-year basis, average enrollment per-private-school increased in 24 counties and decreased in 28 (representing 42 percent and 49 percent of all counties, respectively). In the prior year, increases in average enrollment were reported in 20 counties (35%) and decreases in 32 counties (56%). The remaining counties saw no change in year-to-year average enrollment.

While the majority of private school enrollment was concentrated in the state's most populous counties, the highest *average enrollments* tended to exist elsewhere. In Table 9, the ten counties with the highest average private school enrollments (per-school) are highlighted. Only five of the ten (Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento and Santa Clara) are among the state's ten most populous counties.

Three counties dropped out of the top ten (highest average enrollment) list: Alameda, Marin, and Ventura. Their places were taken by Contra Costa, Sacramento and Solano counties.

In Table 10, the twelve counties with private school enrollments in excess of 10,000 students are highlighted. Of these counties, five experienced net gains in enrollment, while seven saw declines. In the previous year, only one such county (Sacramento) experienced an increase in enrollment.

Table 9. Average Private School Enrollment by County

County	Average Enrollment Per Private School	County	Average Enrollment Per Private School
Alameda	155	Orange	175
Alpine	N/A	Placer	73
Amador	35	Plumas	34
Butte	72	Riverside	127
Calaveras	68	Sacramento	174
Colusa	61	San Benito	61
Contra Costa	160	San Bernardino	100
Del Norte	58	San Diego	153
El Dorado	77	San Francisco	226
Fresno	101	San Joaquin	138
Glenn	58	San Luis Obispo	106
Humboldt	46	San Mateo	216
Imperial	178	Santa Barbara	128
Inyo	25	Santa Clara	218
Kern	96	Santa Cruz	140
Kings	90	Shasta	73
Lake	26	Siskiyou	19
Lassen	8	Solano	180
Los Angeles	166	Sonoma	98
Madera	55	Stanislaus	123
Marin	159	Sutter	86
Mariposa	12	Tehama	63
Mendocino	89	Trinity	N/A
Merced	78	Tulare	131
Modoc	16	Tuolumne	57
Mono	6	Ventura	158
Monterey	181	Yolo	113
Napa	130	Yuba	50
Nevada	95		

Table 10. Private School Enrollment by County: 2009-2010 to 2010-2011

County	2009-2010 Enrollment	2010-2011 Enrollment	Percentage Change	County	2009-2010 Enrollment	2010-2011 Enrollment	Percentage Change
Alameda	23,922	24,251	1.38	Orange	51,080	50,682	-0.78
Alpine	0	0	0.00	Placer	2,060	2,344	13.79
Amador	70	70	0.00	Plumas	93	68	-26.88
Butte	1,591	1,502	-5.59	Riverside	18,231	17,819	-2.26
Calaveras	149	135	-9.40	Sacramento	20,643	20,667	0.12
Colusa	115	121	5.22	San Benito	407	363	-10.81
Contra Costa	15,161	17,249	13.77	San Bernardino	15,910	15,552	-2.25
Del Norte	150	116	-22.67	San Diego	37,725	38,431	1.87
El Dorado	1,146	1,463	27.66	San Francisco	23,253	21,915	-5.75
Fresno	5,362	5,346	-0.30	San Joaquin	6,478	6,349	-1.99
Glenn	173	174	0.58	San Luis Obispo	2,447	2,436	-0.45
Humboldt	712	697	-2.11	San Mateo	15,344	15,133	-1.38
Imperial	1,692	1,604	-5.20	Santa Barbara	5,389	5,132	-4.77
Inyo	31	25	-19.35	Santa Clara	36,508	38,851	6.42
Kern	5,438	5,290	-2.72	Santa Cruz	4,437	4,192	-5.52
Kings	878	904	2.96	Shasta	1,930	1,676	-13.16
Lake	143	204	42.66	Siskiyou	138	95	-31.16
Lassen	33	24	-27.27	Solano	3,607	4,512	25.09
Los Angeles	165,878	164,441	-0.87	Sonoma	5,758	5,758	0.00
Madera	508	496	-2.36	Stanislaus	4,217	4,179	-0.90
Marin	5,036	5,880	16.76	Sutter	660	599	-9.24
Mariposa	39	47	20.51	Tehama	251	251	0.00
Mendocino	733	711	-3.00	Trinity	0	0	0.00
Merced	1,392	1,488	6.90	Tulare	2,455	2,613	6.44
Modoc	64	48	-25.00	Tuolumne	372	340	-8.60
Mono	9	6	-33.33	Ventura	13,422	13,151	-2.02
Monterey	3,901	4,171	6.92	Yolo	1,738	1,812	4.26
Napa	2,827	2,851	0.85	Yuba	171	151	-11.70
Nevada	949	758	-20.13	TOTAL	512,826	515,143	0.45

Student-Teacher Ratio[8]

Small class sizes and low teacher-to-student ratios have long been a hallmark of private schooling. As shown in Table 11, the student-to-teacher ratio decreased modestly in 2010-2011, dropping from 12.5 to 12.3 students per-teacher. The previous year, this ratio *increased* by two-tenths of a percent.

Table 11. Student-Teacher Ratio - All Private Schools: 2009-2010 to 2010-2011.

	2009-10	2010-11
Students	512,826	515,143
Teachers	41,161	41,767
Students-Per-Teacher	12.5	12.3

[8] Teachers referenced in Tables 11, 12 and 13 are employed on a fulltime basis.

The number of students-per-teacher was significantly smaller in schools operating on a for-profit basis (Table 12). From 2009-10 to 2010-11, the student-to-teacher ratio remained constant in for-profit schools and decreased marginally (by one-tenth of a percent) in nonprofit schools.

