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HEALTH AND WELL- BEING DURING COVID:

Nationwide Data on Christian Schools

ACSI RESEARCH

In order to gauge how Christian schools are responding to ongoing COVID challenges, ACSI fielded a third U.S. survey electronically in mid-November 2020. A total of 738 unique schools responded to the survey for a response rate of 32% and overall were fairly representative of ACSI membership across a number of demographic factors.

The survey found that the vast majority of schools (88%) with grade levels anywhere within the K-12 range were physically reopened, with 24.5% offering on-campus instruction only, 56.8% offering on-campus instruction plus a distance learning option (e.g., in case of illness, health condition, or family preference), and 6.8% requiring all students to experience some form of blended learning (on-campus plus distance learning). Just 4% of schools continued to have their physical campuses closed, with only distance learning being offered.

COVID Disruption

At the time of survey administration, a fifth of schools (20.3%) reported that they had experienced *no disruption* due to coronavirus spread in Fall 2020,



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ACSI exists to strengthen Christian schools and equip Christian educators worldwide as they prepare students academically and inspire students to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

ACSI Vision Statement

ACSI will become a leading international organization that promotes Christian education and provides training and resources to Christian schools and Christian educators, resulting in:

- schools that contribute to the public good through effective teaching and learning and that are biblically sound, academically rigorous, socially engaged, and culturally relevant and
- educators who embody a biblical worldview, engage in transformational teaching and discipling, and embrace personal and professional growth.

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while an additional 44% reported only experiencing a *small disruption* due to COVID (e.g., a small number of students were sent home or missed school). Nearly a quarter (24.4%) had experienced a *substantial disruption* (e.g., sending or keeping home entire classes or cohorts of students). Less than a tenth (8.3%) reported having to *shut down* the entire school for a period of time as a result of coronavirus spread.

Influences on Decision Making

In order to better understand schools' planning processes, the survey also asked about the influence of various input sources in ongoing decision making related to COVID. The top three sources of input were: 1) local health department guidance (with 63% of schools citing this as highly influential; and 31% as somewhat influential); state guidance (50% highly influential, 45% somewhat influential); and advice of medical personnel known to the school (43% highly influential, 41% somewhat influential). These findings suggest that schools have taken health-related guidelines and advice into strong consideration as they make decisions for their students, faculty and staff, and school communities.

Faculty & Staff Well-Being

The survey asked respondents to rate a number of COVID-related challenges in terms of level of concern (extremely, very, slightly, or not at all concerned). A range of financial, academic, and COVID-diagnosis concerns were of significant concern to respondents; however, well-being rose to the top, particularly for the adults who work in schools. The top two challenges were with regard to teachers, staff, and leaders (*overwork* at 77% and *mental health* at 73%), and the third was with regard to students (*mental health* at 64%).



In anticipation of these kinds of concerns, the survey asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they were intentionally supporting faculty in the areas of stress, well-being, and mental health. One-fifth of schools (20.6%) reported that they are *not really doing much* to support faculty in these areas. Two-thirds (66.2%) indicated that they are *doing some things* to support faculty but have not developed an intentional plan. Finally, only 13.2% of schools had an *intentional plan in place* for supporting faculty in these areas. These findings appear to reflect the overall concern regarding these areas of challenge in schools but also suggest that there is room for more intentional planning (e.g., putting a plan for faculty well-being in place) for most schools.

Student Well-Being

Care for students was also a need identified in the survey data. For example, the third top concern cited by respondents was the mental health of students (reported as extremely or very concerning by 64% of schools). In terms of special education and student support, two-thirds of schools reported either the same level or increased offerings for students during the current school year, as compared with previous years.



While causality cannot be inferred, a statistically significant correlation was identified for the combination of on-campus instruction and increasing support for special education students (with schools that did both seeing an enrollment growth of 9.9%, whereas those that reopened with blended or distance learning only and decreased SPED support declined in enrollment by over 20%).

Prioritizing Well-Being for 2021 and Beyond

Taken together, these findings suggest that Christian schools are very cognizant of school community concerns regarding well-being posed by COVID. While the majority of schools are addressing these issues in some way, the survey findings also suggest that there is room for growth. This is certainly understandable given the logistical challenges faced by the majority of schools in reopening in-person this year. However, as they look toward the next academic year, leaders can consider ways their schools can care more intentionally for the needs of educators and students, and in doing so “bear one another’s burdens” as a community and as Scripture encourages (Galatians 6:2). [RIB](#)

REFERENCE

Swaner, L.E. and M.H. Lee. 2020. *Christian Schools and COVID-19: 2020-2021 School Year Profile*. Colorado Springs, CO: ACSI.

The November 2020 survey also included an open-ended question regarding strategies schools were utilizing to support faculty in the area of well-being; six categories were identified through qualitative analysis, below.

Staffing Support Provided

- ✓ Designated COVID liaison who handles communication with parents and guardians
- ✓ Professional counselors, social workers, pastoral staff, and others available to meet with faculty on campus
- ✓ Extra aides/volunteers to assist faculty with workload

Outside Resources Utilized

- ✓ Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free counseling
- ✓ Referrals to and/or allotment for counseling sessions
- ✓ Partnership with local hospital and wellness group

HR or Benefit Increases Made

- ✓ Bonus pay
- ✓ Raises given from increased enrollment
- ✓ Employee benevolence fund
- ✓ Additional personal and/or sick days added this year

Schedule Changes Implemented

- ✓ Extending days off around holidays
- ✓ Swapping PD days for “mental health” days
- ✓ Regularly scheduled half or full days for non-instructional time (e.g., extra planning or rest)
- ✓ Rotating staff schedules to provide time off
- ✓ Limiting or eliminating non-essential meetings
- ✓ Weekly individual check-ins with administrators

Professional Development (PD) and Group Support Offered

- ✓ Health and wellness classes held on campus
- ✓ Book study on teacher wellness
- ✓ Prayer partners
- ✓ Families “adopt” a classroom or teacher

Hospitality and Wellness “Perks” Provided

- ✓ Meals or coffee breaks provided by school and/or volunteers
- ✓ Remodeled teacher lounge to be COVID-safe and stocked with food
- ✓ Dress down days
- ✓ Wellness emphasis days
- ✓ Gift cards, baskets, or other “treats”

Leadership for Well-Being: Insights from the Flourishing Schools Research

LYNN E. SWANER, CINDY DODDS, AND MATTHEW H. LEE

Because of their biblically based philosophy of education, Christian schools ground their vision and mission in Scripture. Thus, based on the scriptural truth that God desires to bless his people and cause them to flourish (Psalm 44:2; 52:8; 72:7, 16; 92:12-13), ACSI Research set out in 2018-2019 to understand the ways in which Christian schools can flourish, with over 15,000 Christian school students, teachers, administrators, board members, parents, support staff, and alumni participating in the Flourishing Schools Research initiative.

The results of this research (Swaner, Marshall, and Tesar 2016) were groundbreaking and yielded the first ever measure and model of Christian school flourishing, which clusters 35 validated constructs for all survey groups into five domains of flourishing: *Purpose*; *Relationships*; *Teaching & Learning*; *Expertise & Resources*; and *Well-Being*. These domains provide a compelling and comprehensive picture of the areas in which Christian schools can focus their efforts and resources in order to promote a flourishing school culture and community. The model has been externally reviewed and rigorously validated to provide leaders with statistically sound and relevant feedback for their schools.

The question remains, however, of how these findings can be utilized by school leaders—including heads of school, administrators, and school boards—to develop their own practices that lead to flourishing-related outcomes for their schools. A new report from ACSI, *Leadership for Flourishing Schools: From Research to Practice* (Swaner, Dodds, and Lee 2021; available at acsi.org/thought-leadership), answers this question with a review of data-driven insights from the Flourishing Schools Research. While a more extensive review of findings from this report will be shared in the Fall 2021 edition of *Research in Brief*, this article will focus on leadership for the domain of *Well-Being*.

The reason for this emphasis is that stress, for both teachers and leaders, topped the list of areas for improvement for nearly two-thirds of schools in the Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI) sample. Stress is defined as constant feelings of being overwhelmed, which accompany a lack of time to prepare for instruction (teachers) or to focus on physical health (leaders). When combined with the statistical significance of two student constructs—resilience and healthy living—these findings point to the importance of the *Well-Being* domain for the entire school community. This is particularly significant given that the research findings predate the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020,



which added even additional pressure in the area of well-being for educators and students.

