Good Soil

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ACCS ALUMNI LIFE OUTCOMES

Release date: January 27, 2020: 2018–19 comparative study of 24-to 42-year-old alumni from public, secular private, Catholic, evangelical Christian, religious homeschool, and ACCS (classical Christian) schools, on topics of life choices, preparation, attitudes, values, opinions, and practices.

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Credits: Cardus Education Survey (non-ACCS comparative data) Association of Classical Christian Schools (Sponsorship)

Every Kingdom Has a Culture

Discovering why classical Christian education has such a noticeable influence

The parable of the sower teaches a key principle for understanding the role of "school" in a Christian community. From this parable, we see the hand-in-glove work of the cultivator, the sower, and the seed in Christ's Kingdom. When the Spirit sows the "*Word of God*" into soil that is cultivated to receive it, it returns a hundred fold (Luke 8:5-15).

Jesus' kingdom, like every kingdom or nation, has a culture. The primary function of *paideia* in the ancient world was the cultivation of culture in children. *Paideia* is often translated "education," but the concept is much bigger, encompassing the steady cultivation of deep, rich lives where the gospel can take root and flourish. Ephesians 6 uses this Greek word *paideia* when it commands fathers to raise their children in the *paideia* of the Lord.

During the 1990s, families in about 100 communities across the United States started classical Christian schools with the hope of offering an education that would assist parents in raising their children in the *paideia* of the Lord. These families patterned classical Christian education after an old tradition in education with a track record of "raising up children in the way they should go." The goal was restoration and recovery of a distinctly Christian *paideia* as a viable alternative to an education that either simply taught knowledge and skills or one that was distinctly secular. The question almost thirty years later is: "To what extent have the goals of classical Christian education been realized?" To that end, the ACCS commissioned a study by the University of Notre Dame's Sociology Department.

Understandably, some will view the results of this survey skeptically because of the significant differences between classical Christian schools and the others surveyed. These results can be understood more fully by visiting the ACCS schools themselves. They are designed to influence children through ethos, or their whole-school culture. The combination of a wide and deep reading in the classics and student engagement around Socratic discussion tables tells part of the story. So does a focus on respect, manners, and a serious academic pursuit. Logic trains students to think well; rhetoric integrates all knowledge and challenges students to think at an advanced level; Latin to understand more precisely.

Arguably, the greatest distinctive is integration—the intentional way that the subjects and Christian truth are interwoven. Every class and every school activity has one purpose: to see God's world rightly and to glorify Him. These communities are tight-knit, serious but joyful, and eminently curious. And, there is room for improvement. We invite Christians to join a local ACCS school on this journey.

This research seems to confirm what history has repeatedly demonstrated—classical Christian education can influence the course of a home, community, or a nation.

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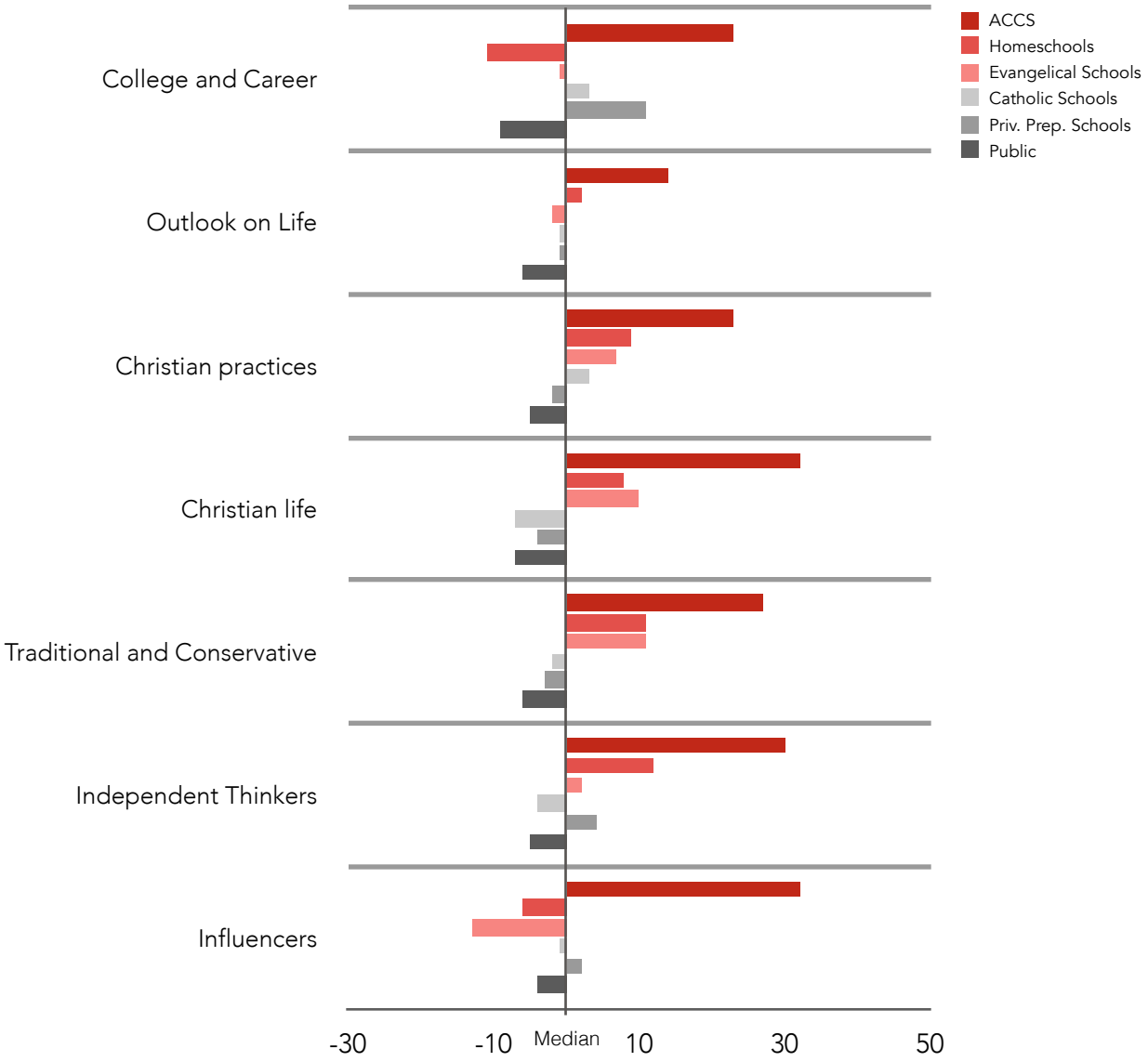
LIFE OUTCOME PROFILES

Alumni aged 23–44, School-related outcomes



ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

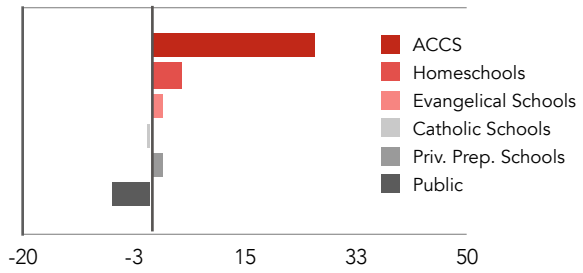
These 7 profiles are based on the percent of respondents over the median answers on over 50 representative questions. Scale is from -50 to +50. +50 would indicate that all of that segment responded above the median answer; -50 the same, but below the median answer.

Chart A

Executive Summary

Beyond college, alumni outcomes differ greatly because of their K–12 experience.

Life Outcome Composite Profile



Average of all seven profile scores **Chart A.1**

The seven profiles in this study reflect the comparative life outcomes for adults aged 24–42 who were educated in one of six school segments (or types): public, private secular preparatory schools, Catholic schools, evangelical protestant Christian schools, religious homeschools, and ACCS (classical Christian) schools. Using a computer model, outcomes were isolated to the school effects themselves rather than family factors, demographics, etc. Given the size and scope of the survey, the data was condensed into profiles to reflect findings. The survey was conducted by the University of Notre Dame Sociology Department. The profiles reflect survey answers about a healthy spiritual life, better life satisfaction, an independence of mind, a commitment to conserving the Western tradition, and the potential to influence culture.

Key Takeaway

From Chart A, the story of hundreds of data points becomes more clear: ACCS schools make a difference in these seven areas. While ACCS alumni shared some common traits with alumni from other sectors, the most significant takeaway is the magnitude of the differences. The differences seen for some of the profiles are an *order of magnitude* higher for the ACCS segment than for the differences between the other segments.

Profile 2, 3, and 4

If the goal is to foster a Christian life, students are markedly better off in a conservative Christian school environment overall (home, evangelical, or ACCS). Given the biblical call for fathers to raise their children in the *paideia* of the Lord, this outcome should be expected (Ephesians 6; Deuteronomy 6). *Paideia*, the ancient Greek word, translated loosely to "education" marks a key difference for classical schools. ACCS schools base their educational model on *paideia* and its underlying principles. Conventional schools typically do not. This creates a unique environment in ACCS schools where Christian *paideia* is infused throughout the method, content, and ethos of the schools. We believe this is reflected in this research.

Profile scores in this study are on a scale from -50 to +50. ACCS alumni score 23 on Profile 3, (Christian Commitment) and 38 on Profile 4, (Christian Lifestyle.) These reflect things like church attendance, Bible reading, divorce rates, and beliefs about religious topics. Profile 2 reflects thankfulness, hopefulness, trust, and attitudes about life. ACCS alumni score a 24 on this profile. "Life Outlook" is one of the most important profiles in the survey because it reflects key contributors to happiness, purpose, and fulfillment in life.

Profile 1, 5, 6, 7

ACCS alumni influence their communities in conservative and Christian ways. ACCS alumni are more prepared academically, are more traditional in their views, think more independently, and are more influential than those from other school backgrounds. "Influence" reflects the greatest difference in the survey. "Independent thinkers" is particularly interesting because it compares views from different parts of the questionnaire to shed light on the independence of mind that characterizes classical Christian graduates.

The Bottom Line

ACCS alumni, as adults, think and live in a markedly different way than their peers from other educational models. Nearly 90% of them attend church at least 3 times monthly, and they participate in other church activities at a higher rate. They are 2.6 times more likely to pray alone and 6.7 times more likely to be readers. While they do not give more money overall, they are much more likely to believe they have the obligation to give. They stand out as they seek jobs that fulfill their religious calling, and they prioritize pay at a much lower rate than other groups (which may explain the giving). ACCS alumni have healthy families. While they report no significant difference in marital satisfaction from the other segments, they are much more likely to hold to traditional beliefs about marriage than their Christian school counterparts. And, this shows in their lives. They have much lower divorce and cohabitation rates compared to the other groups. They send their kids to Christian schools at a higher rate, and they volunteer more.

ACCS alumni are more grateful, more hopeful, and more trusting than their peers from other types of schools. And they are willing to sacrificially serve wherever they are called.

In our communities, ACCS alumni are the best prepared academically, more than double the next highest group. They respect the authority within the church, and are more likely to believe the Bible is infallible, and much *less* likely to believe it has errors with regard to science and history. They are less likely to accept gay marriage. All of these beliefs are complimented by a much higher rate of knowing LGBT people and atheists, and respecting scientists. Their ability to think for themselves despite their personal relationships is evident when these facts are considered together. Finally, they are the most influential group of alumni as adults by the widest margin of all the profiles.

These results are predicted for those who have studied *paideia* and its impact through classical Christian education whenever it has been practiced. The results of this survey reinforce this historical evidence.

How We Measured Educational Outcomes

A deeper look at what school means throughout life

Cardus Survey of Educational Outcomes

The Cardus Education Survey[1] is recognized as one of the most comprehensive and valuable surveys of its kind among school practitioners, leaders, and policy-makers. These surveys, conducted in 2011, 2014, and 2018, contribute to an understanding of school-sector influence on a number of academic, spiritual, cultural, civic, and relational outcomes.

More broadly, the Cardus Education Study seeks to understand the life patterns, views, and choices of graduates from various kinds of non-government schools in order to assess their contributions to a shared good. The Cardus study collects responses from a nationally representative sample of over 1,500 high-school graduates between the ages of twenty-three and forty-two from government schools and non-government schools, including non-religious independent schools, Catholic and Protestant schools, and homeschoolers, in both the United States and Canada. The Cardus study partnered with the University of Notre Dame Sociology Department to conduct and analyze the survey. This original study and the Cardus organization are not affiliated with the ACCS.

ACCS "Good Soil" Comparative Study

In 2018 the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS) sponsored a parallel study with the University of Notre Dame to compare ACCS member school alumni to the Cardus data. Candidates for the survey were randomly selected from a larger list of alumni provided by ACCS member schools. Most of these alumni attended *accredited* ACCS schools. The ACCS did not selectively qualify either the schools or the candidates. We provided all available alumni data to the researchers at Notre Dame. Because the ACCS used the existing survey used in the Cardus research, the association did not have input on the questions. This helps to ensure that these questions were not formulated to advantage ACCS in the responses.

The ACCS is responsible the analysis in this report. It added the data collected in the ACCS/Notre Dame survey to the data collected in roughly the same period by Cardus for the other 5 categories.

The six categories shown, left to right on the charts, are: public school graduates, non-religious private school graduates, Catholic schools, protestant schools, religious homeschools, and finally, those who graduated from an ACCS school.

THE CLASSICAL Difference

ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

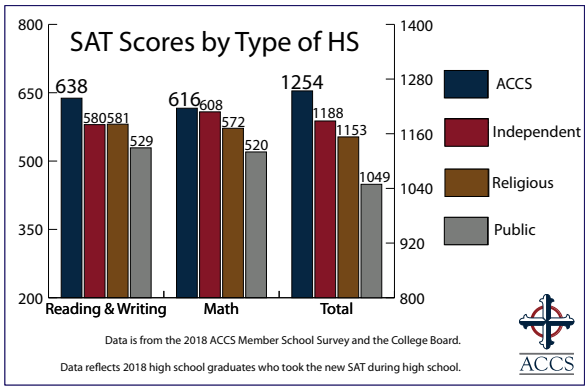
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

[1] The ACCS reporting is in cooperation with Notre Dame. The Cardus data is public, and used in this report for comparison data. Cardus did not participate in the ACCS research.

Beyond Test Scores

How does K–12 school affect a graduate's life?

Since the mid 2000s, tracking data on ACCS school test scores has shown that college preparation is a strength for ACCS graduates.



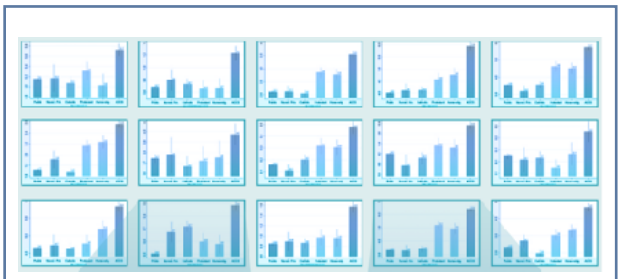
ACCS Tracking Data (not related to this survey)
To compare to Cardus Data:
Independent = private secular, Religious = Evangelical
Chart B

The Cardus survey allowed comparative data across a much broader and, frankly, more important spectrum including:

- Did alumni have a healthy life-outlook?
- Were they involved and practicing a Christian lifestyle?
- Are they conservative and traditional in their beliefs?
- Do they have thought-independence from our culture?
- Are they influencing our nation and world?

These questions were answered through details like how do alumni trust others and view suffering? Do they continue to go to church and stay active in their Christian communities? Do their marriages hold together well? Do they retain a commitment to conservative Christian orthodoxy? And, are they using their gifts to help influence and serve in their communities?

With over 300 slides across the survey, the differences were pronounced. In this image below, we've taken a sample of the slides to show the magnitude of the differences at a glance. The dark blue bar on the right represents the ACCS respondents.



In the majority of comparisons from the survey, ACCS alumni (dark blue) reported more pronounced differences
Chart C

In this report, we present classical Christian education (not necessarily the ACCS) as a better form of education. We mean no ill-will to our Christian brothers who work in other forms of education. We see ourselves not as inventors or owners of this form, but as restorers attempting to recover something that was has historically been better than the current form of education.

