

NEWS RELEASE

Parents with children in public schools and most independent schools in B.C. have similar incomes

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Families with children attending most independent schools in British Columbia have essentially the same level of income as families with children in public schools, finds a new study by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Despite common misperceptions that independent schools in B.C. cater only to wealthy families, there’s little difference in the family income of parents that choose public schools versus those that choose the religious or alternative education provided by most independent schools,” said Jason Clemens, executive vice-president of the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Comparing the Family Income of Students in British Columbia’s Independent and Public Schools*.

The study finds that families with children enrolled in non-elite independent schools have an average (after tax) income that is just 1.9 per cent higher than the average income of parents with children in public schools—\$78,894 compared to \$77,396, according to data from the B.C. Ministry of Education and Statistics Canada.

And only 8.2 per cent—28—of B.C.’s 340 independent schools are elite preparatory schools, defined as such by their memberships in exclusive provincial or national associations.

In fact, more than 50 per cent of independent schools in B.C. have a religious orientation and another 20 per cent offer alternative teaching methods or have a specialty focus—art or athletics, for example—not available in the public system.

In B.C., independent schools that meet certain criteria receive partial government funding between 35 and 50 per cent on a per student basis.

“The myth that independent schools in B.C. cater only to wealthy families prevents more fulsome discussions about providing more choice to parents and improving education in the province,” Clemens said.

(30)


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