Flourishing and School Leadership

When it comes to outcomes for students, teachers, and schools, leadership matters. Leaders know this intuitively, but importantly, this fact has been demonstrated through a plethora of previous research. The Flourishing Schools Research further confirms that leadership matters for the flourishing of all Christian school constituents, as well as the school itself. By surveying multiple school constituencies that compose the school community, the FSCI allows not only assessment of outcomes across different populations, but also enables exploration of relationships between these groups, how these relationships influence outcomes, and how they contribute in positive ways to flourishing school cultures.

Factor analysis of constructs for leaders—supplemented by literature-based consideration of the nature of the constructs as they relate to leadership behaviors—yields three “levels” of constructs as they relate to leaders. These are: *leader specific* constructs; *leader directed* constructs; and *leader shaped* constructs (see model below).

ACSI Leadership Model for Flourishing Schools

All three levels of constructs are crucial for school flourishing, and therefore one is not more important than another; however, they differ in terms of the *mechanisms* by which they operate and by which leaders engage them. Each will be explored below, with specific focus on constructs from the *Well-Being* domain.

Leader Specific Constructs

These constructs emerged from the research as *specific to leaders*, meaning that these are constructs that leaders *embody*. Since they involve the skills and dispositions of leaders, responses to these constructs look much like an iterative cycle for professional and leadership development: reflect and assess one's practices; identify areas for improvement; create a plan to resource and support improvement; and evaluate change in practice (Swaner 2016).

Related to *Well-Being*, the construct of Stress (for leaders) falls within this level. Leaders can address this construct by asking reflection questions of themselves and their teams. These questions might include, "In what ways do I/we prioritize spending time on physical health (exercising, sleeping enough, eating healthy)?" School boards likewise can take the initiative in asking questions about how they promote the well-being of school leaders, such as, "How do we as a board support and encourage the head of school in balancing work and life, reducing stress, and ensuring that adequate quality time is spent with family and friends?" The answers to these questions can help frame a blueprint to increased well-being for leaders, which should ideally take the form of a written plan for leader well-being that is reviewed and evaluated annually.

Leader Directed Constructs

These constructs are those for which leaders have the *most direct responsibility*, and therefore represent places where leaders can directly impact the flourishing of the school and its constituents. The following leadership behaviors serve to move

the needle in positive ways with regard to these constructs:

- Working collaboratively with stakeholders to assess needs, plan for improvement, and evaluate change;
- Creating 360-degree feedback mechanisms so that data is regularly gathered with regard to these constructs;
- Analyzing and utilizing stakeholder data gathered to drive improvement decisions and evaluate progress toward goals;
- Procuring and allocating personnel, finances, and materials effectively, in order to resource change; and
- Developing policies, procedures, and structures that support teachers and staff—again, with collaborative involvement of these groups.

In the domain of *Well-Being*, this involves the construct of Stress again, but this time for teachers. All of the above can be implemented by leaders to determine whether the school schedule is structured to ensure adequate time for planning, teaching, and rest for teachers—and then take collaborative, data-driven action where change is needed. For their part, school boards can commit to supporting and resourcing policies and practices related to employee well-being—from adequate healthcare and vacation time to daily schedules that set a healthy pace and reflect realistic expectations around leading and teaching in a school.

Leader Shaped Constructs

Leader shaped constructs are those which leaders *influence at the cultural level*. This means that in order to effect better flourishing outcomes related to these constructs, leaders should engage in culture-shaping efforts that actively include multiple school constituents. Although leaders may view this construct level as the area in which their influence is most indirect, the importance of these constructs—to the instructional, student, and community cultures of the school—makes this level critically important to school flourishing.

Leaders will need to employ best practices in cultural change management in order to influence these constructs and, in turn, shape the overall school culture toward flourishing. These practices include:

- Setting clear, mission-aligned expectations for all school stakeholders, including teachers and staff, families, and students—both related to their roles at the school and to their relationships with one another;
- Modeling these expectations as leaders, intentionally and consistently;
- Engaging the school community around "big questions" inherent in these constructs; and



ACSI Leadership Model for Flourishing Schools

- Employing leader-specific constructs to inform, manage, and evaluate culture-level change toward flourishing.


Two leader shaped constructs in the domain of *Well-Being* are both specific to students. These are: 1) Healthy Living, or students' level of happiness with their physical health, including sufficient exercise and a healthy diet; and 2) Resilience, which refers to students' ability to handle stress effectively and respond well to/bounce back from difficult situations.

To begin assessing their effectiveness in shaping the well-being of students, leadership teams can ask whether and how they have championed programs that emphasize healthy living habits, as well as scheduled margin for students to engage in activities, unstructured free time, and rest. They can also ask whether they have invested in proper guidance and other support for students, as well as provided for robust social and emotional learning (SEL) for students at all grade levels. For their part, school boards can ask how they support and resource policies, practices, and programs that encourage and promote student flourishing in the *Well-Being* domain.

The Well-Being Domain: Foundational Practices for Leaders

In addition to the three levels of constructs identified above, the FSCM domains provide a helpful framework for conceptualizing three categories of practices that leaders can develop in order to lead flourishing schools: *foundational practices*, arising from the *Purpose* and *Well-Being* domains; *relational practices*, tied to the *Relationships* domain; and *strategic practices*, which correspond to the *Teaching & Learning* and *Expertise & Resources* domains.

While these three categories are explored in-depth in *Leadership for Flourishing Schools: From Research to Practice*, it is important to note that *foundational practices* are exactly that—if leaders are not flourishing in the domains of *Purpose* and *Well-Being*, there can be little hope that they will excel in relational or strategic practices. As C.S. Lewis writes in *God in the Dock*, “None can give to another what he does not possess himself... Nothing which was not in the teachers can flow from them into the pupils” (118).

Both leaders and teachers are often faced with long hours of work and a high level of stress-inducing situations. A flourishing leader understands the importance of healthy work-life integration and develops a plan for well-being (including addressing the construct of Stress). Unhealthy leaders (whether in mind, body, or spirit) simply cannot lead a school community to flourishing. Rather, well-being within a school begins with leaders who prioritize their wellness and both model and create the conditions for others—both teachers and students—to do the same. 

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Sabbath Practices and Wellness in Christian Schools

MATTHEW H. LEE, RIAN DJITA, AND ALBERT CHENG

Many Evangelical Christians believe the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and that in the Bible, the moral law is summarized in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21). One of the commandments is to “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8, NIV). But how do school leaders and teachers encourage their school communities to keep the Sabbath? How are Sabbath practices related to the wellness of the school community? To our knowledge, no research has attempted to answer these questions for Christian schools.

Research on the relationship between Sabbath practices and wellness comes at a crucial time for Christian schools.

A recent Gallup poll found that mental health declined for all Americans in 2020 (Brenan 2020), but the consequences of the pandemic for school communities were particularly onerous (Mheidly, Fares and Fares 2020). The *New York Times* called teaching in the pandemic “not sustainable” (Singer 2020). Yale University researchers concluded that the “toll of the coronavirus on our nation’s school leaders is palpable” (Brackett, Cannizzaro and Levy 2020). At the beginning of the school year, ACSI school leaders expressed high levels of concern for the mental health of leaders, faculty, staff, and students (Swaner and Lee 2020).

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, research

predominantly in subfields of psychology (such as positive psychology and psychogeriatrics) has documented a connection between rest and flourishing. Rest and leisure are positively correlated with physical and mental health (Lee, Wu and Lin 2012), cognitive function (Zhu et al. 2017), and productivity (Bogaert et al. 2014; Wei, Qu and Ma 2016). They are also correlated with lower levels of stress and depression (Goodman, Geiger and Wolf 2016).

To investigate the potential relationship between Sabbath practices and wellness in Christian schools, ACSI fielded the Sabbath Study in January and February 2021. School communities in the United States, Canada, and Indonesia were invited to complete a survey and 7,267 individuals responded (360 school administrators, 1,309 teachers, 2,343 students, and 873 parents; 2,382 respondents did not indicate their relationship to the school).

We find a strong association between Sabbath practices and wellness, an overall finding that replicates for nearly all subgroups in our analysis. Our finding affirms a biblical truth that needs no empirical proof: we are created not only for work, but for rest, bearing the image of our Heavenly Father, who in six days made the heavens and the earth and rested on the seventh day.

Sabbath practices in Christendom

In the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*, Olympic athlete Eric Liddell pulls aside a young man heading to church and rhetorically asks, “The Sabbath’s not a day for playing football, is it?” The quote highlights key differences between Sabbath rest and mere leisure for Christians who believe that the Sabbath is not a day for “doing as you please” (Isaiah 58:13). These differences make it important to study Sabbath practices specifically in the Christian school context.