About this Survey

Survey Subjects: ACCS alumni in this survey spent an average of eight years at the school from which they graduated. Most of the students in the survey graduated between about 1995 and 2012. About 72% of total alumni names collected were from ACCS accredited schools. Oversampling, or a process of pursuing certain demographic groups, allowed researchers to approximate similar age groups for all surveyed respondents. The Cardus age range and ACCS age range may have slight differences. This explains inconsistencies in the age groups listed in this document. The youngest were 23 or 24. The oldest were 42 to 44. To obtain a representative sample, the ACCS collected about 2500 alumni names and contact information out of which researchers selected about 300 for their random sample—a group as large or larger than any of the other sectors surveyed. Respondents were paid in ways similar to the other groups, so selection bias was minimized. The sampling method allows for significant statistical validity between the populations.

The School or the Family: Which is the cause? An early look at the data prompted the question: Are these life outcomes simply a reflection of the type of families that attend ACCS schools, rather than being cultivated by the school experience?

Researchers at the University of Notre Dame use a statistical tool called "linear regression" to determine and factor out causes OTHER THAN the school. This approach, when applied, is not perfect but it does eliminate most of the contribution from factors outside of the school. In this report, you will see three colors of bars:

- Red bars (or red-outlined) represent results that are statistically adjusted to isolate the school as the causal factor for the response. This is done by applying an artificial reduction or increase in the percentage of respondents, based on the linear regression correlation coefficients of other factors like family income, religion, marital situation, etc.
- Blue bars (or blue-outlined) represent the unadjusted data. These are the actual responses derived from the survey. Blue (unadjusted) data is used when the "red adjustments" may mislead or confuse the reader, or when the primary interest is the actual percentage who responded a certain way.
- Green bars represent the raw responses, directly from the survey. The scale is based on the actual response on the survey.

Unified Data Reporting: The original survey was designed to create probabilities that predicted alumni outcomes. Because there were so many different types of questions, and probabilities do not reflect comparative differences in an understandable way for most people, this report reflects a form that provides two key takeaways:

- What are the relative differences in the responses of different groups of alumni; and
- What is the magnitude of the differences between the responses?

"Percent above median" is used because the question's varied in format (1–7, 1–4, yes/no, etc.) so the raw data is difficult to understand at a glance. For this reason, a "cut point" was determined for each question to get to a percent of respondents above or below that point. For each question, a "median" was selected in one of two ways. When a cut point made sense from the responses— for example, those who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with a statement compared to those that were "neutral" or

"disagreed"— the obvious cut point was applied— "agreed." In cases where a sliding scale was used (i.e., How many books do you read in a month?), a median was calculated and went to the next nearest full-point answer (if 3.7 was the median, 4.0 was chosen). This process took all questions throughout the survey to the same basic percentage— those who responded above this median cut point. For example, if a particular school segment responded with 60% above the median, then 40% were below the median. So, 10% *more* respondents in that segment reported above the median for all segments. A group that responded 50% would have reported the same as the median for all segments. A group that responded at "30% above the median" meant that 70% were below the median. The cut point is described at the bottom of each chart.

"Profiles" Tell a Story: The questionnaire collected hundreds of points of data. Many of the data points, when compared with data points from other areas of the survey provided additional insights.

Because the data from this survey were so extensive, the areas that represented the most pronounced distinctions between segments were grouped into "profiles." These profiles represent the key life-attribute differences between graduates. For example, college and career readiness were taken from measures of how the respondents reported their preparation for college in several questions: how they reported their high schools prepared them for a job, how many books they read now, what percent eventually completed a BA or more, and what their GPA was in college.

The profiles take a representative set of questions into account. They do not include every pertinent question. Data from the survey was selected when it had the most direct impact on each profile. In every case, there were additional responses that cast further light on the profile. These responses are often included in the explanations in this report. For example, a general trust factor was included in the Life Outlook profile. But, more clarity was available when all trust questions were considered together as in Charts 2.7 and 2.8.

An eighth profile is included which simply sums up the level of appreciation alumni had for their K–12 school, but this profile (Appendix A) is not included in the overall Quality of Life Outcomes synopsis.

Caveats and Cautions

1) The survey and results on individual questions were created and conducted by qualified third parties with consideration for scientific validity. The profiles were created afterward in conjunction with ACCS analysis and input. The process began with the data and grouped the findings into the seven profiles. Attempts were made ensure that an accurate story could be told by the data to represent the point of view promised by the profile. There is undoubtedly some bias in the profile component choices. **Consider the profiles as an argument taken from the data, with the individual data composing each profile as evidence of the profiles' validity.**

2) The results are reported without standard deviations for simplicity. The predictive value of any response is another matter. The text accompanying the charts in the report will typically comment on the significance of the differences. **Keep in mind that two bars that are relatively close together are likely not to represent a significant difference.** This means that, because the result is based on a sample of about 300, any specific alumnus surveyed in the

future is more likely than not to answer within the averages shown.

3) The five groups surveyed by Cardus are extracted from large school segments (see Chart B). Public, Prep, Catholic, Evangelical, and Homeschool groups are likely less homogenous than the smaller, more consistent ACCS group. This does **not** present a challenge to the **validity** of the answers. **Overall segment sizes may, however, explain some of the extremely disparate and consistent differences between the ACCS and others.** Consistency is more likely with a small group of homogenous schools. The sample, however, is from a wide enough geographical and school base to ensure that the results are not the effect of a small collection of select schools.

4) The "school-impact data" (red) was used most often when it made sense. In cases when the correction using regression (red bars) was misleading, we used actual data (blue bars). **We tried not to selectively choose the actual or corrected data to favor any school type, but rather to offer clarity.** For an explanation of how this impact is isolated, read "Isolating the School's Impact" on page 18.

5) **While this research indicates that, as a rule, enrolling your child in an ACCS school will yield results consistent with those shown herein, individual schools vary.** ACCS accredited schools, since they are heavily represented in this survey, are the most likely to yield these results. Because particular schools vary, schools of other types may far exceed their category on a school-by-school basis. So, a particular evangelical school may meet or exceed ACCS results.

6) The scales used on the "y" axis may be compressed to more effectively reflect differences between segments. For example, a scale of 30% to 60% may be chosen instead of 0-100%. This is reflective of the type of data in a sociological survey and the "Percent above the median" measurement. One misnomer is that this overstates the data. A more careful consideration of this type of scale would indicate the absolute scale is not intuitively meaningful for two reasons. Given the nature of a median, and the percentage above or below the median as the primary measure in this report, the scale is not linear. The closer you get to 100% or 0%, the more difference is required because each school segment is approximately 1/6th of the dataset that forms the median. 100% is not a realistic result. **A more realistic understanding of the data requires narrowing the scale to show relative differences between the segments.** For example, when you notice a 5% difference between public and evangelical schools, but a 15% difference between ACCS and evangelicals, the 3 times greater difference is more meaningful than the absolute scores. Thus, compressing the scale helps to see these differences.

Comparative Group Descriptions

PUBLIC SCHOOL	• About 90% of all students in America are educated in public schools, with about 15% of those in charter schools. • About 43% of public school parents are college educated. Those surveyed by Cardus were from the general population, with corrective measures applied to equalize the family-specific influence.	**Total Students** **47 Million**
PRIVATE NON-RELIGIOUS	• Private, non-religious account for about **25% of private school students.** • 82% of parents at these schools are college educated. • Average tuition for these types of schools in 2009 was **$21,910 annually**. Nearly all non-religious private schools are preparatory schools.	
CATHOLIC	• About **41% of private school students** graduate from Catholic schools. • 65% of religious school parents hold a BA or higher. Data isolated to this segment on college educated parents is not available. • Average tuition **was $7,020** annually.	**5.5 Million**
EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN (PROTESTANT)	• About **24% of private school students** graduate from these types of schools. • 65% of religious school parents hold a BA or higher. • Average tuition is estimated **at $8,850.** These numbers are adjusted to approximate "conservative Protestant schools" as on the NCES report, though this group is estimated because Cardus targets a subset of the NCES data.	
RELIGIOUS HOMESCHOOL	• About **23% of all non-public schooled children** are homeschooled.	**1.7 Million**
ACCS SCHOOLS	• **1% of private school students** attend ACCS schools. • Annual tuition averages **about $7,900 annually.**	**Inc. in Private**

Chart B: School size[2], School cost[3], Homeschool[4], Overall percentages.[5] Public school/private school percentages.[6]

Comparative Considerations

The most comparable sectors in this survey are between the non-public schools, given comparative sizes, and other similarities. Tuitions are similar for evangelical, Catholic, and ACCS schools, but are much higher for private non-religious. Private non-religious also have a high percentage of college educated parents — about 20% higher than general Christian schools. These factors and many others are factored out when you see red bars in this report.

[2] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, NCES Private School Universe Survey, 2015-16. School student tables.

[3] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics Digest, Table 205.50 Private elementary and secondary enrollment, number of schools, and average tuition by school level, orientation, and tuition, Selected years 1999-2000 through 2011-2012.

[4] EBID, Table 206.10, Number and percentage of homeschooled students.

[5] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). School Choice in the United States: 2019 (NCES 2019-106)

[6] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics Digest, Table 206.30. Percentage distribution of students enrolled in grades 1-12, 2016.

About the ACCS

The Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS) was founded in 1994 and now represents around 300 schools educating around 50,000 students. ACCS ranks about sixth among Christian school associations by the number of schools represented as reported by National Center for Education Statistics and is the only association of Christian schools to continually grow over the past 15 years.

The ACCS represents the majority of classical Christian schools in the U.S. and around the world. It provides services, including.

- Accreditation of member schools
- Advocacy for classical Christian education
- Certification of classical Christian teachers
- Data collection and research
- Resources for establishing and growing classical Christian schools
- Convening partners to serve the unique needs of the movement

The ACCS hosts an annual conference called Repairing the Ruins: RepairingtheRuins.org

Find information on the ACCS, including a directory of schools: classicalchristian.org

The Classical Difference is the outreach service of the ACCS: ClassicalDifference.org

7 Life Outcome Profiles

A dashboard for those considering the importance and impact of school

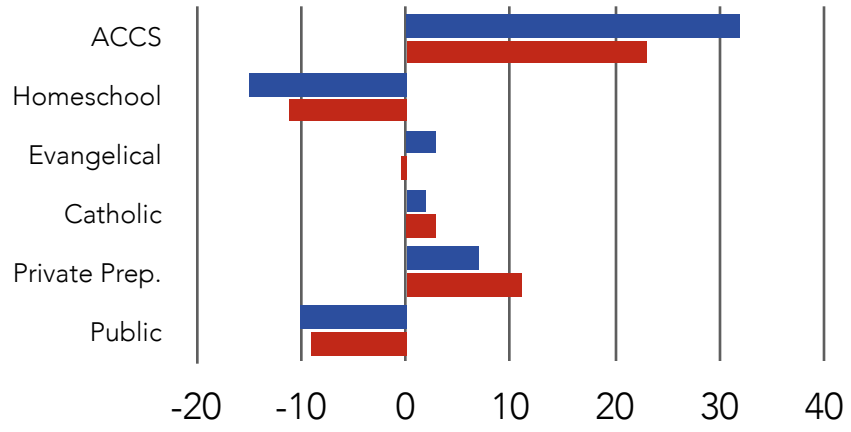
COLLEGE AND CAREER	Prepared for college & university, prepared for job, reads books, percent with BA or more, college GPA
LIFE OUTLOOK	Thankfulness, God's calling to a vocation, everything (even suffering) in God's plan, trusts people (neighbor, church members, coworkers, strangers, atheists), not helpless, have goals
CHRISTIAN COMMITTMENT	Read Bible daily, attend small group study, volunteer in church, give to church, attend services weekly, obligation to observe practices, kids attend Christian school
CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE	Obligation to attend church, family eats together, family prays, talks about God, and reads Bible together, not divorced, never lived together (unmarried)
TRADITIONAL & CONSERVATIVE	Can govt. solve problems, good sexual ethics, know God, authority of church, science and faith compatible, no errors in Bible, more likely to know LGBT but less likely to accept LGBT lifestyle
INDEPENDENCE OF MIND	Independent views, reading, trust science but disagrees with some theories, willing to disagree in public, accept differences but willing to challenge (this measure uses multiple questions in conjunction to reveal practices and attitudes), know LGBT but does not support gay marriage
INFLUENCE	Know elected officials, CEO's, community leaders, atheists, read non-religious books, volunteer and lead non-church org., obliged to take action, believe they can impact, give to any organizations, Ok to offend in public discourse, vocation is calling by God, accept low job pay
+ SCHOOL EXPERIENCE (BONUS)	Enjoyed high school experience, teachers cared, close-knit high school, good relationship with teachers and administrators, proud to graduate from the high school

(Right column reflects survey questions within the profile.)

In some cases, we used a limited set of the supporting data to make up the profile for simplicity. We may include additional supporting data in the explanation.

Profile 1: Prepared for College and Career

ACCS alumni and private prep school alumni were the most prepared.



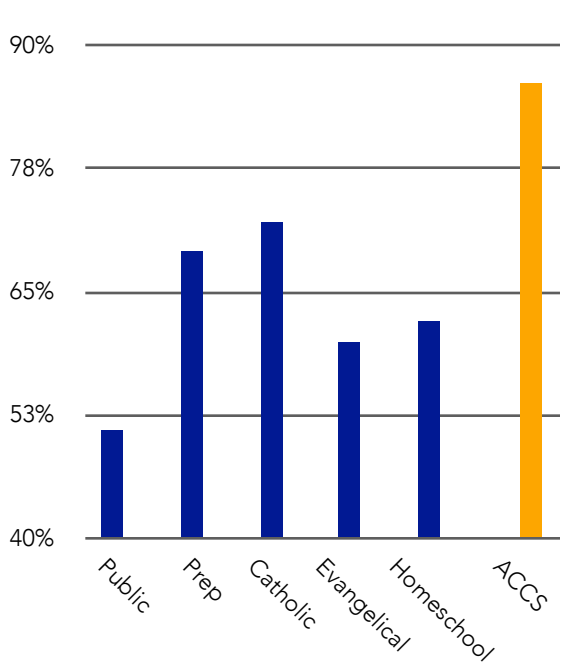
Prepared for college & university: prepared for job, read books, percent that earned a bachelor's degree or more, college GPA. **(Chart 1)**

Two groups in this category reported significantly above the median: ACCS and Private Preparatory schools. While ACCS schools are tasked with a different mission, a side benefit of the classical method is academic preparedness.

In this chart, we can see that both the red and blue bars show a significant difference. The red bars reflect the school's effect, isolated from other family factors. This calibration is accomplished through the previously mentioned regression analysis technique which can identify and remove factors like family income, frequency of family church attendance, parents marital status, and so on. The technique is further explained below.

Scale: The zero point, shown here, is the median, or about 50% of the responses are above, and 50% below in the overall dataset. Lines to the left or right are below or above the median respectively.

In actual data (blue), the ACCS reports a score of 32. This point system reflects the degree of difference for each sector on a scale from -50 to +50. These points are related to the percentage above the median. In fact, they can be turned into the "percent above the median" by adding 50 to the points and changing to a percentage. Thus, ACCS reports that 34 + 50 or 84% of the respondents are above the median. The points make both the relevant difference and the magnitude easier to compare.

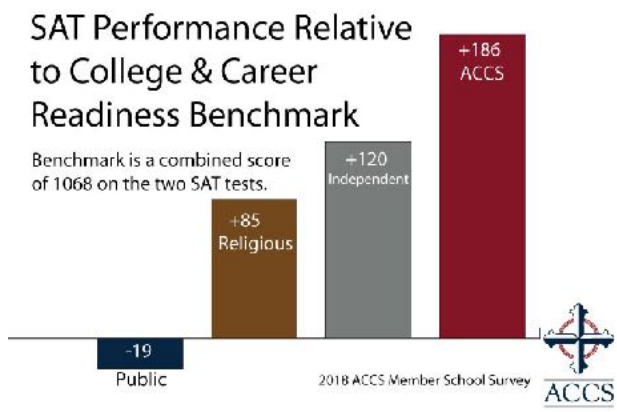


Percent of respondents who answered they were prepared perfectly or very well for college. **Chart 1.1**

ACCS alumni, as post-college adults, believe they were well prepared by their ACCS school. Notably, they believe this in greater numbers than do preparatory school alumni. Among evangelical Christian schools, ACCS alumni were almost twice as likely to say this. The bars here are blue which means these are the actual percentages of respondents who said they were perfectly or very well prepared for college.