Table 12. Student-Teacher Ratio by For-Profit and Non-Profit Status: 2009-10 - 2010-11

	2009-10		2010-11	
	For-Profit Schools	Non-Profit Schools	For-Profit Schools	Non-Profit Schools
Students	55,436	457,390	59,155	455,988
Teachers	7,145	34,016	7,585	34,182
Students-Per-Teacher	7.8	13.4	7.8	13.3

The ratio of students-per-teacher was 31 percent lower in schools with a secular orientation than in religiously affiliated schools, although the ratio for religiously affiliated schools decreased by 3.5 percent between 2009-10 and 2010-11 (Table 13).

Table 13. Student-Teacher Ratio by Religiously Affiliated and Secular School Orientation: 2009-10 - 2010-11

	2009-10		2010-11	
	Religiously Affiliated Schools	Secular Schools	Religiously Affiliated Schools	Secular Schools
Students	397,772	115,054	395,716	119,427
Teachers	28,145	12,351	29,068	12,699
Students-Per-Teacher	14.1	9.3	13.6	9.4

Changes from 2009-10 to 2010-2011

In 2010-2011, the number of private K-12 schools in California increased 1.7 percent from the preceding year, while total K-12 enrollment increased by one-half-of-one-percent (see Table 14). The increases in both the number of schools and overall enrollment, while modest, marked a reversal of a multi-year downtrend. As the number of schools and student enrollment grew, average school enrollment declined from 155 to 153 students per school, continuing a multi-year trend. One plausible explanation for the decrease in average enrollment is that consolidation and the absorption of students by larger schools is offset by the establishment of new, smaller schools.

Whereas 2009-2010 saw a moderate increase in the number of nonprofit private schools and a significant decrease in the number of for profit counterparts, 2010-2011 witnessed a mirror image of those figures. Two years ago, the number of private for profit schools fell by a precipitous 7,8 percent, while last year the number of such schools increased by 7.1 percent. At the same time, the number of nonprofit private schools, which had risen by a modest 0.8 percent two years ago decreased by 0.6 percent last year.

While 2010-2011 saw a one-half-of-one-percent decrease in overall religious school enrollment, the number of such schools actually increased by just over one percent (see table 16). A possible interpretation is that a larger number of newly established religious schools with smaller enrollments took the place of a smaller number of such schools that closed their doors. This possibility is supported by the presence of a 2.3 percent decrease in year-to-year median enrollment for private religious schools.

At the same time, schools with secular orientations enjoyed healthy gains in both enrollment (3.8 percent), and number of schools (2.7 percent). A 5.3 percent decline in median enrollment among such schools - with a new median of 36 students per-school in 2010-2011 - permits the assumption of modest enrollment

growth in established secularly oriented schools, bolstered by the creation of a number of new schools with very modest enrollments.

Table 14. Number of Schools and Total Enrollment: 2009-2010 - 2010-2011			
	2009-2010	2010-2011	Net Change
Schools	3,303	3,358	+55 (+1.7%)
Enrollment	512,826	515,143	+2,317 (+0.5%)

From 2008-2009 to 2009-2010, the number of schools with enrollments in excess of 500 students decreased by 7.6 percent, and the number of schools enrolling 200-499 students decreased by 6.5 percent. The former figure fell to 2.1 percent in the past year, while the number of schools enrolling 200-499 students remained stable. It is noteworthy that nearly the entirety of the year-to-year increase in the number of private schools is accounted for by schools enrolling fewer than 100 students.

Table 15. Schools and Enrollment by For-Profit and Non-Profit Status: 2009-2010 - 2010-2011						
	2009-2010		2010-2011		Net Change	
	Schools	Enrollment	Schools	Enrollment	Schools	Enrollment
For-Profit	980	55,436	1,050	59,155	+70 +7.1%)	+3,719 (+6.7%)
Non-Profit	2,323	457,390	2,308	455,988	-15 (-0.6%)	-1,402 (- 0.3%)

Table 16. Schools and Enrollment by Religiously Affiliated and Secular Orientation: 2009-2010 - 2010-2011						
	2009-2010		2010-2011		Net Change	
	Schools	Enrollment	Schools	Enrollment	Schools	Enrollment
Religiously Affiliated	2,067	397,772	2,089	395,716	+22 (+1.1%)	-2,056 (-0.5%)
Secular	1,236	115,054	1,269	119,427	+33 (+2.7%)	+4,373 (+3.8%)

From 2009-2010 to 2010-2011, total enrollment in grades K-5, inclusive, increased by a four-tenths-of-one-percent. Though modest, this figure signaled a reversal from the previous year-to-year period in which K-5 enrollment fell 4.9 percent. Enrollment in grades 6-8, inclusive, declined by one-tenth-of-one-percent, compared to a drop of 5.7 percent over the previous year-to-year period, while enrollment in grades 9-12, inclusive, increased 1.2 percent, reversing a loss of 4.6 percent during the prior period.

Kindergarten enrollment increased by just under one percent from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011, compared to a 5.6 percent previous annual decline, while enrollment at the 9th grade high school entry level increased by four-tenths-of-one-percent compared to a decrease of 5.6 percent the prior year.

About CAPSO…

The California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO) is the voice of K-12 private education in California. Its primary mission is to preserve the independence of California's private schools and to uphold parental choice in education. CAPSO, independently, and in collaboration with other community and governmental institutions, is an advocate, catalyst, and creative leader for strengthening and advancing K-12 private education in California.

CAPSO's mission is based on the belief that a healthy, pluralistic society depends upon educational options, parental choice, and dialogue and collaboration between educational entities.