The Bible teaches that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11) signifying God’s everlasting covenant with his people (Exodus 31:16; Ezekiel 20:12). It is an occasion of jubilation on which liberty would be proclaimed (Leviticus 25). It is a day of worship, thanksgiving, affirmation (Psalm 92) and fellowship (Acts 2:42, 20:7), a day over which Christ proclaimed his lordship and on which he performed miracles (Matthew 12:9-21; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11; John 5:9-18).

However, Christians may disagree about when the Sabbath is to be observed. We asked respondents “When is the Sabbath?” and provided five possible choices: “Sunday,” “Saturday,” “Every day,” “No specific day,” and “Don’t know.” Nearly three-quarters of our sample revealed they are First-day Sabbatharians, observing Sunday as the Lord’s Day in connection with Christ’s resurrection (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10). Fourteen percent maintain that Saturday is to be kept as the Sabbath, in

keeping with Old Testament tradition (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:15). Eight percent do not set aside any specific day, emphasizing liberty of conscience (Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:9-10, 5:1-26; Colossians 2:9-17), and 4% indicated they do not know which day is the Sabbath.

Christians may also disagree about how to practice the Sabbath. The Puritanical Sabbatarianism of Liddell, summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith, explicitly rejects both “worldly employments and recreations” as inappropriate on the Lord’s Day (WCF 21.8). In contrast, the Heidelberg Catechism, which espouses the Continental View of Sabbatarianism, permits recreations on the Sabbath as it is a “festive day of rest” (Lord’s Day 38).

Throughout the survey, we try to remain indifferent to respondents’ views on Sabbath practices (preferring the term “Sabbath” to assuming the normative “Sunday”). Our study is not intended to promote particular views on Sabbath practices or prescribe specific behaviors. Rather, it is meant to describe the Sabbath practices policies and practices of members of Christian school communities.

What do respondents believe about the Sabbath?

To measure respondents’ views on the Sabbath, we presented respondents with 11 statements about the Sabbath. Respondents indicated how strongly they agreed with each statement on a four-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.”

The vast majority of respondents believed the Sabbath is for worship (96%) and rest from labors (94%). Roughly four-fifths held that Sabbath practices is a priority for their school community (82%) and that their school community discusses how to encourage Sabbath practices (76%). Respondents most strongly disagreed with the claims that Sabbath practices is an Old Testament practice to which we are no longer bound (63%) or that recreations are not permitted on the Sabbath (74%).

There was some degree of incoherence in respondents’ views. When presented with the statement “God commands we should keep one day in seven holy by resting from our labors,” 94% agreed or strongly agreed, but when presented with the statement “We should abstain from working on the Sabbath,” only 58% agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, when presented with the statement “We observe the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath to commemorate Christ’s resurrection from the dead,” 83% agreed or strongly agreed, but when presented with the statement “We keep the Sabbath not on a particular day of the week but by seeking rest every day,” 64% agreed or strongly agreed. While we expected responses to be similar on such statement pairings, these patterns suggest that respondents are not consistent on these

views or that these items capture more nuanced differences than we anticipated, possibly stemming from survey design issues.

Are schools engaging in Sabbath practices?

We asked each respondent about school policies that may be related to Sabbath practices (see Figure 1). Seven out of ten respondents indicated their school does not have an official Sabbath policy. Most respondents indicated their school avoids scheduling professional meetings (89%) or official school activities (86%) on the Sabbath. The majority of respondents reported that their schools never schedule any activities on the Sabbath. Activities most commonly scheduled on the Sabbath include chapel/worship, prayer meeting/Bible study, and athletic events.

Schools tend not to interfere with teachers’ classroom policies that may be related to Sabbath practices. Teachers generally reported not being told to avoid scheduling major deadlines immediately after the Sabbath (77%), assigning work over the weekend (82%), or working on the Sabbath (85%).

Teachers indicated that they almost never grade student work or have professional meetings on the Sabbath, rarely assign student work to be completed on the Sabbath, or schedule a major deadline immediately following the Sabbath. This is particularly true of Sabbath practices teachers, who were significantly more likely to report “never” or “rarely” having professional meetings, grading student work, or emailing on the Sabbath ($p < 0.01$), assigning a major deadline immediately following the Sabbath ($p < 0.01$), or lesson planning on the Sabbath ($p < 0.05$).

Are Sabbath practices related to individual wellness?

To measure the relationship between Sabbath practices and individual wellness, we used the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), a validated six-item scale used to measure psychosocial well-being (Ruiz, Gómez-Quintero, & Lluís 2013). According to the CBI, personal burnout is a “state of prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion.” Overall, responses were highly consistent by respondent ($\alpha = 0.87$). Respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (0 = “Almost never,” 1 = “Seldom,” 2 = “Sometimes,” 3 = “Often,” 4 = “Always”) how often the following statements applied to them:

Table 1. How often do the following statements apply to you?

Item	All Respondents	% “Often” or “Always”	
		Sabbath-keepers	Non-Sabbath-keepers
1. I feel tired.	2.95	39%	50%
2. I am physically exhausted.	2.37	33%	40%
3. I am emotionally exhausted.	2.43	34%	45%
4. I think, “I can’t take it anymore.”	1.94	18%	27%
5. I feel worn out.	2.72	20%	30%
6. I feel weak and susceptible to illness.	1.05	7%	11%
Overall Burnout Score	2.24		

Overall, 69% of respondents indicated that they keep the Sabbath. We found that the spiritual discipline of keeping the Sabbath is positively associated with wellness (negatively associated with burnout). For example, half of non-Sabbath-keepers reported feeling tired “often” or “always,” while 39% of Sabbath-keepers felt the same way (see Table 1). The likelihood of “often” or “always” feeling physically and emotionally exhaustion are respectively 7 and 11 percentage points higher among non-Sabbath-keepers compared to Sabbath-keepers.

As shown in Figure 2, Sabbath-keepers reported significantly lower levels of burnout (2.2 scale points) than non-Sabbath-keepers (2.3 scale points), a difference of about a quarter of a standard deviation ($p < 0.01$). The difference was greatest for administrators and teachers (about two-fifths to half a standard deviation, $p < 0.01$), but was also present for students, who expressed the lowest frequency of burnout ($p < 0.01$). Only parents’ burnout could not be distinguished by Sabbath practices. These differences persisted whether or not we control for demographic characteristics (age, gender, marital status), educator experience, and respondent’s country.

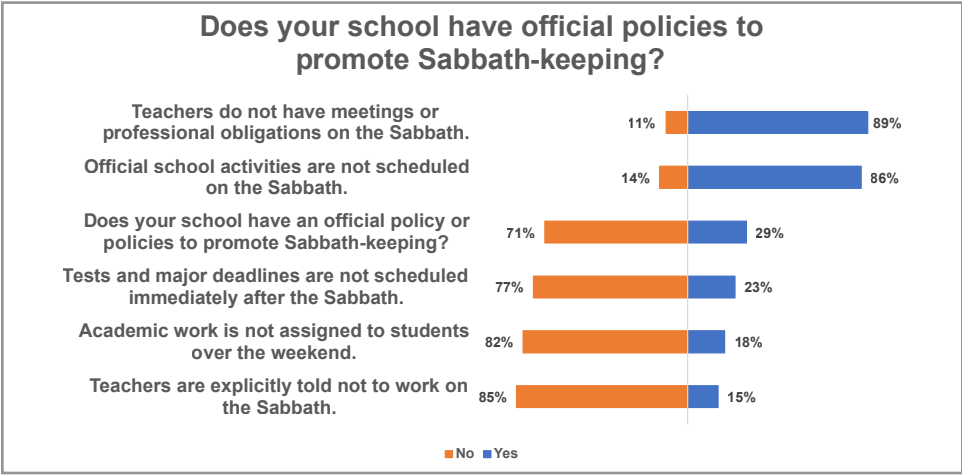


Figure 1

Lower burnout scale scores suggest greater

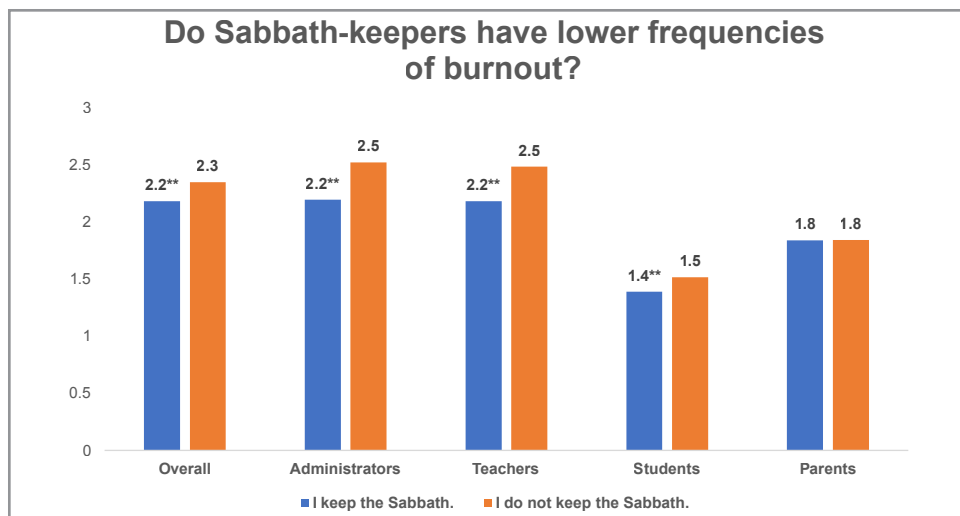


Figure 2

wellness for Sabbath-keepers, demonstrating an important link between Sabbath practices and individual wellness.