The opinion of our alumni is supported by the ongoing tracking research that the ACCS does in a survey of our high school student on college readiness every other year. This graph is based on the average SAT scores of ACCS graduates (Chart 1.2).

So, we can see that ACCS alumni were well prepared for college. And, not surprisingly, further data shows that ACCS graduates do well in college.



From ACCS. **Chart 1.2**

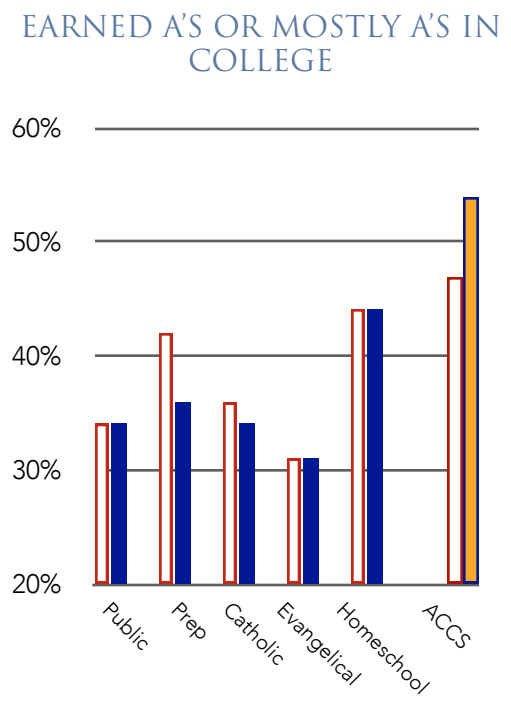
Grades in College, Earned a Degree

Almost 55% of ACCS alumni earned A's or mostly A's in college, and when corrected to show only the school effect, ACCS still reports the highest of any group—45% (Chart 1.3). Let's take a moment to understand the red/blue bars.

Isolating the School's Impact

Imagine that we could create, through statistical means, a representative alumni group that was *not* influenced by their families' income, parent's education, religion, practices, etc.— we'll call these the "neutral alumni." The red bars indicate what the results would be if we only surveyed a collection of neutral alumni from all six types of schools. Thus, the causes for the red bars could only represent the school's impact on the reported college grades.

We see that ACCS hypothetical neutral alumni would still have the highest grades, but rather than 55% reporting A's (gold bar), only 47% would report A's (red outlined bar) (Chart 1.3). Why? ACCS alumni do 8% better when they come from the average family profile that happen to attend ACCS schools (maybe they have higher income, on average, or they are more college educated). This family profile is the cause for about 8% of the college grades reported in the raw data for ACCS schools. In contrast, private preparatory schools would have 42% of their imaginary neutral alumni with A's, versus the 36% who actually reported A's. This is the inverse effect from the ACCS schools. Why could this be? Something about the families that attend prep schools diminishes the school's impact on their actual alumni grades in college. Speculation may help clarify. We could speculate that more private prep alumni come from highly educated parents who drive their



Percent of respondents answering "A's or Mostly A's" **Chart 1.3**

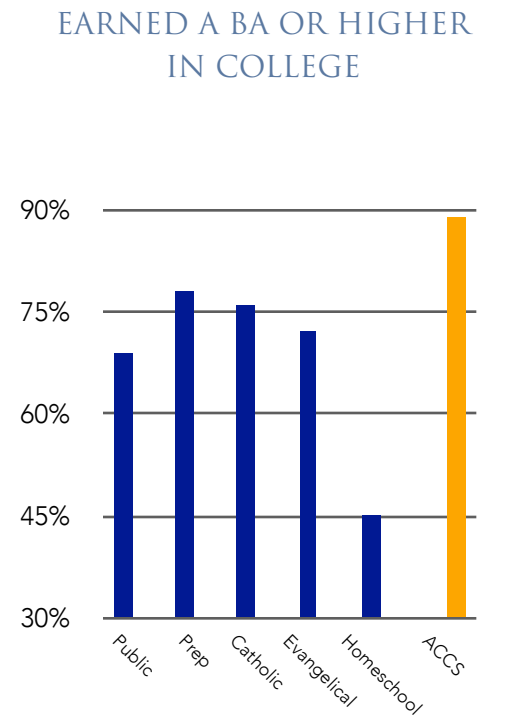


Chart 1.4

children to attend top colleges with harder grading. Therefore, the type of student who generally attends preparatory schools reports lower grades than the neutral student. Our reporting does not allow us to assess what family factors specifically contribute to the red bars, so we can only guess.

Similarly, ACCS alumni may have come from families of lower income than preparatory schools. Therefore, they may tend to attend lower-profile colleges with easier grading, which contributes to more reported A's in this question. This is speculation, of course. But we do know the overall effect of the family factors statistically and we can correct for them.

For other school segments besides prep and ACCS, there is no real difference between the blue bars and the neutral student bars (red). These school alumni have no distinction between their alumni and the neutral alumni in their actual population— for this question. Other questions may report differently.

To simplify, in this report, we tend to show blue and red bars selectively when there is little value in the comparisons between actual and imaginary neutral alumni.

Here, we see that actual data shows that more ACCS students complete their bachelor's degree, and many earn higher degrees (Chart 1.4). This shows that nearly 90% of ACCS respondents completed college. Overall, homeschoolers were significantly less likely to have completed college. From these results, given that homeschoolers report higher grades in college and feel as prepared as graduates of evangelical schools, but do not finish college at the same rate, some type of factor is at play. Could it be that a more structured educational experience when growing up provides a better completion rate in college?

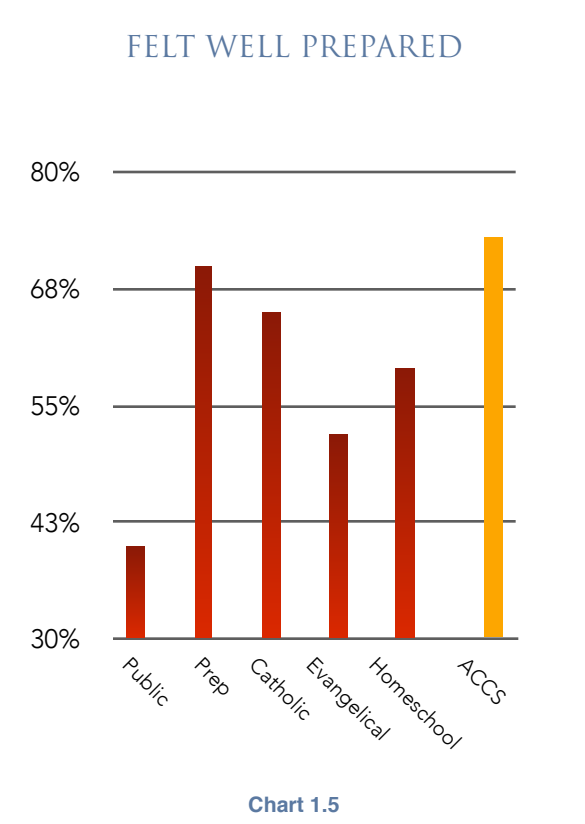
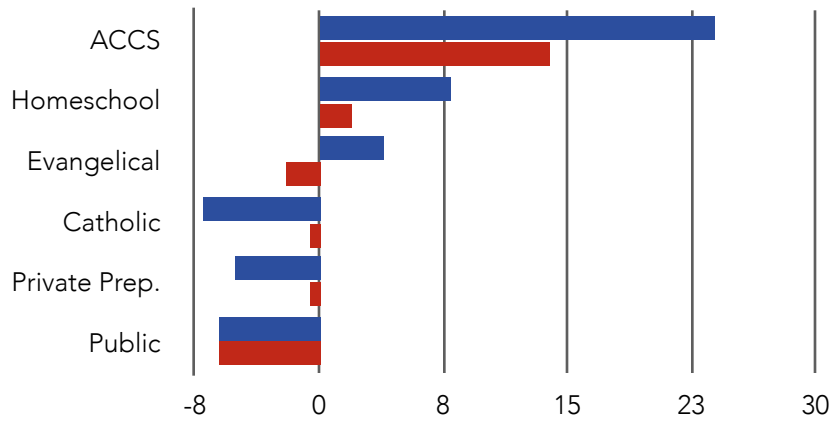


Chart 1.5

In Chart 1:5: Here, we see only the responses corrected to reflect the school's effect (red). We see that ACCS alumni are well prepared for their jobs— about the same as non-religious prep schools. ACCS alumni report being significantly more prepared than evangelical or homeschool alumni, and about the same as prep school alumni.

Profile 2: Life Outlook

ACCS alumni have positive life outlooks, indicating better life-satisfaction.

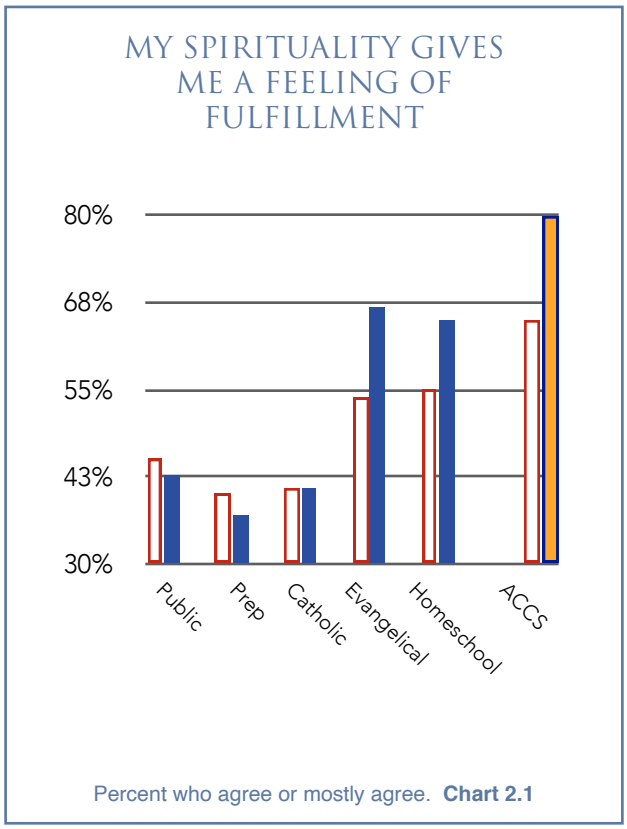


Thankfulness, God's calling to a vocation, everything (even suffering) is in God's plan, trust people, self-sufficient, goal-oriented. **Chart 2.0**

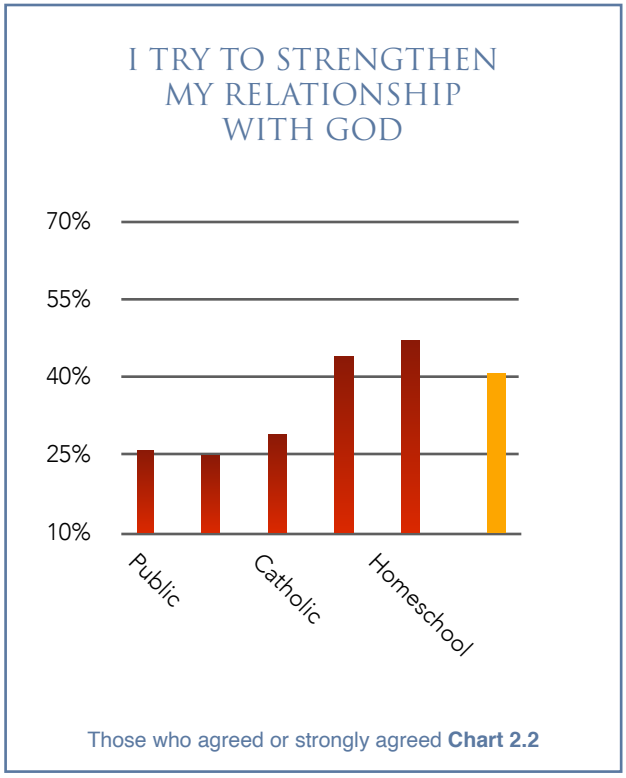
When it comes down to it, this is perhaps the most important profile as parents think about their children's future—Life Outlook. It is also one of the most distinctive for ACCS alumni, with most other adjusted segments (red) at or below the median. The ACCS profile score is nearly halved when other family factors are removed, which indicates the family and church play a significant role as well.

This profile is made up of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are indicators of a healthy life outlook. Do you feel a sense of purpose? Are you called by God to do something important? Is your suffering part of His plan? Has God equipped you for this mission? Are you grateful for all that you have? Do you tend to trust people? If your answers are "yes" to these questions, you will likely be more optimistic, and feel like life is worthwhile. If you were taught to see the world this way— if your *paideia*, or life outlook were formed to love these things— then maybe happiness would come more naturally. This is why our purpose statement at the beginning of this presentation is so important to keep in mind. *ACCS schools cultivate students to love the right things, rightly, so alumni lead satisfying, purposeful lives.*

Homeschoolers are the only other segment above the median (when adjusted). Catholic and prep schools inverse the effect, indicating that when family factors are removed, the school's influence on this profile is minimal (near the median). Evangelical schools seem to negatively impact outlook, but this probably indicates that families are bigger factors for the good in the case of evangelical alumni. Possibly, the disparity on life outlook is because these three conservative Christian school types do not intentionally address the *paideia-like* factors in this profile through their educational model.



Percent who agree or mostly agree. **Chart 2.1**



Those who agreed or strongly agreed **Chart 2.2**

It seems that "happiness" or "life satisfaction" is the illusive measure that so many pursue and so few find. And, based on nationwide statistics, we now have a crisis of life satisfaction indicators. For example, among the ages studied in this survey, (24-to 42-year-olds) the second highest cause of death, behind accident, is suicide.[7] Drug overdoses are another major cause. This change has reversed a nearly half-century-long trend of increasing life expectancies. Life expectancy is now declining for the first time in decades. This profile may provide insight into how we can reverse this trend.

Source of Fulfillment

Overall, 80% of ACCS alumni mostly or completely agree that their spirituality is important to them. Note that around 40% of alumni from the first three groups say this— about 10 points below the median view. All non-Catholic Christian schools fare higher, but ACCS alumni are nearly 10 points higher yet, giving our graduates a measure of significance over the public, non-religious, and Catholic sectors. Clearly, Christian education in general matters to one's outlook on life, as is validated by the red bars.

This question was asked in a six question set about the person's relationship with God. We can see more by looking at the follow-up questions.

Relationship with God

As you can see in this follow-up question (Chart 2.2), there is no significant difference (within the margin of error) between the evangelical, homeschool, and ACCS students as they try to strengthen their relationship with God. Once again, Christian education, of some type, matters, even for children raised in Christian homes, as family factors have been statistically neutralized here.

[7] Melonie Heron, "Deaths: Leading Causes for 2017," CDC, 2017, accessed December 8, 2019, 2017 National Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 68, Num. 6, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_06-508.pdf

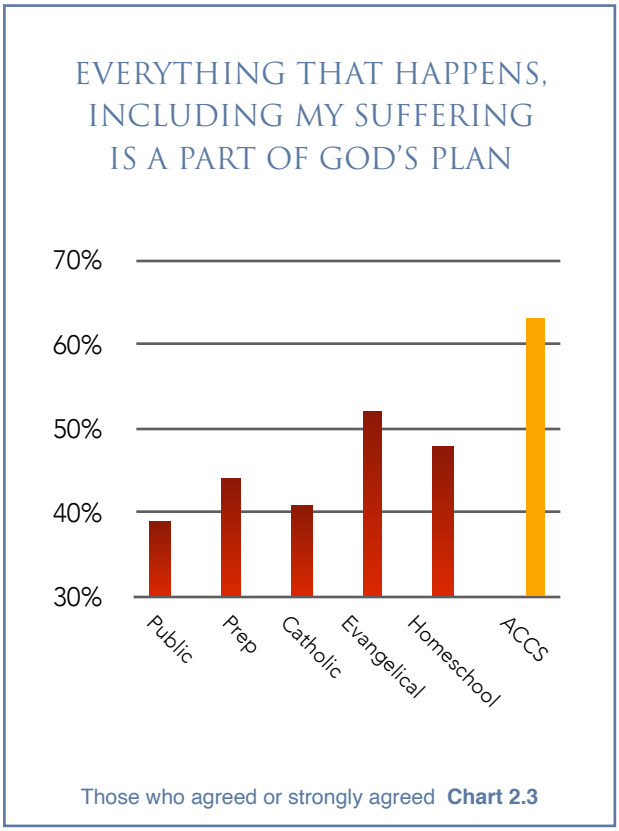
Suffering

There was a significant difference in the overall responses of ACCS alumni who believe that everything, including suffering, is part of God's plan (Chart 2.3). It seems clear that when one's life outlook takes this view of suffering, one has a healthier and generally more satisfying life.

