



A Case for Nonpublic Schools

According to an article in The Legislative Gazette, 2/9/04, page 25, as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit, the state has been ordered to correct how public schools are funded so that all students receive a sound basic education. It is estimated that "it will take \$6.2 billion over the \$32 billion already laid out to meet the adequate level."

A billion is a thousand million. That's 1,000,000,000. The \$6.2 billion is just a little over the \$6 billion that nonpublic schools save taxpayers by educating 500,000 children.

One of the arguments that public school organizations use against us is that nonpublic schools are a talent drain. They claim one of the reasons that nonpublic schools outperform them is that they draw the brightest and the best. An examination of four charts from "New York The State of Learning, A Report to the Governor and Legislature on the Educational Status of the State's Schools: Submitted July 2003," may shed light on this issue.

With respect to English Language Arts, using figures 2.14 vs. 6.2 we find that for 1999 through 2002, in the fourth grade, identical percentages of students were at the highest level (5%, 16%, 17% and 21%). However the nonpublic schools had an advantage at level 3 of 4%, 4%, 5% and 6% in each of the examined years. Thus at grade 4 the nonpublic schools did have an advantage.

Moving to the eighth grade, Figures 2.16 and 6.3 show that this advantage increases. Here we find that at Level 4 the nonpublic schools now show a 2-3% advantage while at Level 3 the range is from 8 to 10% higher. Unfortunately, we are not tracking the results for the same students since the figures are for non-overlapping classes (the 1999 fourth graders are only in 7th grade in 2002).

One could thus be lead to argue that indeed nonpublic schools are doing a superior job. To truly make this claim, would require tracking and comparing large numbers of the same students' performance in 4th vs 8th grade but in lieu of that data, these figures do provide some insight. One must ask why the percent of students in the top half more than doubles after four years of nonpublic vs public education.

The case for mathematics is even more startling. Using Figures 2.15 and 6.4, it would seem that at the highest level, the



The theme for this month's prescription is Resurrection. Since Lent is upon us it seems appropriate to use this core element of our faith as a basis for this month's message. (Plus it has the added benefit of becoming our 7th R.)

When I was younger, I thought that success was essential. Getting A's, winning games, solving problems was what was important. In our politically correct world success has become so important that the fear of non-success, failure drives us to equate competition with evil—no competition equals no failure. "Why keep score—just play the game for the fun of it." "Let's do a group project—that way we can all succeed together." "Everyone in my class gets B's or better—a "C" is only average." Success is wonderful!

How does resurrection fit in? Resurrection is the correct response to failure. It is picking yourself up. It is over coming loss. It is gaining good out of evil.

The real danger to the healthy administrator is that this fear of failure can prompt inaction. Why take a chance? One can become frozen in complacency. It takes true courage to stick one's neck out. Leadership requires the courage to risk failure.

If and when we do fail, let us learn from the experience, raise up, move on, continue to try another way. Real success comes from persistence, the dogged hard work of seeking the goal, living toward the future, not being depressed by the past. Resurrection is hope!

Failure is not evil, it is the inevitable consequence of pursuit. It is the real world. One might even conclude that if we are not failing then we are not pushing the envelop. We will never know what we can accomplish if we don't take risks.

public schools actually begin with an edge in grade four. They show a 4%, 3%, 2% and 3% advantage at level 4—the brightest and best. However, adding in Level 3 (5%, 5%, 4% and 6%) more are in the nonpublic schools; once again throwing a small (1%, 2%, 2% and 3%) starting advantage to the nonpublic schools. However, when we look at eighth grade the nonpublic schools once again pull up their percentage of students in the top half with increases of 6%, 4%, 7% and 7% respectively. This time, more than doubling their lead!

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