How do Sabbath-keepers spend their Sabbaths?

Finally, to get a sense of how people spend their Sabbaths, we asked respondents whether or not they engaged in several church, recreational, and work-related activities on a typical Sabbath before the COVID-19 pandemic. These questions were similar to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey.

We compared patterns of behavior between those who reported keeping the Sabbath to others who did not report keeping the Sabbath. These comparisons may give some insight into why Sabbath-keepers expressed lower frequencies of burnout in our survey.

Sabbath-keepers were less likely to engage in recreational activities on the Sabbath (e.g., stream TV/movies, eat out, community programs not associated with school), and they were less likely to engage in work-related activities on the Sabbath (e.g., chores/errands, travel, job shifts; all $p < 0.01$). They were more likely to participate or lead church activities, attend morning or evening worship, and fellowship with family or church members (all $p < 0.01$). They were no more or less likely to engage in leisurely activities (e.g., reading, arts, exercise, other hobbies; 97% of our sample) or fellowship with others outside the family (86%).

These patterns suggest that, in addition to resting from work, greater engagement with church-related activities rather than recreational activities may explain differential levels of burnout between Sabbath-keepers and non-keepers.

Conclusion and implications for educational practice

Throughout Scripture, the importance of rest for God's people is clearly stated in the Old Testament (Exodus 20:8, 31:12-17;

Deuteronomy 5:15; Nehemiah 13:22) and reiterated in the New (Matthew 4:28-30; Hebrews 3:7-4:9). True rest for sinners before a holy God is only possible by understanding that we are not made holy by our perfect efforts to keep the Sabbath, but that it is God who "makes you holy" (Exodus 31:13). As believers living in light of the Good News of the Gospel, we may disagree about what rest specifically entails. Regardless of these differences, we find a strong relationship between Sabbath practices and wellness in Christian school communities. We encourage prayer and further study of God's Word to understand what this may look like for your school community.

On one hand, we are greatly encouraged by the findings. We find a clear relationship between Sabbath practices and the wellness of the school community. Sabbath-keepers express significantly lower frequencies of burnout. Patterns of responses indicate thoughtfulness from certain school communities about Sabbath practices. Sabbath keepers who are teachers take clear steps in their instructional practices to remember the day and, perhaps in an act of discipleship, to encourage their students to do the same by not assigning work to be completed on the Sabbath. Sabbath keepers are more likely to be involved in the life of the church and to enjoy fellowship with family and church members.

Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. Inconsistencies in expressed beliefs indicate that there are opportunities for school communities to grow in the knowledge and application of Sabbath practices. While administrators' responses indicated a strong consensus on the importance of Sabbath rest, official school policies generally do not align with this stated belief. Administrators may want to, for instance, actively encourage their teachers to put aside their work responsibilities at specific times or be mindful of when they schedule particular kinds of official school activities. We are in great danger of being robbed of our rest in an interconnected digital age—now wildly amplified by COVID—when our work often lies just a swipe and a tap away. Explicitly communicating the need to prioritize rest may be more important than ever before.

School communities may additionally find value in critical reflection about whether their teaching and learning practices are consistent with the reality of Sabbath rest. How might Sabbath practices be encouraged for students and families if exams or homework due dates were not scheduled on Mondays? What school policies or practices might free educators to avoid the need to catch up on work-related email, lesson plan, or grade student work on the Sabbath?

Incorporating regular rhythms of rest are important not merely for the pragmatic purpose of avoiding burnout but

also because they provide a kind of discipleship. Practicing Sabbath points educators, students, and families to the kind of rest that Augustine alluded to when he confessed, “Because you have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in You.” Practicing Sabbath is a way to enter that rest. Thus, we encourage Christian schools, if they aim to prioritize students’ spiritual formation and discipleship, to consider how they are forming them into a people, not just of Sabbath rest, but of Gospel rest. Are they not only encouraging students to participate in church services during the weekend but also shaping them into a people who are thankful and in tune with the melody of God’s grace that has been transposed into the world? Similarly, are teachers, principals, and other members of school staff living their identity as a people of Gospel rest?

How might heads of school provide leadership in encouraging Sabbath practices and promoting the wellness of the school community? Do Sabbath practices encourage similar practices in students? These are among many questions to consider as school communities press into entering and operating under the banner of Sabbath rest, and ones we will continue to investigate through the Sabbath Study. [RIB](#)

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The Protestant Family Ethic

ALBERT CHENG

What is a Christian education good for? What kind of people do Christian schools long to see their students become? In what ways are students formed for the sake of not only their personal good but also the common good of the communities in which they will find themselves as adults? Leaders at ASCI and educators at member schools have posed and pondered these kinds of questions.

There are many ways in which students can eventually contribute to the well-being of their communities. The common good touches multiple facets of our shared lives, including economic, social, and civic ones. How well are schools preparing their students to fulfill their vocations, for example, in the marketplace, in their cities, in their

neighborhoods, and in their homes?

My colleagues Wendy Wang, Brad Wilcox, Patrick Wolf, and I recently considered the last item on that list: the home. In a report entitled “[The Protestant Family Ethic](#)” released through the Institute for Family Studies and the American Enterprise Institute, we explored the prevalence of marriage, divorce, and out-of-wedlock childbirth among graduates from Protestant, Catholic, non-religious private, and public schools. Although ASCI’s Matthew Lee reviewed the piece in the Fall 2020 edition of *Research in Brief*, I would like to take the opportunity to offer more details and share a few additional insights.

Theoretical Framework: Moral Ecologies

Schools ultimately help to shape students’ moral outlook on life. For Christian schools, this includes not only teaching students central tenets of historic Christian faith but also instilling practices and behaviors—habits for inhabiting the world. In short, Christian education entails cultivating character, that is, forming students into a particular kind of people.

All schools are in the business of formation, whether they are aware of it or not. They are communities of value, holding normative views of human nature, good, evil, and a life worth living. In other words, schools are part of a larger moral ecosystem that shapes students. In their recent volume *The Content of their Character*, James Hunter and Ryan Olsen of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture explain:

When social institutions—whether the family, peer relationships, youth organizations, the internet,

religious congregations, entertainment of popular culture—cluster together, they form a larger ecosystem of powerful cultural influences. None of these is morally neutral. Indeed, all social institutions rest upon distinctive ideals, beliefs, obligations, prohibitions, and commitment—many implicit and some explicit—and these are rooted in, and reinforced by, well-established social practices. Taken together, these form a moral ecology.

Views of family formation and an understanding of the institution of the family itself are largely shaped by these moral sources. Do students who attend Christian or other types of schools exhibit distinctive life patterns as it pertains to marriage, divorce, and bearing children?