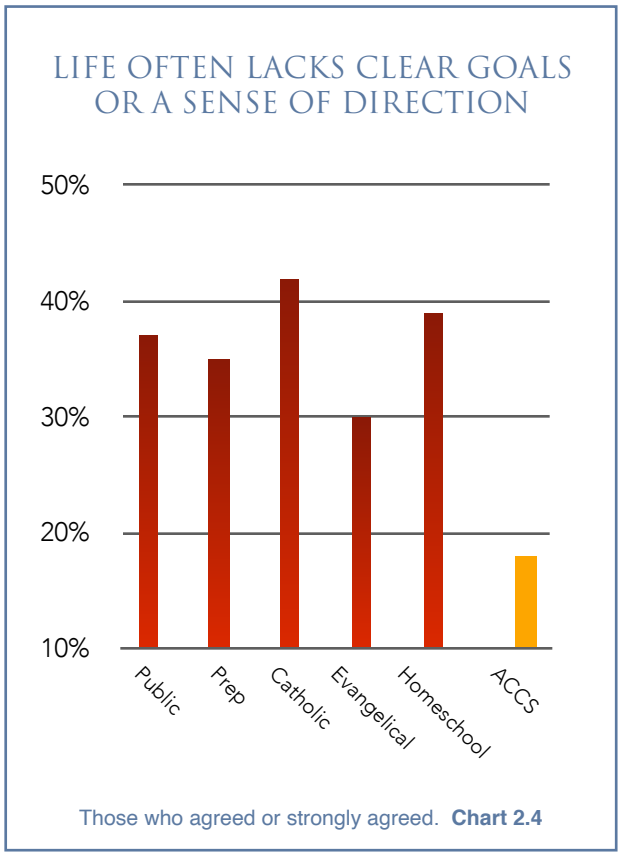
Other questions within the survey cast further light on the outlooks students take with them into adulthood based upon the type of school they attended.

Goals and Direction

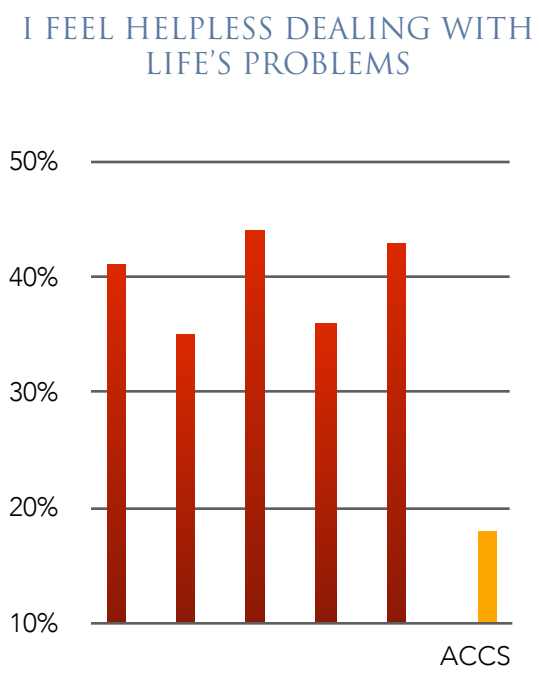
ACCS alumni have a clear sense of purpose and direction (Chart 2.4). Only 14% of ACCS alumni agreed that life lacks clear goals or a sense of direction. ACCS schools give students perspective on life through a study of theology, philosophy, history, and literature— with a wide ranging exposure to the Western Canon. And, they are taught to love the Lord with their minds, souls, and strength throughout every subject. We believe this perspective shows up when alumni think about their significance in the grand scheme of things. This question indicates ACCS alumni are hopeful, as we will soon see.



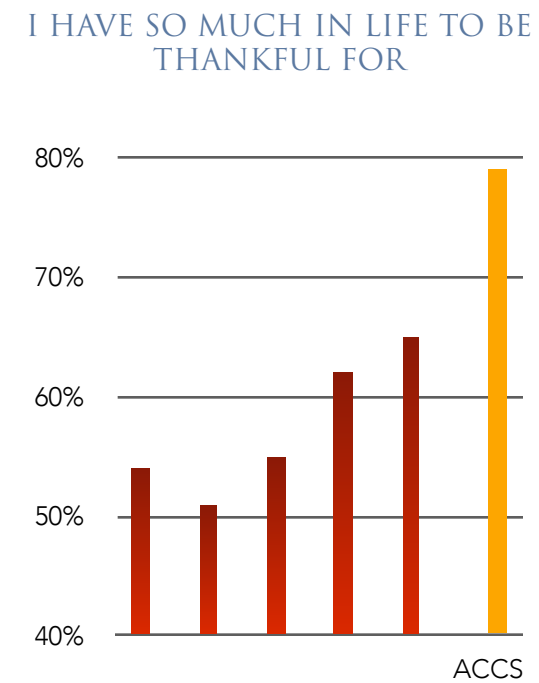
Those who agreed or strongly agreed **Chart 2.3**



Those who agreed or strongly agreed. **Chart 2.4**



Those who agreed or strongly agreed. **Chart 2.5**



Those who agreed or strongly agreed. **Chart 2.6**

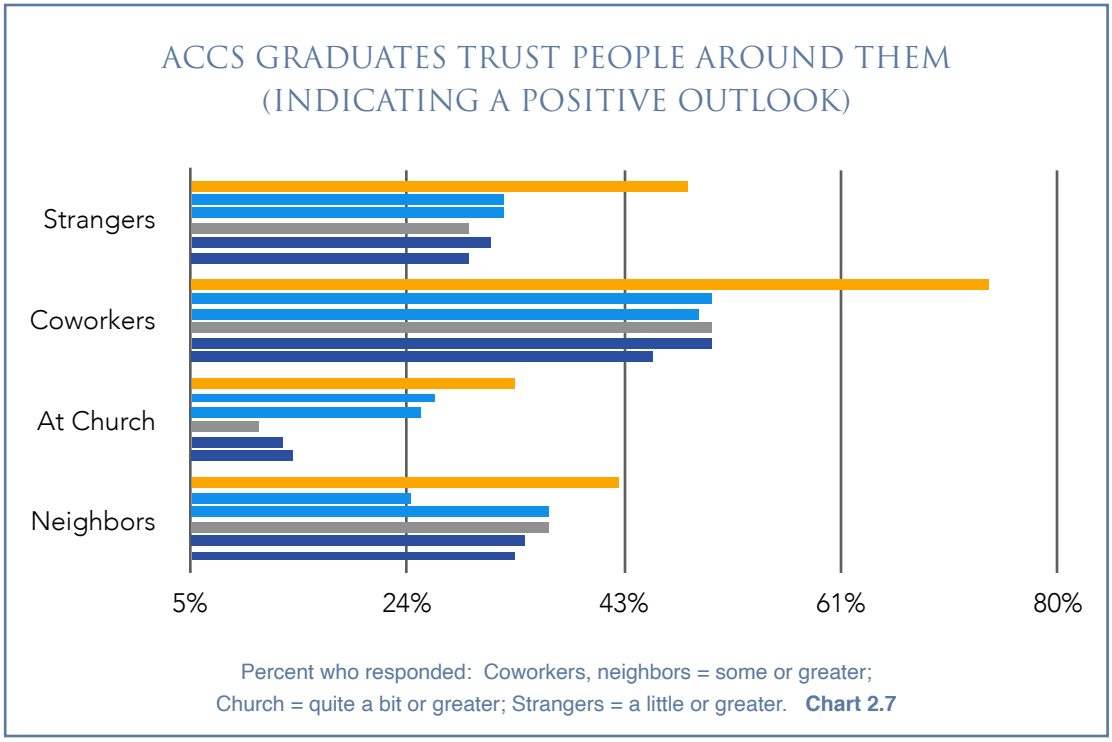
Hopefulness and Gratitude

Chart 2.5 can be interpreted to show that ACCS alumni are hopeful. This outlook shows up in the data in other ways.

By a significant margin, ACCS schools influence students to have gratitude at a higher rate than any other type of school (Chart 2.6).

The raw scale on Chart 2.6 went from a low of 1 to a high of 7. The ACCS raw average was 6.8. While many respondents had general basic agreement with this statement, ACCS alumni were outliers in the magnitude of their thankfulness.

While ACCS alumni are similar to other evangelicals in the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment, their attitudes about suffering, goals, problems, and thankfulness stand apart.



Trust as an indicator of a health and happiness

Chart 2.7 shows the responses of alumni to "who do you trust" questions. Note here, gold is ACCS as usual, the light blue are evangelical "Christian" schools, the dark are secular. Catholic schools tend to trend with secular schools, but are in gray here. Blue shading is because these are actual numbers. The school impact, usually in red, is not significantly different.

The first takeaway from this and the next chart is how much more trusting ACCS alumni are than others. Given the answers elsewhere in the survey, we believe this points to something beyond being coached or taught in ACCS schools. Psychologists have long held that trust is a strong indicator of a positive life outlook. According to the National Institutes of Health, "The levels of subjective well-being increase with the number of people an individual can trust and confide in."[8] Many popular articles echo this long held view.[9] ACCS grads are the most trusting of personal relationships in every category.

Catholic school alumni seem to be the least likely to trust people in their church, which might be influenced by recent scandals. This is a warning for all of us when it comes to integrity in the church. When it comes to strangers and co-workers, ACCS alumni are the most unique, in that they are significantly more trusting of these groups.

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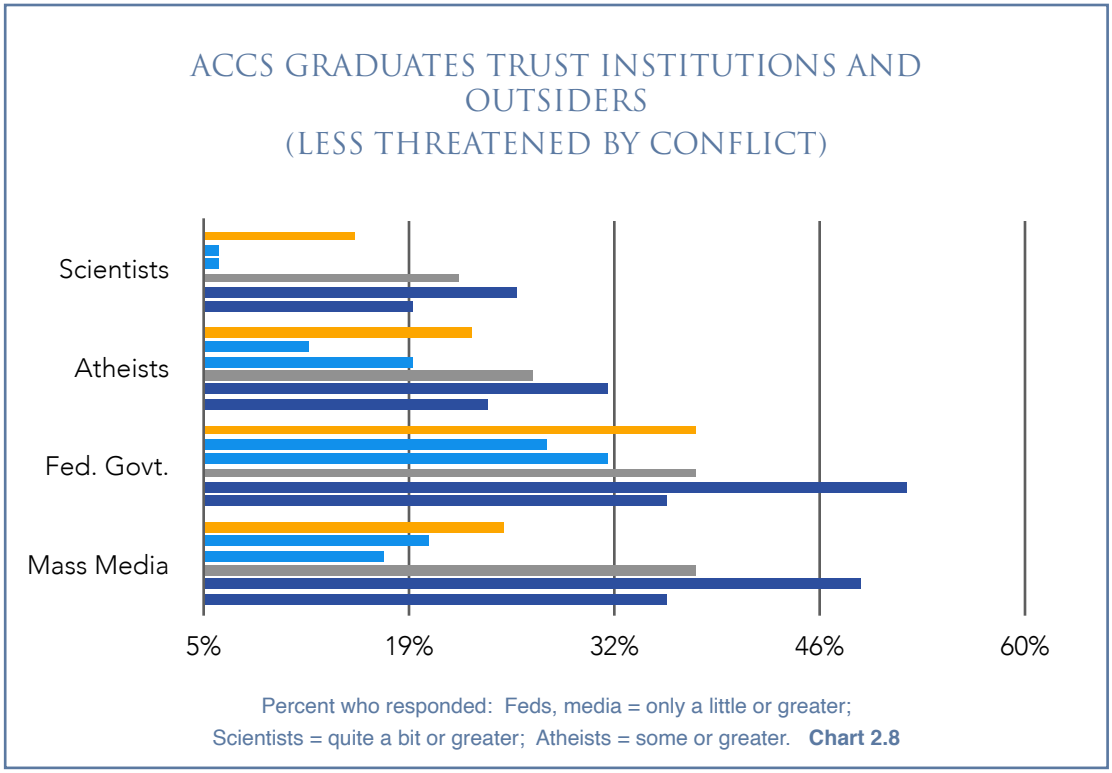
[8] Viviana Amati, et. al. "Social Relations and Life Satisfaction; The Role of Friends." *Genus.* 74, 7 (2018) accessed December 8, 2019, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5937874/.

[9] Julie Beck. "Smarter People are More Trusting,"*The Atlantic*, (2014) accessed December 8, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/03/study-smarter-people-are-more-trusting/284520/



ACCS alumni trust institutional or outside contacts, though not as much as some other groups. Note that ACCS alumni are not the top group in any of these categories as they were in Chart 2.7—secular preparatory schools are. But, the groups listed here are also typically seen as hostile to evangelical Christians, so we see lower trust factors for all evangelical segments.

ACCS alumni do trust these groups more than their counterparts at other evangelical schools. We believe this continues to support the thesis that a greater life outlook is reflected in trust.

ACCS alumni are much more likely to trust scientists and atheists than other evangelicals. In contrast, we'll see later that they are not as willing as the other segments to believe scientism, or atheistic evolution. This intersects with the intellectual independence profile which will come later. It seems ACCS alumni do not feel as threatened by the anti-Christian ideas that come their way. Most ACCS schools expose students to scientific or atheistic ideas, and they teach students to rightly understand them. This seems to build confidence in them later in life.

Among conservative evangelically educated segments, ACCS alumni are more likely to trust the federal government and the mass media, though they are generally less likely to trust them than the secular groups. Once again, we'll see later that the bias the government and press inject into the conversation does not influence what ACCS alumni believe as with the other segments. We'll see later that ACCS alumni stand out as strongly traditional and conservative on matters generally contradicted by government and media. Yet, they trust more in general. Possibly, this is because ACCS schools take to heart Aristotle's maxim that an educated man can "entertain a thought without accepting it." On this note, this survey was taken prior to the historically low trust in media figures experienced in most of 2019.

Friends

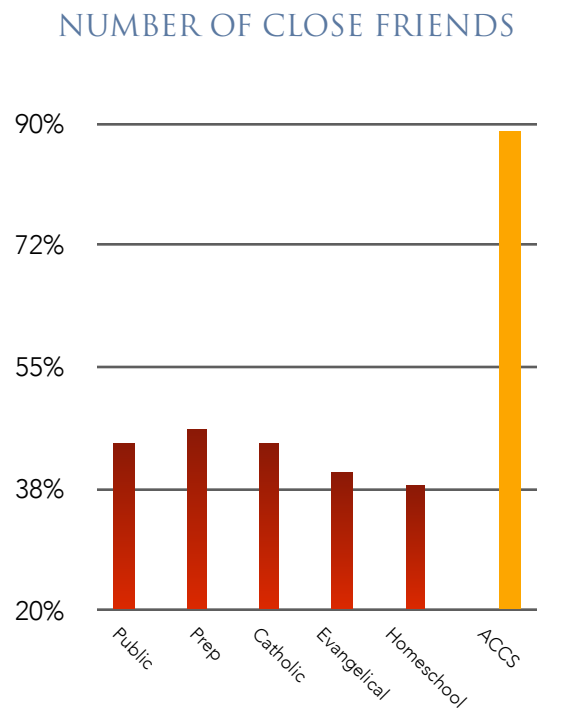
Our final indicator of a fulfilling life is the number and quality of friendships among alumni. Respondents were asked to think about close friends from their neighborhood, family, church, or wherever, and asked how many they had. The median answer for the whole population was 3 friends. 90% of ACCS alumni reported more friends than this. When asked to name their "close ties," the percentage was 94% above the median. The data consistently show that ACCS alumni have more and closer relationships in adulthood. Also, the data indicates that more ACCS alumni count among these close friends the people they attended high school with.

Combined with trust, this "friendship factor" is frequently cited in studies as beneficial to health and life satisfaction. In fact, "[m]aking one more friend increases an individual's general health measure by 6.6% of a standard deviation. This suggests that accumulating social capital through friendship interactions is beneficial to health."[10]

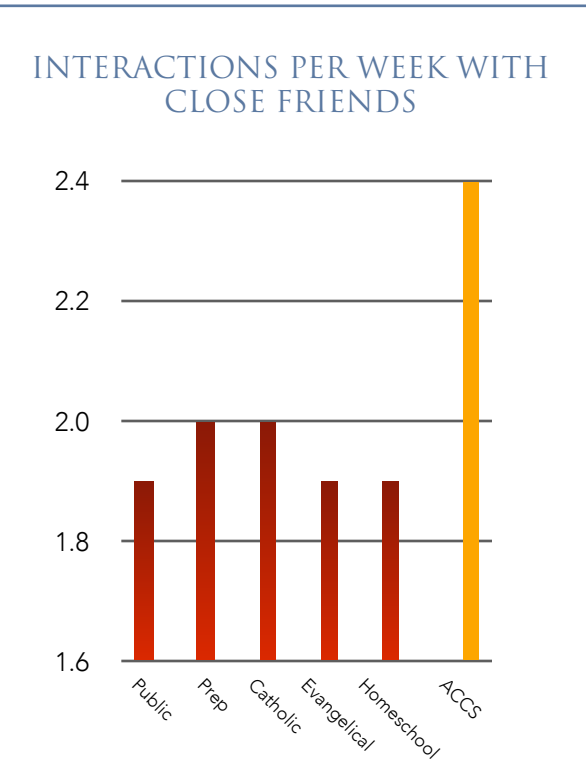
83% of ACCS alumni talk with their friends about religion and significantly more of them interact frequently with their friends on a weekly basis.

A healthy view of suffering, life goals, gratitude, trust of others, and strong friendships are significant indicators that our students enjoy life with a depth and understanding that is unmatched, and much, if not most, of the apparent cause is the ACCS school they attended.

83% of ACCS alumni talk with their friends about religion



Percent of respondents who reported more close friends than the median. **Chart 2.9**

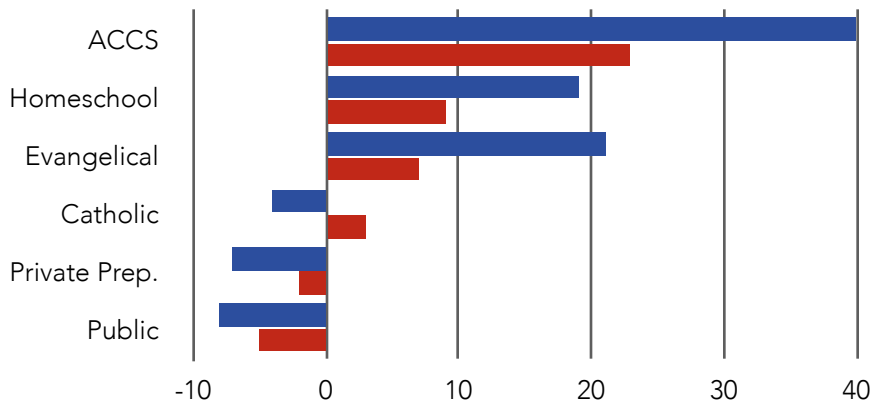


Reported number of interactions per week. **Chart 2.10**

[10] Ho Cy, "Better Health With More Friends: The role of Social Capital in Producing Health," *Health Economist*, 25, 1 (2016): 91-100.

Profile 3: Christian Commitment

ACCS alumni are more involved in church and community



Attend church regularly, small group study, regularly read Bible, volunteer at church, give to church, obligation to special religious practices **(Chart 3)**

After academics and life outlook have been considered, we can now look at two profiles that reflect aspects of an alumni's Christian life. The first is Christian Commitment (Profile 3), the second, Christian Lifestyle (Profile 4).

Profile 3 (Christian Commitment) reflects a person's practices in their church and their involvement in church community. Things like church attendance, Bible studies, and volunteering combine with attitudes like their obligation to observe religious practices to create this profile. The result above is further supported by other responses, like placing their children in Christian school, which are included in later profiles.

For this profile, two groups are above the median along with the ACCS— homeschool and evangelical schools. While they do show strength here as well, the ACCS alumni show the most pronounced influence in this area, with nearly twice the profile score of the other two evangelical groups.

One observation here is that in actual data, ACCS alumni score a 40 on this profile. This translates into 90% reporting above the median for all groups. This is one of the most pronounced attributes of ACCS alumni.

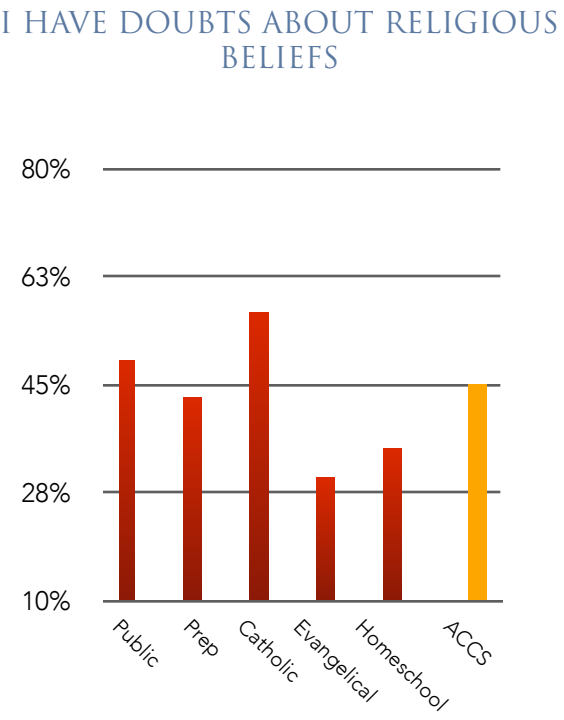
Let's look at the details of this difference.

Doubts and Practices

When the data are corrected to reflect only the school effect, the "doubts about their faith" reported by ACCS alumni are not significantly different from their peers who graduated from evangelical or homeschools, but they do seem to have doubts in alignment with the secular groups.

ACCS alumni's commitment to their faith, however, shows some significant differences.

ACCS alumni have a clear and significantly different spiritual viewpoint and practice than other graduates. The gold bar on Chart 3.2 reflects the actual data for the question, showing near 80% agree that they have an obligation to practice spiritual disciplines.



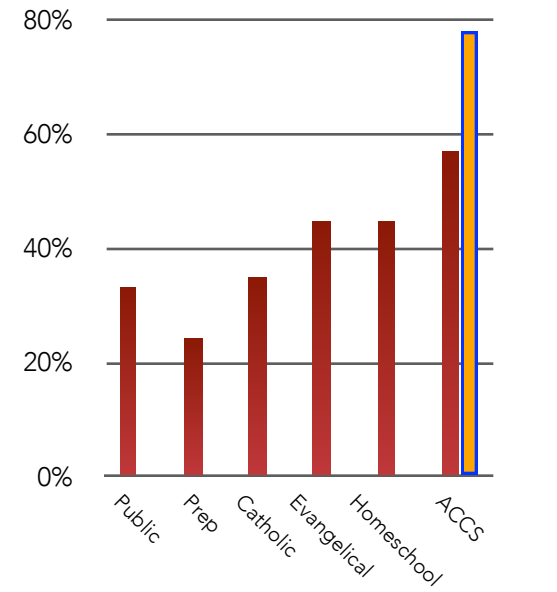
Those who are neutral or agreed **Chart 3.1**

ACCS alumni

90% attend church 3 times per month or more

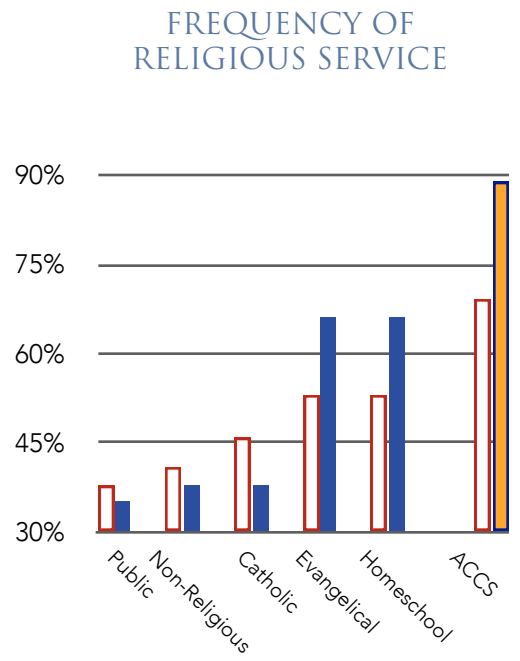
83% attend small groups weekly

70% read the Bible weekly



Mostly or completely agree. Gold = Actual **Chart 3.2**

Church Attendance

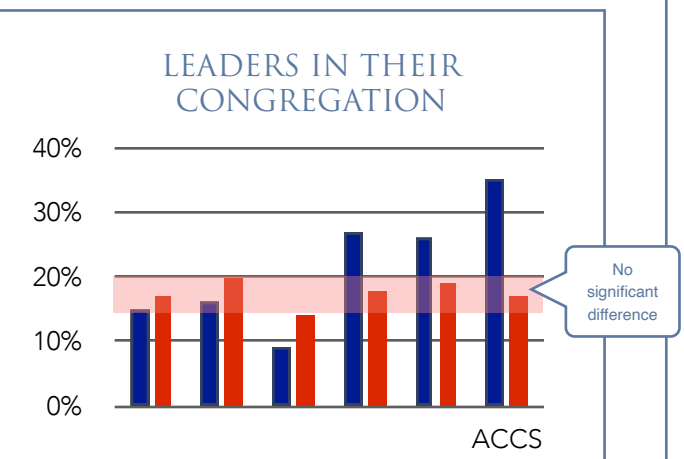


Percent that attend more than 3 time per month.
= Attributable to the school. **Chart 3.3**

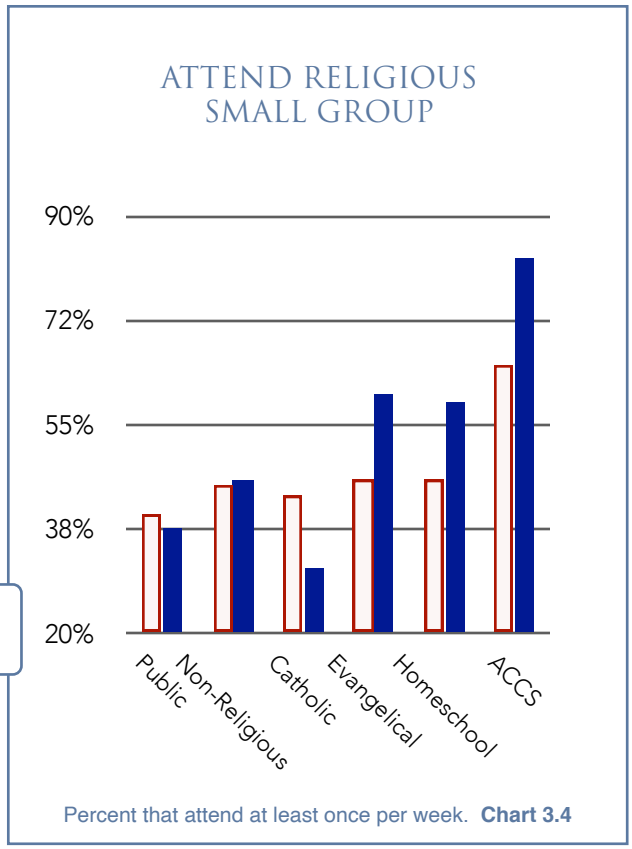
Here, we see the most obvious indicators of alumni practice and attitude: frequency of church attendance. The red outlined bar on Chart 3.3 for the ACCS shows a significantly higher church attendance. The blue outlined gold bar shows the actual response data, which is more than 20 percentage points higher than the next highest group's actual data—evangelical schools (in blue). The gap between them is larger than between secular and Christian or homeschools.

With nearly 90% of ACCS alumni attending church at least 3 times a month, we asked how else are they involved? Digging a bit deeper, we see that ACCS alumni are more involved in their churches. 83% of ACCS alumni report attending a small group at least once per week. These two factors answer the question so many ask: Do ACCS schools influence whether a student will remain faithful to church?

ACCS alumni are leaders in their congregations in greater numbers. But, when corrected for other factors, the differences on Chart 3.5 are not significant. So, this "leadership" aspect could be more related to other factors than the school. Nonetheless, ACCS alumni take their experiences and education with them.



Percent that attend at least once per week. **Chart 3.5**



Percent that attend at least once per week. **Chart 3.4**

Reading

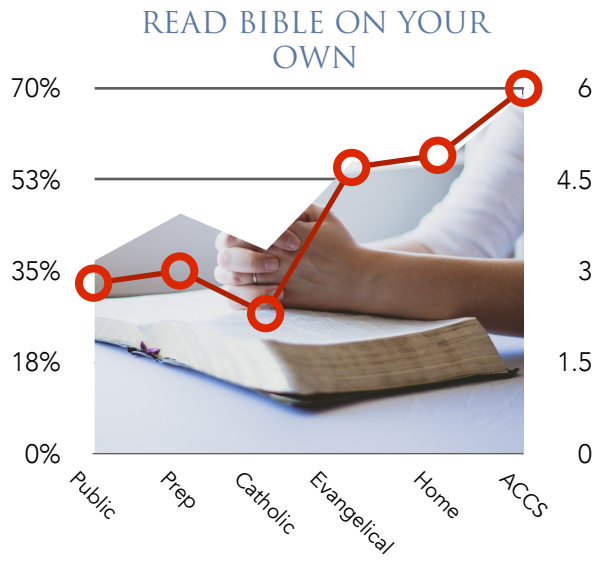
When corrected for the school influence alone, about 70% of ACCS alumni read their Bibles on their own at levels higher than the median respondent. Corrected for school effect, ACCS alumni are 2.6 times more likely to pray alone than the median, and 6.7 times more likely to read, regardless of the type of reading.

The scale on the right side of Chart 3.6 shows the frequency of Bible reading: 1=never; 2 once or twice a year; 3 several times a year; 4 about once a month; 5 a few times a month; 6 once a week; 7 a few times a week; and 8 once a day or more. ACCS alumni average a 6 on this 8-point scale.