Methods and Data

In “The Protestant Family Ethic,” my colleagues and I answer this question with data from two surveys: the Understanding

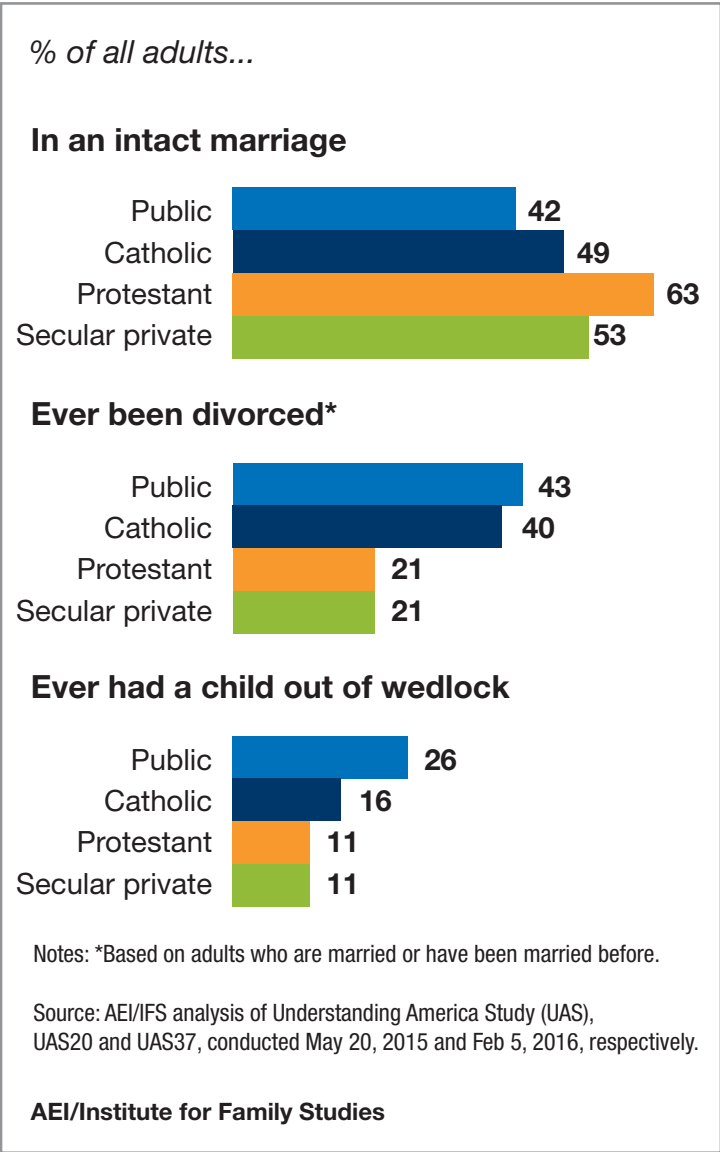


Figure 1: Family outcomes by school type

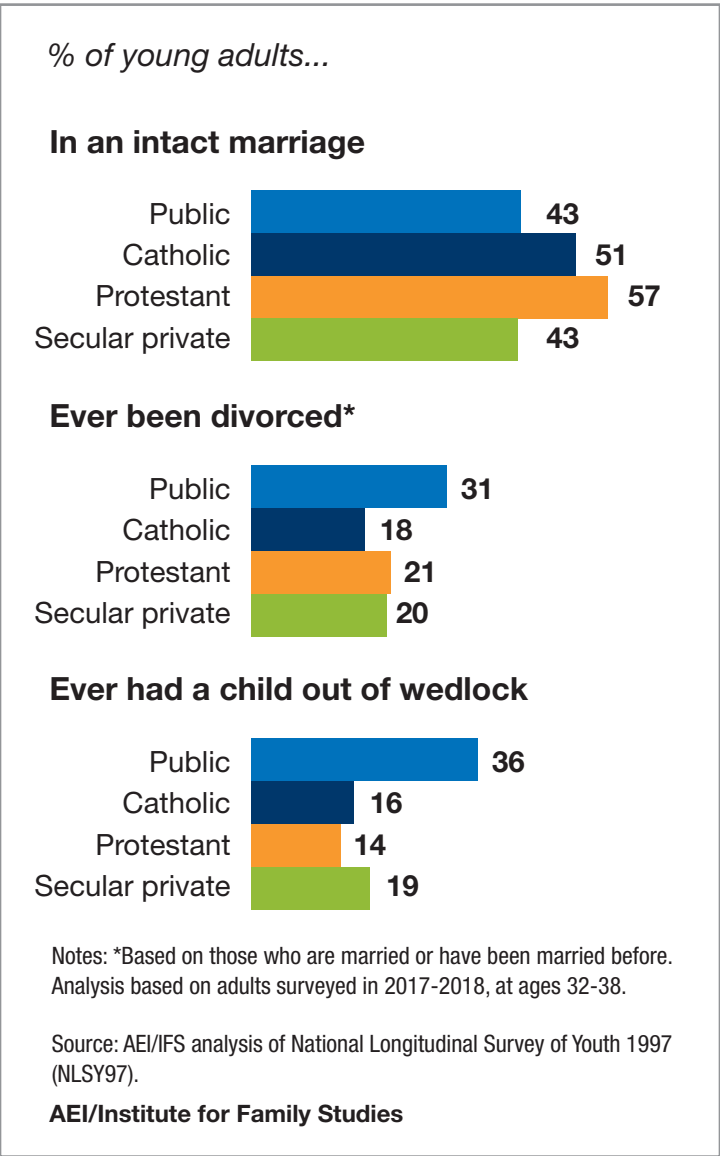


Figure 2: Millennials who attended religious schools are more likely to be in an intact marriage

America Study (UAS) and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997 (NLSY97). The UAS is a nationally representative sample of about 5,000 US adults, while the NLSY97 is a nationally representative sample of almost 7,000 Millennials ages 32 to 38.

We identified the schooling sector that each respondent primarily attended for elementary and secondary school. In the UAS, 4,366 respondents attended public schools, 410 respondents attended Catholic schools, 91 respondents attended Protestant schools, and 75 respondents attended secular private schools. The NLSY97 comprised 6,143

public school attendees, 228 Catholic school attendees, 123 Protestant school attendees, and 57 secular-private school attendees.

We then compared these four groups of adults on three indicators of family formation. First, we considered whether the adults were in an intact marriage. In other words, which adults have married and have never been divorced? Next, we examined which adults have ever been divorced. Finally, we investigated the incidence of ever having a child out of wedlock.

Results

Let us first consider the results based on the UAS. As shown in Figure 1, which is reproduced from our report, we found that 63% of Protestant-school attendees were married and have never divorced. This proportion was higher than the proportion of adults who attended schools in other sectors. About half of adults who attended Catholic or secular private schools were likewise in their first marriage, while about 40% of adults who attended public schools were in their first marriage.

One in five attendees of Protestant schools have ever been divorced. This rate was similar to the rate for attendees of secular private schools. Adults from these school sectors, however, were about half as likely to divorce compared to adults from public or Catholic schools.

Nonmarital childbirths were also lower among Protestant school attendees. One in ten of these adults reported having a child out of wedlock, which was also the rate for adults from secular private schools. About one quarter of public school attendees reported having a child out of wedlock, and the rate for Catholic school attendees was 10 percentage points lower, at 16%.

In the results presented thus far, we did not account for demographic differences in adults who attended the four school sectors. However, when we use a linear regression framework to adjust our results for background characteristics such as whether the individual grew up in a two-parent home, racial background, financial stability of family during childhood, mother’s educational background, gender, and age (see Figure 2), these cross-sector patterns in family formation held.

Although our report primarily focuses on these results based on the UAS, it is also worthwhile to consider the results based on the NLSY97. Recall that the key difference in these two surveys is that the UAS is based on a nationally representative sample of all adults in the US, while the NLSY97 is based on a nationally representative sample of Millennials ages 32 to 38. When we used the NLSY97 to view that specific segment of the US population, we found similar results for Protestant school attendees, where marriage rates were higher and