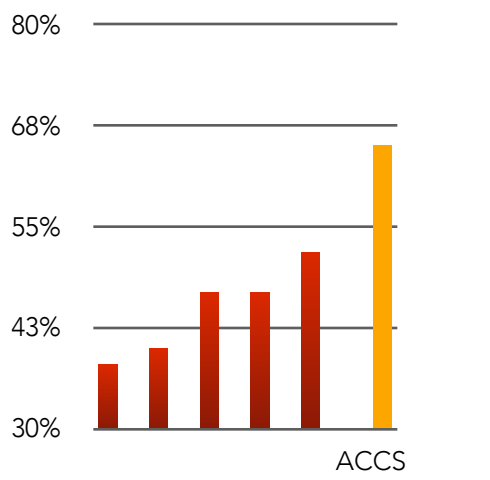
ACCS Alumni:
(vs. next highest)

2.6 x more likely to pray alone
(vs. Evangelicals 1.9x)

6.7 x more likely to read
(vs. Homeschoolers 4.1x)

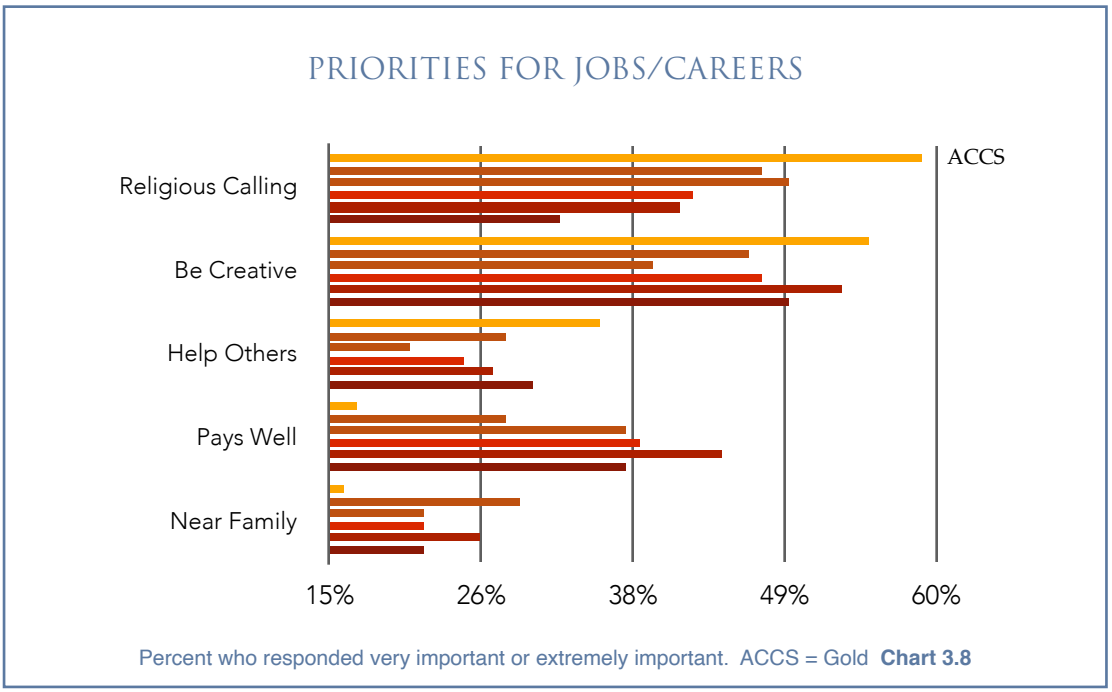


Left scale/red line: percent who exceed monthly Bible reading
Right scale/image area: frequency
6 = weekly 4 = monthly 1 = once or twice annually **Chart 3.6**



Percent who read more than once a month. **Chart 3.7**

Vocational Priorities



Vocational priority indicates where alumni wish to spend their time. And, for ACCS alumni, their priority for choosing a career is distinct from all other groups. Note here, gold is ACCS as usual, the gold-red are evangelical "Christian" schools, the dark red are secular. Catholic tends to trend with secular, but are in bright red here. These results are corrected to reflect the school effect only.

ACCS alumni strongly seek a job that fulfills their religious calling, they want to help others—significantly more than their evangelical counterparts, and they are willing to take less pay and sacrifice family proximity to follow this calling.

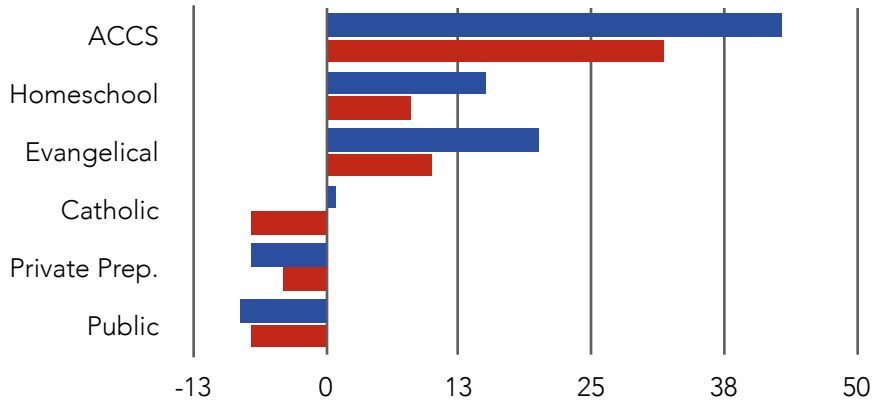
Note that an interest in creativity is unique to both preparatory and ACCS schools. This may be worth further exploration.

The takeaway from this survey is that ACCS alumni are likely to serve more through their vocation, particularly in a religious calling, and they are willing to sacrifice financially to do it.

How do these practices bear out in life? We'll see in the Christian Life profile, up next.

Profile 4: Christian Life

ACCS Alumni live their faith.



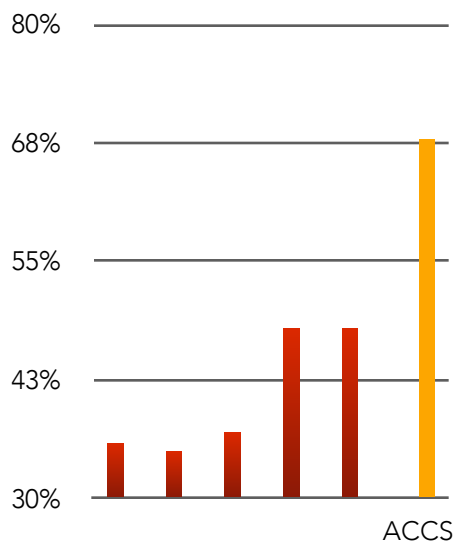
Accept church authority, family eats, prays, talks about God, reads Bible together, never lived together before married, never divorced. **(Chart 4)**

The Christian living profile captures the lifestyle differences for alumni that are a reflection of their Christian Commitment from Profile 3.

As with Christian Commitment, the Profile 4 shows some common ground with evangelical and homeschools, though on different scales. If your desire is to foster a Christian life, clearly, students are better off in a conservative Christian school environment overall. Given the biblical call in Ephesians for fathers to raise their children in the *paideia* of the Lord, this shouldn't need to be proven by research. *Paideia*, the ancient Greek word and concept translates to at least seven words like fear, instruction, education, training, and admonition. ACCS schools base their educational model on *paideia* and its underlying principles. Conventional schools typically do not. This creates a very unique environment in ACCS schools where Christian *paideia* is infused throughout the method, content, and ethos of the schools. We believe this is reflected in the differences we see between conventional Christian schools and evangelical or homeschools.

Here, the ACCS school effect is more than three times as pronounced when compared to the next highest form of school. The underlying data helps us understand these differences in some detail.

ACCEPT AUTHORITY OF CHURCH AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP



Percent who agreed somewhat to completely.

Chart 4.1

Within the Church

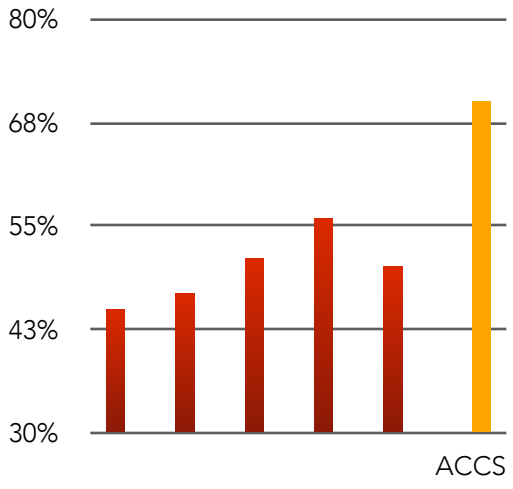
Within the church, we see that ACCS alumni have different attitudes when compared to any of the other sectors of school alumni. Nearly 70% accept church authority (Chart 4.1), and 70% believe they have an obligation to tithe (Chart 4.2). Again, these are adjusted to show only the affect of the school.

ACCS alumni reported an obligation to give 10%, when adjusted for about the same as other evangelical groups. The median amount was about $450.

ACCS alumni are nearly 3x

more likely to donate to their church than other Christian school segments.

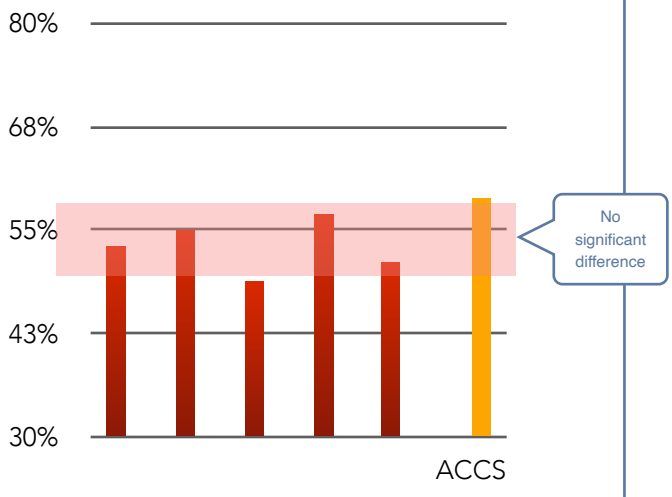
OBLIGATION TO TITHE 10%



Percent who agreed somewhat to completely.

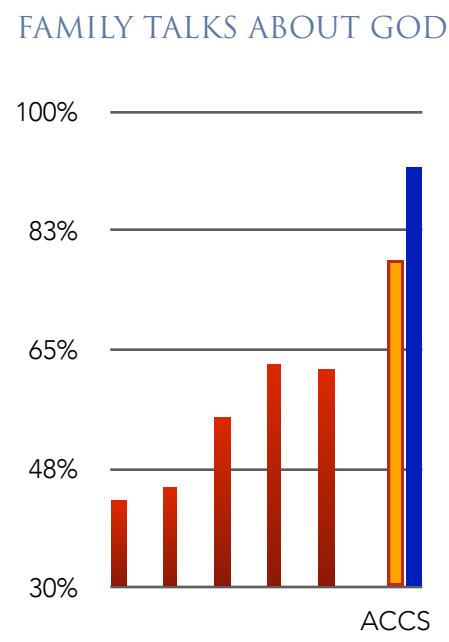
Chart 4.2

AMOUNT GIVEN TO CHURCH

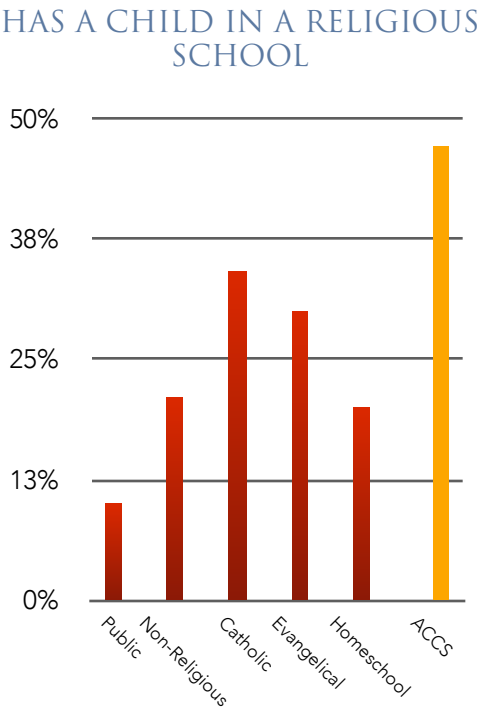


Percent who reported giving more than the median amount.

Chart 4.3



Percent who talked more than 3x per week.
Chart 4.4



Percent of those who have children, with a child in a Christian school.
Chart 4.5

Within the Home

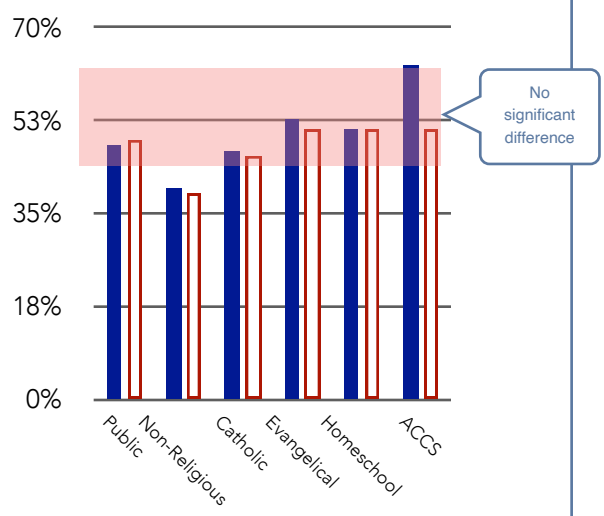
When it comes to the home, the ACCS alumni surveyed have about the same aged children and about the same number of children overall as the median. Possibly, evangelical schools and homeschools have more children, but within the margin of error.

ACCS Alumni and prep school alumni report marrying younger—about ten points below the median, but again, with a wide margin. ACCS alumni talk about God more, eat together more, and pray together more than any of the sectors. The blue bar in Chart 4.4 indicates the actual data for this question, to show that the unadjusted number reflects a very high rate above the median. Similar graphs reflect a similar result for prayer, eating together, etc.

More ACCS alumni report putting their children in a Christian school. We have no way of knowing if the school is classical. However, since ACCS alumni are outliers in the school types listed, it seems likely.

ACCS alumni talk about God more, eat together more, and pray together more.

Marriage



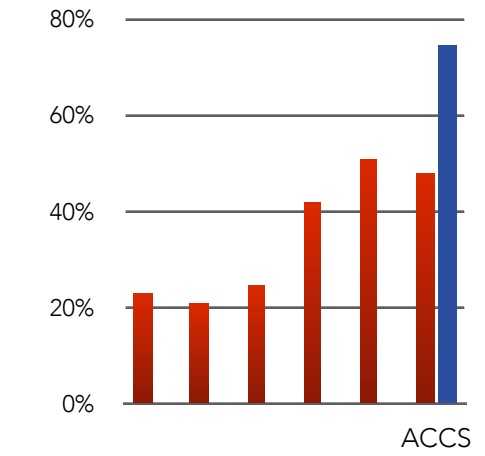
Percent "satisfied" or "very satisfied." **Chart 4.7**

There is a slightly higher marital satisfaction rate for ACCS alumni in the actual data (blue in Chart 4.7). However, when corrected for the school's affect only, there is almost no significant difference across any of the groups. All sit near the median. So marital satisfaction seems independent of the school attended.

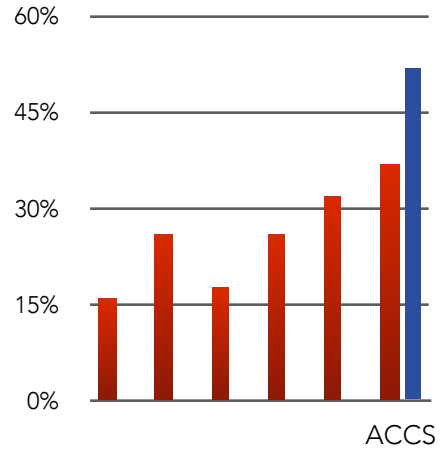
About the same proportion of ACCS, homeschool, and prep school alumni were married—55%. Ten percent more evangelicals were married; fewer public and Catholic alumni were married when compared to ACCS, prep, or homeschool alumni.

Interestingly, ACCS alumni have very different views of marriage.

ACCS alumni believe living together outside of marriage is morally wrong (Chart 4.8). The blue bar shows the actual data, which is much more pronounced than the adjusted data. This means that, while the school's impact is about the same for all three evangelical groups, the actual data shows that ACCS



Percent who agreed somewhat to completely.
Blue = Actual unadjusted responses
Chart 4.8



Percent who agreed somewhat to completely.
Blue = Actual unadjusted responses
Chart 4.9

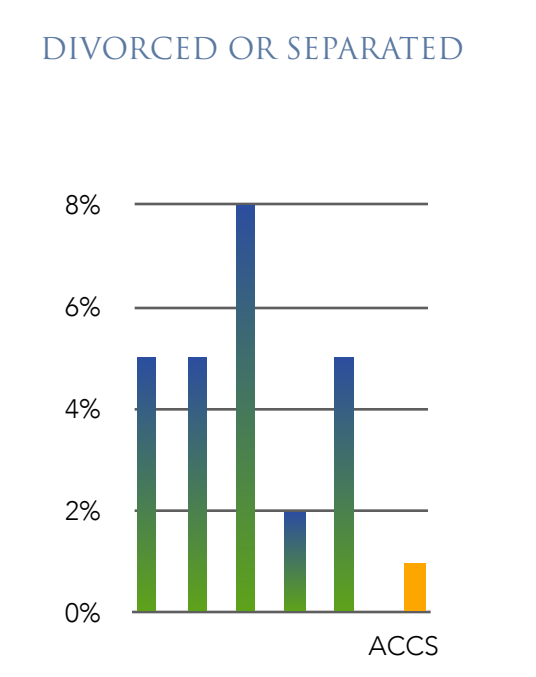
alumni are much more likely to see living together as wrong. Public, preparatory, and Catholic schools are significantly less likely to influence students to believe this. ACCS alumni are more likely to say that divorce is morally wrong "most or all of the time." Again, the actual data shows even stronger convictions from ACCS alumni.

Marriage lived out

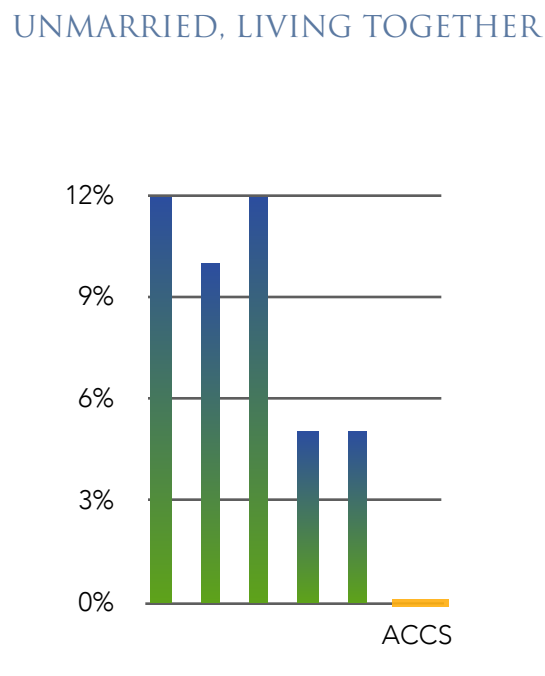
With marital satisfaction about the same, and beliefs about marriage's proper moral context different, how does this play out in real life? The divorce rate among ACCS alumni is small. For these charts, we used actual data rather than corrected for school effect because the reported numbers for ACCS graduates were at or near zero so the correction created a misleading result. Even with the adjustment for school effect, the graphs took the same shape, showing the school effect was real and significant. Also, these are presented as probabilities rather than the usual percentage. Thus, we used the green color indicating an actual scale. For example, based on the data a random alumni selected from the public school would have about a 6% chance of being divorced. ACCS alumni would have less than a 1% chance.

No ACCS graduates reported living together. Very few reported every having lived together which stands in contrast to other school types.

ACCS schools seem to influence the beliefs, and more significantly the behavior of our alumni.



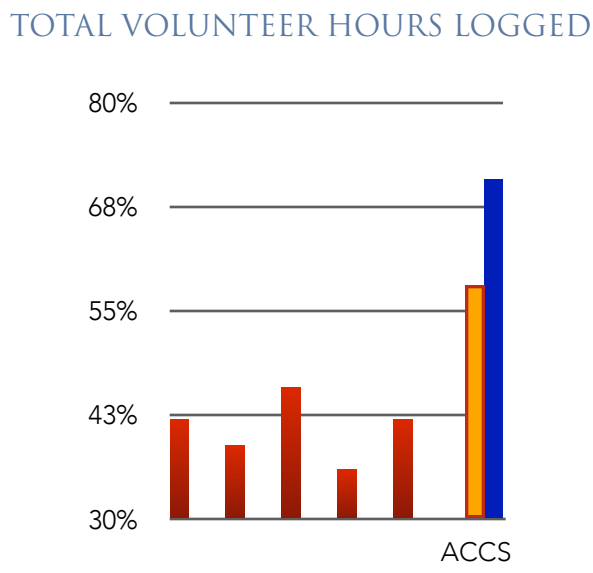
Probability of divorce based on reported rates among respondents.
Chart 4.9



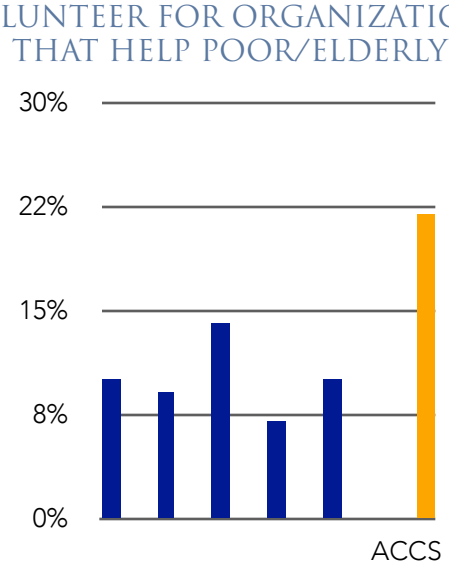
Probability of living together, based on responses.
Chart 4.10

ACCS alumni invest in their communities. ACCS alumni volunteer at a greater rate, with the actual data showing a very high rate of volunteering— the median is about 1 hour per month. 70% of ACCS alumni report exceeding this number.

While most sectors reported about the same type of volunteering, ACCS alumni reported less emphasis on volunteering for youth programs, and more emphasis on helping the poor or elderly.



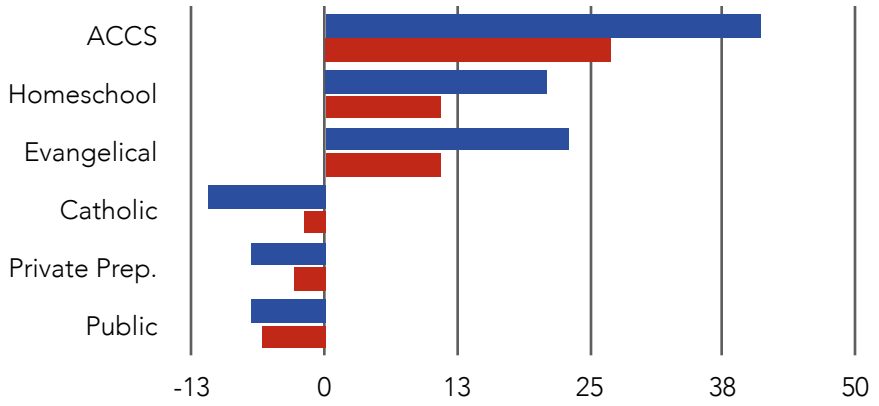
Percent over the median of logged hours per month.
Chart 4.5



Percent who responded yes for the past year.
Chart 4.6

Profile 5: Conservative and Traditional

ACCS alumni lead a clear divide between Christians and secular schools.



Can govt. solve problems, good sexual ethics, who God is, authority of church, science and faith compatible, inerrancy of Bible, more likely to know LGBT, less likely to accept LGBT lifestyle.
(Chart 5)

The "Conservative and Traditional" profile represents the political, social, and orthodox Christian views of alumni. Since this survey did not delve deeply into political views, "conservative" in this context refers to holding to values and practices that would be considered socially conservative. All three forms of evangelical schools showed strength in this profile. The national divide is clearly seen here. Notably, most of the other profiles' greatest differences were between the ACCS schools and everyone else. The biggest difference in raw scores here is between the Christian groups and the Catholic, prep, and public schools in the actual data. In the school-adjusted factors, ACCS still represents the most different group.

This profile consolidates attitudes and beliefs, along with a few behavioral factors relating to beliefs that traditional or conservative alumni hold in the area of sexual ethics, government's role in solving problems, faith vs. science, theological questions of authority, the Bible, and sin. For example, how do ACCS alumni view the problems in America today?

All three forms of evangelical schools showed strength in this profile. The national divide is clearly seen here.

Unexpected Views

ACCS alumni do not think lack of respect for authority is one of the main problems in the U.S., at least not relative to graduates of other evangelical schools. ACCS alumni compare most closely with private preparatory schools on this question—the lowest percentage.

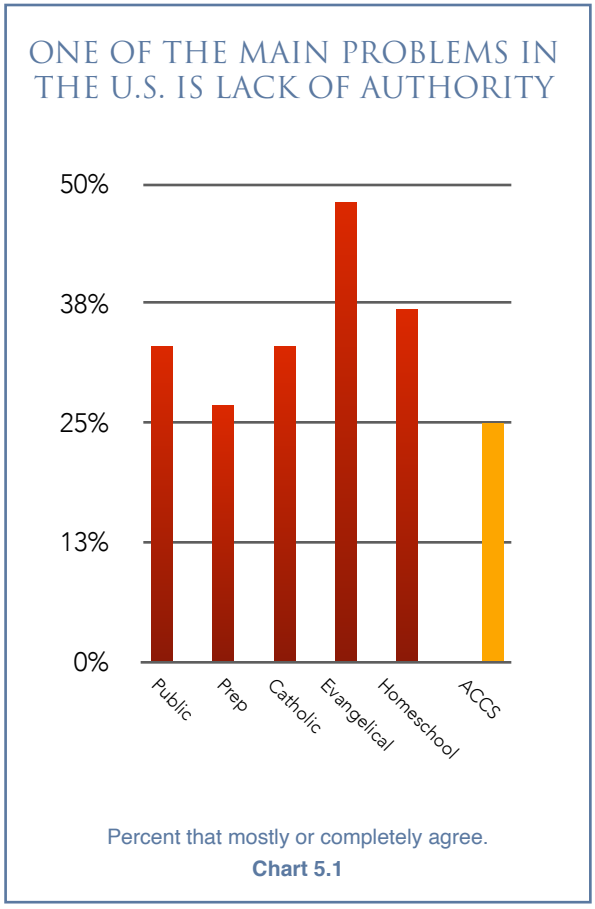
This question was grouped with questions like: "The dominant culture in the U.S. is hostile to my moral and spiritual values." ACCS alumni answered in the affirmative, similar to evangelical and homeschool, but differently than the public, nonreligious, and Catholic alumni. So, the reason for the lower ACCS agreement on authority may be that the ACCS alumni perceived one of the other choices as "more serious" from the list. Or, possibly, ACCS alumni were influenced to have less concern about respect for authority.

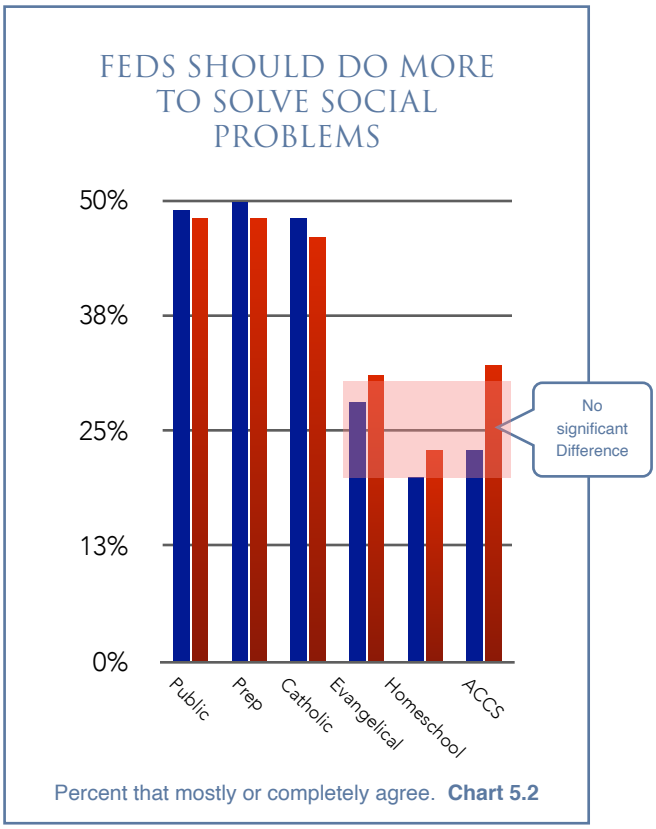
To understand, we looked at other data in the survey. Since other data show that ACCS respect authority in churches at higher levels, and of the Bible, there is probably an underlying story to this one.

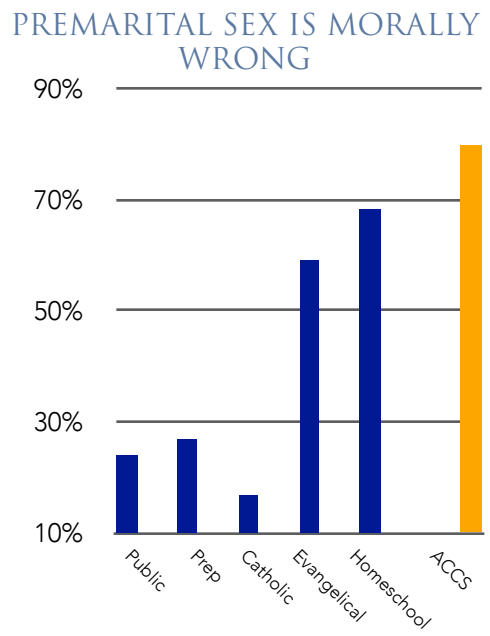
About 23% of ACCS alumni surveyed agree that the federal government should do more to solve social problems, which means 77% do not agree (Chart 5.2).

About half of all alumni from public, prep, and Catholic schools agree, thus there is a sharp divide. Evangelical and homeschool students are about the same as the ACCS on this factor. Thus, the "school effect" red chart looks about the same relative to one another.

At a time when socialism is nearing 30% approval with this age-group, it's once again clear from this data that all three types of education, conservative Christian, homeschool, and ACCS, make a difference in what students take with them into adulthood from their schools.

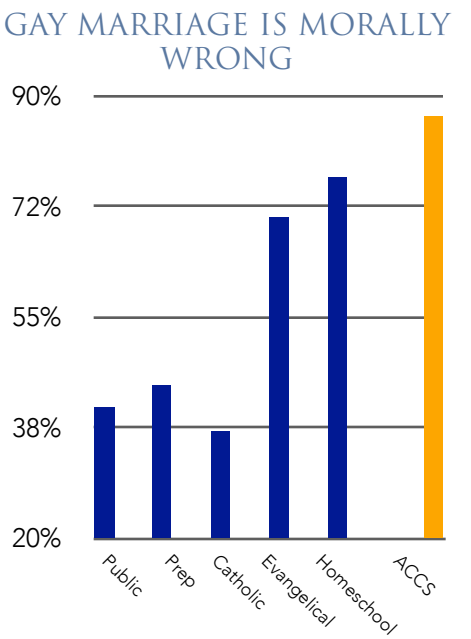






Percent who say it's always or almost always wrong.

Chart 5.3



Percent who say it's always or almost always wrong.

Chart 5.4

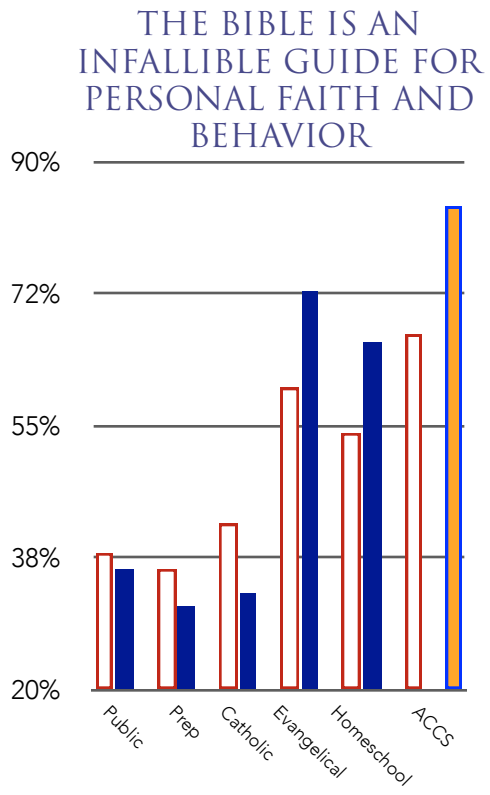
ACCS alumni are socially more conservative than their counterparts who graduated from evangelical schools. The "school-caused" (red) percentages showed this difference was caused by the school's influence. We provided the actual numbers in charts 5.3 and 5.4 to show that 80 or near 90% of ACCS alumni agree. We saw marriage attitudes earlier. These questions report the opinions on a broader set of sexual ethics. And, the differences are wide— below 30% for secular schools, and nearing 90% for ACCS. When the formula is applied to isolate the cause to the school, the differences are slightly less pronounced, but still significant.