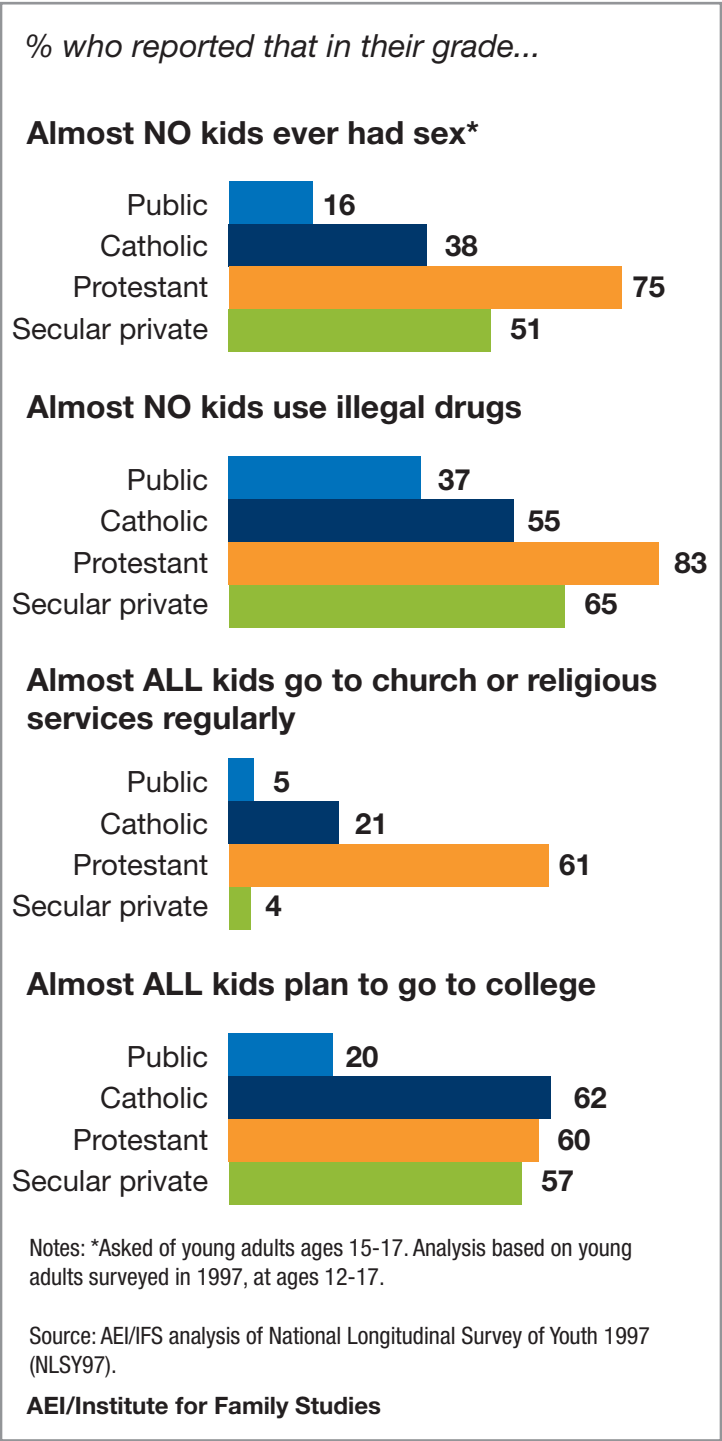


Figure 3: Peer environment by type of school Millennials attended



divorce and nonmarital childbirth rates were lower, at least when compared to public school attendees. Differences between adults educated in Catholic schools and Protestant schools were less pronounced for this relatively younger segment of US adults from the NLSY97 compared to the population of all US adults from the UAS.

Another valuable feature of the NLSY97 is its longitudinal design; respondents in the NLSY97 were surveyed not only as adults but also in the past when they were in middle school. They were asked several questions to describe the moral ecology of their respective schools.

We found markedly different climates across the school sectors, especially in Protestant schools. These results are displayed in Figure 3. For instance, when asked to report how many students at their schools ever had sex or never used illegal drugs, 75% and 83% of Protestant-school attendees said that “almost none” of the other students engaged in these two practices, respectively. Contrast that with the 16% and 37% of public-school attendees who said that “almost none” of the other students engaged in these two practices, respectively.

Church attendance was also noticeably higher among the peers of Protestant school attendees. Almost two-thirds of these respondents reported that “almost all” of the other students attended church or other religious services regularly. A college-going culture was more prevalent among all private schools as well.

Questions to Consider for Christian Schools

Many readers of *Research in Brief* will recognize that these findings are similar to those found in the Cardus Education Surveys administered in Canada, the US, and Australia.

Christian school graduates exhibit unique patterns in family formation as they enter adulthood. This is all good news, especially given the abundance of other research suggesting the critical role that a nuclear family and stable home environment plays for the well-being of children.

However, rather than concluding with these positive findings, I would like to raise several challenges for Christian education and hope they will spur school leaders and educators to greater faithfulness.

For one, it is important not to overstate the findings. Our analysis is correlational, not causal, so we cannot confidently say that attending a Christian school was the particular mechanism that led to these outcomes. The relative influence of school compared to the influence of the kinds of families that select Protestant schools is unclear. This is not to say that the school has no role to play. Consistent with the theory of moral ecologies, the dual influence of school and home affect the ways students understand and embody marriage and family. Indeed, our analysis also revealed that students who grew up in two-parent homes are themselves more likely to raise their own children in two-parent homes. The value of Christian schools, then, is dependent on the way they come alongside families in forming their children. School leaders and educators would probably do well to remember the dynamics of moral ecologies in the ways they relate to their families and consider how to serve them more wholeheartedly.

More importantly, Christian schools must also consider that many children do not come from two-parent homes. School leaders and teachers should reflect upon whether their school is not only meeting the unique needs of these students but also making their families feel welcome. Church leaders have often quipped that churches need to be more like hospitals for broken people rather than showrooms of

saints. What are Christian schools like? Are they embodying Christ by being the communities of grace that they are called to be in welcoming, ministering to, and serving families that might not look like the majority of other families that have presumably stable home lives?

In fact, we noticed within our data that very few Christian school attendees did not grow up in two-parent homes. In contrast, there was a sizable proportion of public school and even Catholic school attendees who did not grow up in two-parent homes. The sample of non-white Christian school attendees was likewise much smaller than those for public and Catholic schools. These data points underscore the long-standing challenge that Christian schools continue to face: how can Christian schools more faithfully be places of belonging for all families, especially those who have not historically been welcomed?

Furthermore, not all Christian school graduates are married. Christian schools need to take care not to treat unmarried individuals as second-class citizens. There are a variety of reasons many individuals are not married. Perhaps they are widowed. Perhaps they never found a spouse. Perhaps they struggle with same-sex attraction and are committed to celibacy. Perhaps they have experienced the tragedy of divorce. Are Christian schools equipping their students to faithfully live a life of singleness? Are Christian schools similarly equipping their students who will eventually marry to extend familial belonging to unmarried individuals who

do not have their own biological families? It is also worth considering whether married individuals with children are extending welcome to married individuals who are unable or decide not to have children.

After all, a marriage and the home it builds are not merely meant to be shared within the enclave of the couple and their children. They are also meant to be a place of welcome, one that is shared with others. A public-facing view of marriage rather than a purely private one may go a long way to promote the flourishing of our communities. Analogously, how might a public-facing view of Christian schooling do the same? The ways Christian schools prepare students for healthy family formation is a gift to be shared to all people. How might Christian schools be better conduits of this grace? [RIB](#)

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ACSI Sustainability Research Update

Over 1,200 Christian school leaders at the 2019 Global Christian School Leadership Summit identified [enrollment and sustainability](#) as the number one priority for Christian schools. Supported by two generous grants, including one from the Christian Education Charitable Trust (MacLellan Foundation), ACSI embarked in 2020 on a research study to understand how Christian schools are leveraging innovation and increased accessibility to create sustainable financial practices to ensure that the school's mission continues into the future. The mixed-methods study involves 12 Christian schools and school networks that have engaged successfully in these efforts—for example, mergers and acquisitions, hybrid and online programs, third-source income and entrepreneurship, and school choice and charter networks.

Some early thematic insights emerging from the research include the following:

1. **Taking disciplined risks** is key. While taking risks may seem daunting, it is almost impossible to identify innovative new practices that may contribute to school sustainability without taking some risks. Creating

opportunities to take disciplined risks means allocating enough time, resources, and most importantly trust to try something new.

2. **Nimble responsiveness** is a recurring theme, whether in taking advantage of opportunities that come along (e.g., school choice funding, which may be expanding in part due to the coronavirus pandemic) or innovating in the face of challenges (as necessity is often the mother of invention).
3. **Mission requires margin**. Prioritizing financial margin—and then re-investing that margin in innovative approaches and programs—seems to create an innovation “engine” in schools. This engine not only impacts the bottom line, but also has the potential to transform the larger culture of schools toward innovation—all the way to the level of teaching and learning.

Full study results are anticipated in early 2022 and will be co-published with [Cardus Education](#). A special pre-conference panel will be held at [Converge](#) (the 2022 Global Christian School Leadership Summit) in San Diego on March 7, 2022, for school leaders to explore the findings further. [RIB](#)

The Process of Leadership Advancement for Female Heads of Christian Schools

ROBIN BRONKEMA

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As Christian K-12 schools strive to provide an excellent education taught from a biblical worldview in a competitive education market and a time fraught with economic challenge, there is a need to develop a strong and deep pool of leaders who can navigate the rapidly evolving education landscape. The research of Eagly and Carli (2007), Kezar (2014), Welbourn et al. (2007), and Woolley et al. (2010) indicates that gender diversity around the leadership table may enhance wise decision-making and creative problem solving, yet female heads of Christian K-12 schools are rare, even though they have unique leadership attributes to offer.

Primary data from three Christian school organizations illustrate this point, with women heading anywhere from 5-20%, depending on the organization, of Christian K-12 schools in the United States with enrollments of 250 and more. While the percent of female leaders in other educational leadership contexts, such as public K-12 education, is higher, with women representing 27% of the superintendents (AASA 2015), women remain rare in the top leadership seat of Christian K-12 schools. The relatively low representation of women in the chief leadership role in Christian K-12 schools suggests there is a potential limiting of the strongest possible talent pool, and thus there is room to enlarge the pool.

Literature Review

Investigating the leadership advancement of the women who attain these roles can help to inform the pipeline development of women's leadership in Christian schools. There is a lack of research on leadership advancement for the female head of school (HOS), including the systems, practices, and conditions that catalyze women's leadership advancement toward attaining influential leadership positions.

Research in Christian higher education, however, provides some hints about what may be going on with the theological and cultural context of women's leadership in Christian K-12 education. Reynolds (2014) notes that evangelical institutions have "unique cultural, theological, and structural realities that may inhibit women's access to leadership roles" (4). Indeed, many evangelical churches do not open senior



leadership positions such as pastor or elder to women, based on interpretation of Scripture that speaks to gender roles within the church. That teaching sometimes gets applied to parachurch organizations, such as Christian education, which is sometimes viewed as an extension of the church, impacting leadership roles for women (Wood 2009).

This "stained glass ceiling" (Mock 2005) is observed in the low percentage of women in senior leadership positions in parachurch organizations. Reynolds conducted an analysis of women's representation in the highest leadership position across a number of evangelical organizations and found that women held 16% of CEO positions. This suggests that evangelical nonprofits, such as colleges and universities, sit at the boundary between church and society. Having both complementarian and egalitarian views represented in evangelical Protestant parachurch organizations can raise questions about which leadership roles are open to women in various settings. Biblical interpretations of female roles influence women's leadership experiences within evangelical contexts and have implications for women's leadership aspirations, both internally for women and externally for the organization (Dray 2003).

Research Purpose and Question

Given that so few women attain the headship of Christian K-12 schools, what is it about those who do and their leadership journeys that advance them to attaining the headship? The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the leadership advancement—specifically the critical influences—of female heads of Christian K-12 schools, leading to their attainment of the head role. The research question guiding this study was: What do female heads of evangelical Protestant Christian K-12 schools in the United States, with enrollments of 250 and higher, identify as the critical influences leading to the attainment of their position?

Method

Data collection for this qualitative grounded theory study involved interviewing 13 female heads of accredited Christian K-12 schools in the U.S. with enrollments of 250 or more. Data analysis took place through an extensive coding process that included: an examination of fit assessing how well the theoretical concepts reflected the incidents they represented; workability, or the relevant and explanatory nature of the phenomenon studied; and vertical analysis to confirm that the model accurately represents the experiences and processes shared by the women.

Findings

Data analysis identified three barriers and six catalysts that were impeding and advancing a woman's progress toward the HOS role in both an iterative and linear fashion. The three barriers were: (a) perceiving the HOS job as not attractive; (b) facing external opposition; and (c) facing internal opposition. The reasons women found the HOS job to be unattractive are because it can be a lonely position, it requires making difficult decisions and experiencing pressures, and it pulls one away from student contact. External opposition was defined as people not liking the woman or her decisions, people not having confidence in her, or people not wanting women in leadership. Internal opposition centered around women not feeling skilled or competent enough for the head of school role, their reluctance to step away from the comfort and success of a previous position, and their desire to protect the integrity of the school while recognizing the need to meet, sometimes one-on-one, with male donors, board chairs, and others.

The six catalysts were: (a) having a mentor; (b) having someone push and nudge them into considering the HOS position; (c) being called upon to meet a need or fill a gap; (d) knowing and being known by the school; (e) saying yes to earlier opportunities to lead, serve, or learn; and (f) gaining a realistic view of the headship. One overarching factor was identified: being sensitive to God's calling. In general, women who attained the HOS role felt called by God to a

place, to one particular Christian school, long-term, to serve in whatever way was needed according to their gifting and equipping for the task; they typically rose through the ranks, spurred on by mentors and others who pushed and nudged them toward considering the HOS role.


Implications

Christian schools and Christian school organizations can strategically apply the findings of this study in order to raise up and enlarge a strong pool of Christian school leaders who can effectively navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of K-12 education and effectuate the fulfillment of student outcomes in Christian K-12 schools.

To this end, and based on the study's findings regarding women's ascendancy to the HOS role in Christian schools, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Emerging female leaders should be encouraged to continue developing sensitivity to God's calling in their lives. There is often an internal and external component to this calling (Longman et al. 2019).
2. In light of the catalyzing effect of mentoring, Christian school organizations and schools are encouraged to establish mentoring programs, coaching, and access to senior leaders.
3. Expose female leaders to a realistic perspective of the HOS role, allowing them to see how heads face challenges, develop skills, interact with boards, and experience joy in their role.
4. Invite women to take on tasks, such as leading the accreditation process, that will give them leadership opportunities and expose them to various areas and leaders of the school.
5. Along these lines, several female heads noted a lack of experience in the areas of finance, marketing, and development, which contributed to their questioning whether they had the skills needed to perform the head of school role effectively. Targeted experiences in these areas should be offered to aspiring women leaders.
6. Provide emerging female leaders with opportunities to get to know the school and be known by the school community by chairing a schoolwide committee or having a visible role at all-school events.
7. Invite female leaders to meet needs and fill gaps, such as filling in for a HOS who is off campus for a number of days, or serving as an interim HOS.
8. Commit to a persistent pursuit of strong female candidates for HOS roles. Sponsor these women and encourage their candidacy, particularly those affiliated with the institution.
9. The readiness of an organization to receive a female leader may be influenced by the perspective of trustees (Stone 2005) and other stakeholders. Therefore, if a given school is theologically comfortable with women

in leadership, school leaders can build a culture that explicitly states that hiring and promoting women to leadership is desirable and appropriate. Without such messages, cultural norms may be mistaken for theological convictions.

Christian school organizations, Christian schools, and individuals may find the implications of this study to be useful for establishing the systems, practices, and conditions that would catalyze women's leadership advancement toward attaining the HOS position. Enlarging the leadership pool in that way would benefit current and future female school heads and ultimately the Christian schools they lead and the students they serve. 

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By the Numbers: Women's Leadership in Christian Schools

LYNN E. SWANER

Data on the hiring, promotion, and tenure of women leaders can be informative to not only track changes in time in the profile of women's leadership in a given industry, but also to inform efforts to support women's leadership across the industry. Such data can likewise be helpful when it comes to framing women's leadership for the Christian school sector. To this end, we can look to publicly available data collected by ACSI through its annual Tuition & Salary Survey. Data from recent years suggests a narrower pathway for the transition of women leaders in secondary leadership levels to the head of school role.

In the 2018-2019 school year, a total of 746 ACSI member schools (705 in the U.S. and 41 international schools) responded to the survey invitation, representing a 29% response rate. The survey found at the time that, of current heads of school, 56% were men, and 44% women (see Figure 1). However, at the next layer of administration (e.g., principals, assistant heads, directors), this ratio was reversed; 57% of next-tier administrators were women, whereas 43% were men (at the 50th percentile). At the board level, 39% of board members were women (again, at the 50th percentile).



Along with Jay Ferguson, Head of School at Grace Community School in Tyler, Texas, I discussed these results in a blog post entitled *Christian School Leadership: 2019 Profile*, which ran on the ACSI blog in February of 2020. In this post we discussed these findings regarding women’s leadership, along with the heavy skewing of the staff race/ethnicity profile of schools toward Caucasians/Whites (at 82%, at the 50th percentile). In reflecting on this data, we suggested the following course of action for Christian schools:

To address this, school leaders and boards should develop diversity-enhancing strategies within their schools that more closely mirror the body of Christ and their surrounding communities, not only to better reflect God’s Kingdom, but also to help ensure long-term sustainability with an increasingly diverse population. This will require closely examining explicit and implicit assumptions or biases that may be undermining recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates, as well as precluding high-quality leadership from having opportunities for advancement within a given school structure.

Additionally, we noted the importance for emerging leaders to be targeted for professional development, mentoring, and networking opportunities both inside the school community and in the larger field of Christian schools and private education.

Although the 2019-2020 survey response rate was not as robust (at 17%) due to the disruption of COVID-19 during fielding in spring 2020, the data picture that emerged did not show increases in women’s representation at any level of leadership. Notably, the survey found no change in either direction in the gender ratio of school heads (steady at 56% men, 44% women) as compared with the preceding year, along with a six point decrease (to 33% at the 50th percentile) in the percentage of women board members (see Figure 2), and a seven point decrease (to 50% at the 50th percentile) in the percentage of women in second tier leadership roles.

Again, the 2019-2020 data needs to be viewed in light of the significant disruption of COVID-19 in all sectors of education during the second half of that school year, and certainly it is not yet understood how this disruption has or will impact women’s leadership in schools. It is also preferable to draw upon multiple years of data if we are to identify trends when it comes to profile-level changes in school leadership. But at the very least, it appears that the suggestions mentioned regarding diversity-enhancing strategies for school leadership continue to merit prayerful consideration and implementation. [RIB](#)

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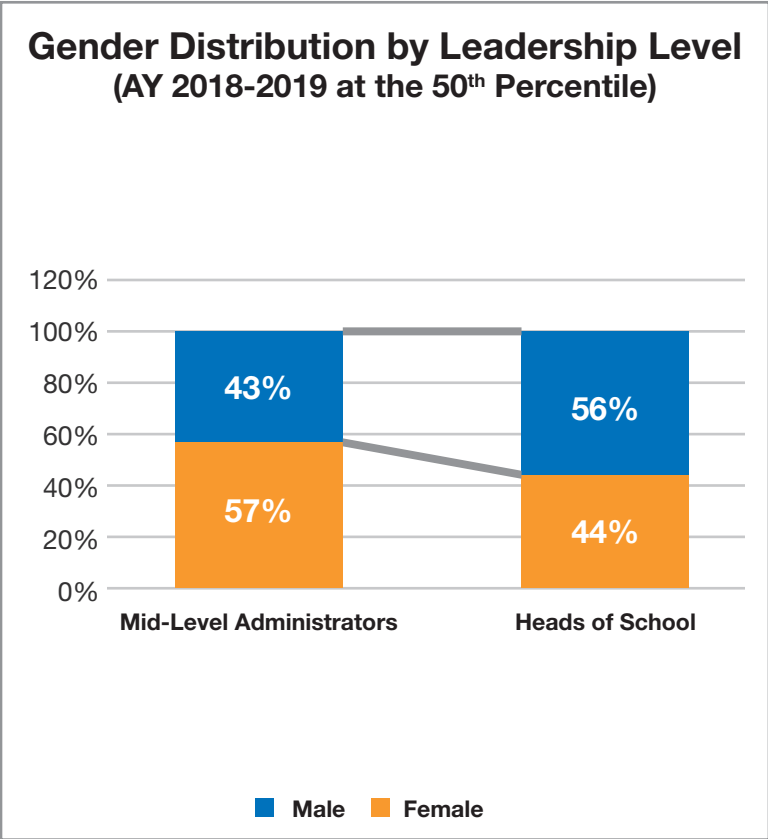


Figure 1

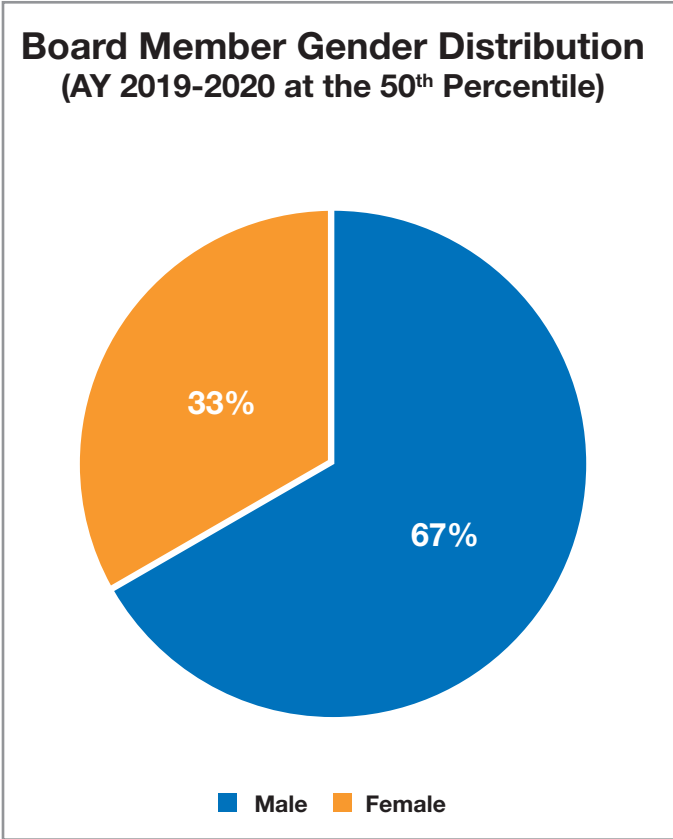


Figure 2

New Resource for Women's Leadership: The WLCE Blog

BECKI RUST



In September 2020, a new online resource—the *Women Leaders for Christian Education* blog—launched at WLCE.org. The mission of WLCE is to *inspire and support women leaders in Christian education by providing a platform for encouragement, resources, and conversation*. Subscribers to the blog will receive weekly posts addressing topics like leadership approaches, biblical inspiration, mentoring, work-life integration, and encouragement through challenges.

The blog has a host of regular authors who serve as leaders in Christian schools, organizations, non-profits, and higher education institutions. I serve as the production editor and am joined by Dr. Beth Green (Provost and Chief Academic Officer at Tyndale University in Toronto), Dr. Lynn Swaner (ACSI Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer), and Dr. Katie

Wiens (Executive Director of the Council on Educational Standards and Accountability) in producing WLCE.


To access this week's post, as well as archived posts, visit WLCE.org. Readers can also subscribe at the site and receive weekly posts in their inbox. Once COVID abates in the hopefully not-too-distant future, the editors hope to sponsor convenings of women leaders in North America for networking and mutual learning. In the meantime, please share the blog with colleagues and friends. For information regarding submitting a blog post, please email hello@wlce.org. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Becki Rust is the Thought Leadership Project Coordinator at ACSI, where she leads project management for a wide variety of innovative and timely initiatives, programs, and events. She is the production editor for WLCE.org.



ACSI Appoints Director of Research

Dr. Matthew H. Lee has been appointed ACSI's Director of Research, effective March 1, 2021. Dr. Lee is co-editor of the book *Religious Liberty and Education* as well as numerous research articles related to school choice outcomes, private school leadership, and educational program evaluation. He completed his dissertation, "Faith-based Education and Civic Value Formation," at the University of Arkansas under the supervision of Cardus Senior Fellow Dr. Albert Cheng. Dr. Lee's work at ACSI will involve building on ACSI's groundbreaking Flourishing Schools Research and sustainability initiatives. ACSI is excited for Dr. Lee to spearhead ongoing research efforts as well as develop new initiatives that will undergird ACSI's thought leadership in Christian education. Dr. Lee resides in Fayetteville, Arkansas, with his wife Caroline and two children. 

GOING DEEPER TO FLOURISH: ACSI Offers New Flourishing Schools Institute (FSi) for 2021

The biblical concept of flourishing, studied in schools by ACSI's groundbreaking Flourishing Schools Research, serves as the framework for a premier professional development offering coming in 2021. Designed for Christian school leaders who desire to take their schools deeper into flourishing, the **Flourishing Schools Institute (FSi)** will feature nationally known speakers and a unique event structure designed for rich learning and engagement.

Speakers for 2021 include **John Stonestreet**, President of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview (for the *Purpose* domain); **Dr. Rob Loe**, Director of the Relational Schools Foundation (for the *Relationships* domain); **Peter Greer**, author of *Mission Drift* and *Rooting for Rivals* (for the *Expertise & Resources* domain); **Dr. Althea Penn**, educational consultant and development specialist (for the *Teaching and Learning* domain); and **Rex Miller**, author and creator of the *MindShift* for teacher wellness (for the *Well-Being* domain).

The 2.5-day event will engage leaders in the “GLEAN” cycle, where they will Gauge their schools' strengths and opportunities for growth; Learn about the flourishing

domains and constructs; Experiment with other leaders to design programs and interventions for flourishing; Apply new learning across their school culture; and Network with other leaders who are focused on their school's flourishing.

The Flourishing Schools Institute (FSi) will be launched in Dallas on June 16-18, 2021, and in Orlando on November 1-3, 2021. Bundle pricing is available for schools wishing to administer the Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI) in tandem with attending the institute. To register, please visit our website at <https://www.acsi.org/flourishing>.

FLOURISHING SCHOOLS
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