Orthodoxy

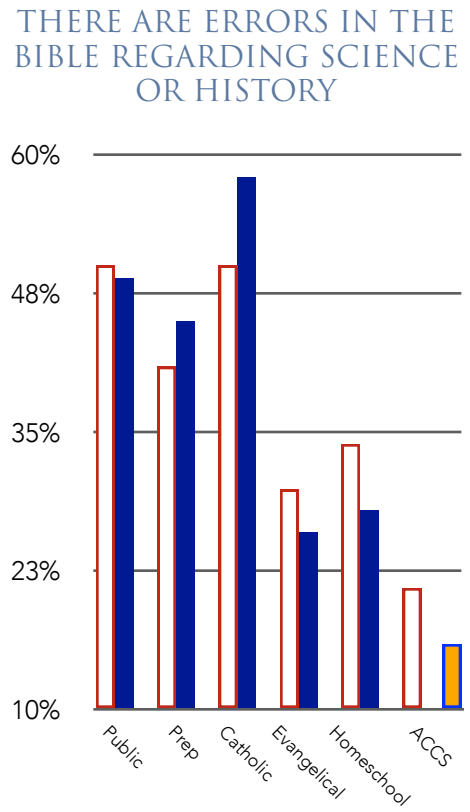
ACCS alumni have distinct differences with all schools, particularly secular and Catholic, when it comes to orthodoxy. They believe the Bible is inerrant. When you look at the actual data, the difference is quite pronounced.

And, ACCS alumni believe the Bible is true with respect to history and science. We believe this is because ACCS schools typically do not isolate these subjects from "Bible class," so students grow to understand how the truth of the Bible is true for everything, not just personal spirituality.

We've seen that ACCS alumni are about as politically conservative as their evangelical school counterparts, but are more orthodox in their Christianity, and more socially conservative than all groups.



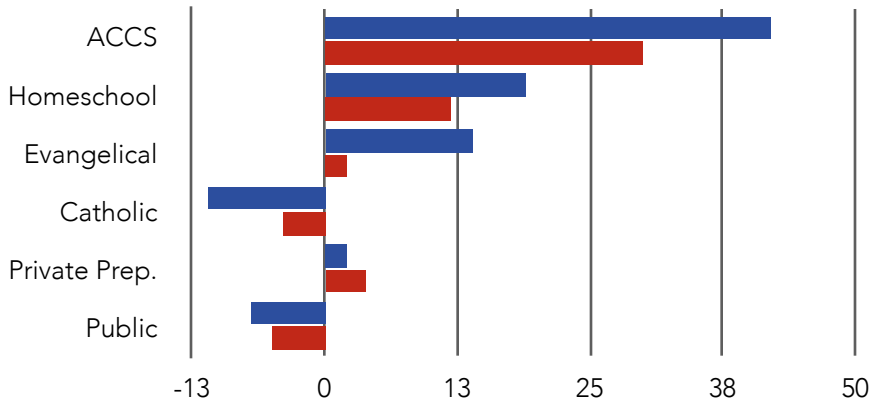
Percent who agreed. **Chart 5.5**



Percent who agreed. **Chart 5.5**

Profile 6: Independent Thinkers

ACCS alumni defy categories as they retain orthodoxy AND engage the world.



Independent views, reading, science, willing to disagree, accept differences but willing to challenge (This measure uses multiple questions in conjunction to reveal practices and attitudes).

(Chart 6)

The last two profiles reflect the independence of mind and the influence of ACCS alumni. These are important when gauging the cultural influence of each group.

ACCS alumni score more than two times higher than homeschoolers, who also score well above the median, and much higher than all other groups on this profile. Classical education has long been known as a form of education that "teaches students how to think well." This reputation seems to be supported by this data.

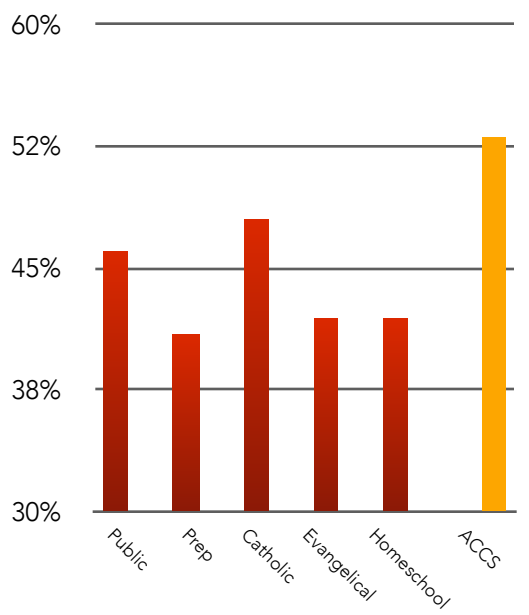
The Independence profile is different because it uses several direct factors, but also the combination of several indirect factors that when seen together, indicate an independence of mind. We'll start with a few interesting results from the survey.

Surprises and the Expected

Given the conservative numbers we just saw, it seems surprising the ACCS alumni are the most likely to feel an obligation to care for the environment. This question was asked in a series of "obligation" questions about religious practices, business ethics, and personal practices. ACCS alumni generally answered in the affirmative more than any other group on most of the obligation questions. This indicates a higher general level of felt responsibility among ACCS alumni. The following factors also indicate the independence of mind of ACCS alumni.

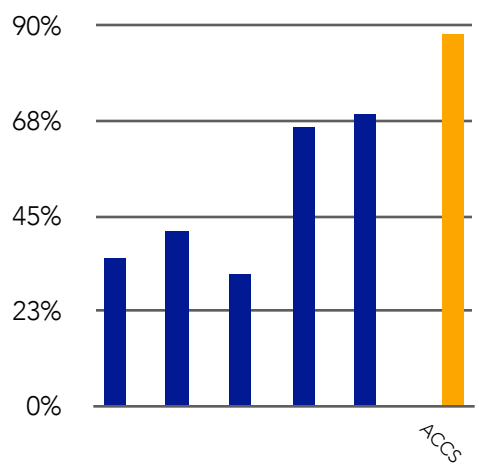
Less surprisingly, we can see that ACCS alumni read more, almost twice as much on average, than secular school graduates. And, their reading includes non-religious books more frequently than those from evangelical schools.

Reading is just one measure of "independent thought," but not the strongest.



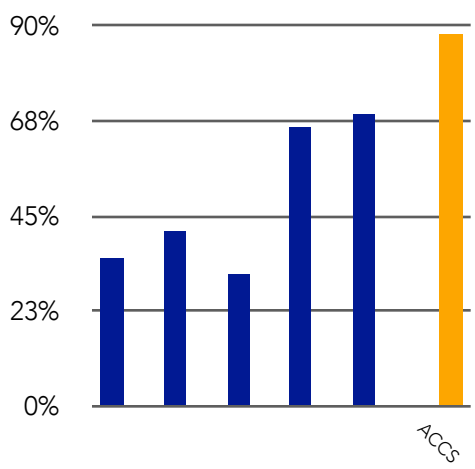
Percent that mostly or completely agree.

Chart 6.1



Greater than 10 books annually.

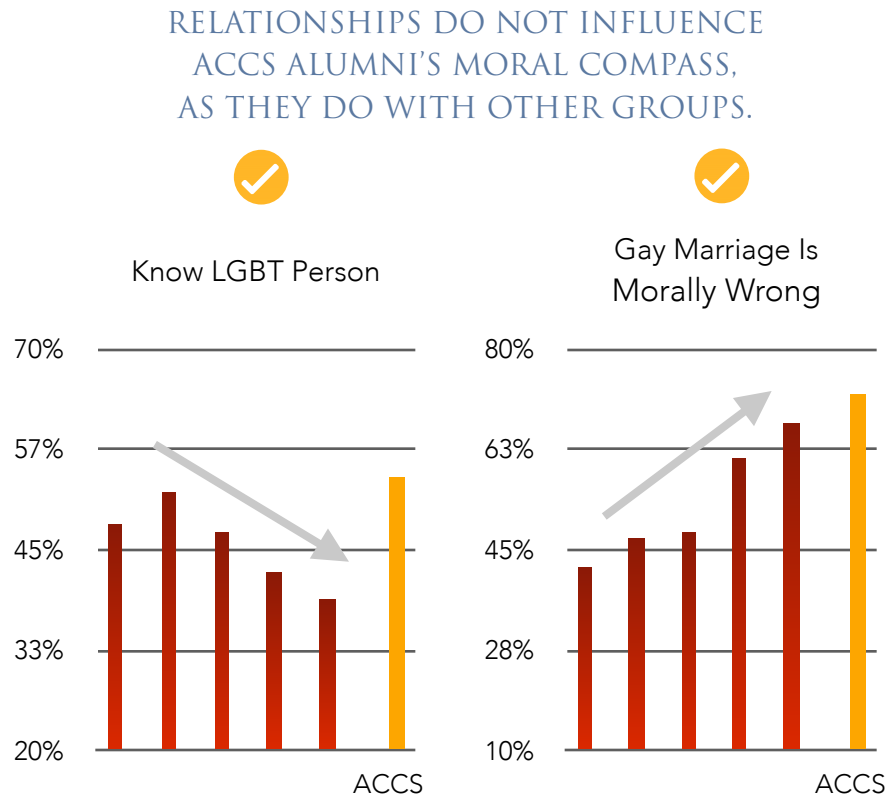
Chart 6.2



Once per week or more.

Chart 6.3

Combinations of responses demonstrate independence of mind



While other groups have a clear inverse relationship between knowing a person and moral choices, ACCS alumni reflect the opposite. Note the fewer LGBT people most segments know, the more they support gay marriage. ACCS alumni break this trend, knowing more yet rejecting gay marriage.

Chart 6.4

Perhaps the strongest evidence of the independent thought among ACCS alumni is found when you look at multiple questions together. Studies have shown that those who know a gay person are more likely to support gay marriage[11]— if you know someone, you tend not to be as critical of them. However, while ACCS alumni are more likely to know a person who identifies as LGBT than any other group, they are much more likely to believe gay marriage is wrong. You can see the inverse correlation of knowing/supporting gay marriage in the other school segments, indicated by the gray arrows. As each school segment is less and less likely to know a gay person, those same segments increasingly do believe in gay marriage. ACCS alumni are among the most likely to know an LGBT person, yet they remain the most opposed to gay marriage.

This is an indicator of independence of mind. Note that these differences are isolated to the school's effect (red).

[11] "A Survey of LGBT Americans," Pew Research Center, June 13, 2013, accessed December 8, 2019, https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/ ; and Gwen Aviles, "Just One Gay Acquaintance Can Change Hearts and Minds on LGBT Rights, Study Finds," NBC News, December 17, 2018, accessed December 8, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/just-one-gay-acquaintance-can-change-hearts-minds-lgbtq-rights-n948911.

Scientists trusted, but not always believed

ACCS alumni trust scientists at about the same level as their secular educated counterparts, and much more than their evangelical counterparts. And they believe science and religion are mostly compatible—by a wide margin—unlike the evangelical school segment. But, even more so than their evangelical counterparts, they do not believe that the Bible has errors regarding science or history, as is commonly held by "scientists." Why this apparent contradiction?

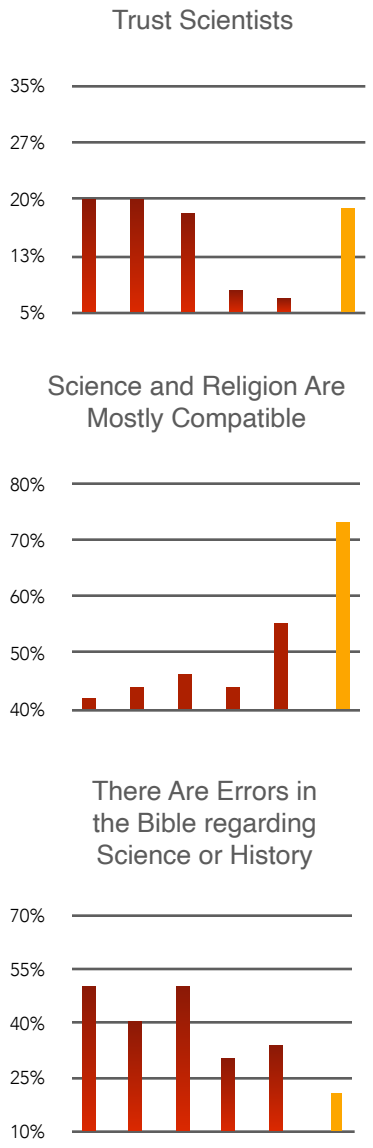
ACCS alumni seem able to take the good from science without being swayed by scientific arguments which may undercut Scripture. Classical education integrates Christ into every area of study, rather than separating religious study. Interestingly, other data in this survey show that ACCS alumni took more advanced science in high school.

From this triad, it is apparent that ACCS alumni are very adept at thinking independently rather than dogmatically about science and religion.

ACCS graduates are most likely to…

- ✓ Trust scientists
- ✓ Believe science and religion are compatible
- ✓ Believe the Bible is true both in science and history

ACCS ALUMNI ARE NOT SWAYED BY "CONSENSUS"



ACCS alumni trust scientists, believe science and religion are compatible, and believe the Bible is true, both in science and history.
Chart 6.5

ACCS alumni were the least likely of evangelicals to believe in young-earth creation. As we just saw, ACCS alumni strongly believe that the Bible is without error regarding science. And, it's an infallible guide for personal faith and behavior. So, the integration of old-earth creation may be a result of their reconciling the evidence in their minds.

This may be of concern for some as a compromise. We believe that the complex literature to which ACCS alumni are exposed allows them to believe the Bible to be accurate while understanding it in a less concrete, though no less true way.

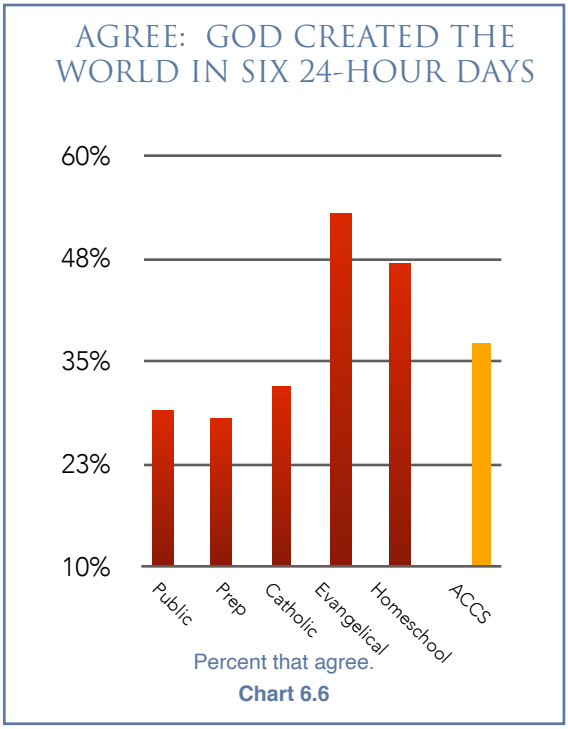
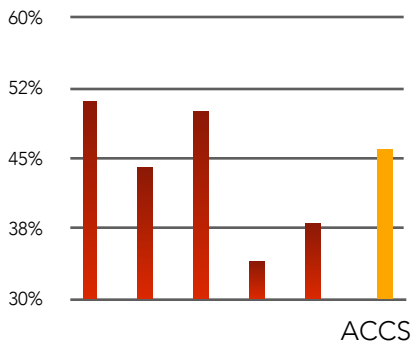


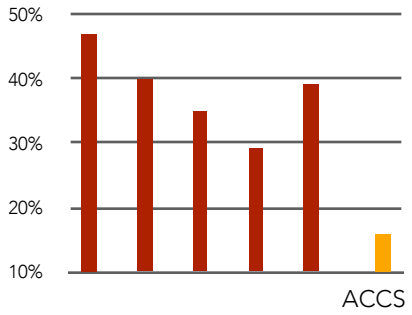
Chart 6.6

TOLERANT BUT CHALLENGING

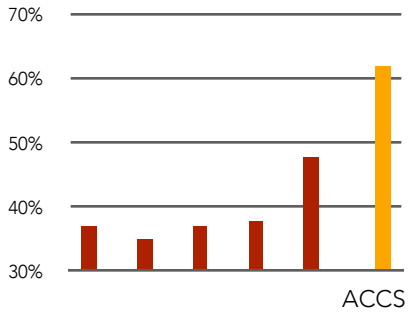
Society should be more tolerant of non-Christian religions



Religion is a private matter; should be kept out of social and political debates



OK to say things in public offensive to religious groups



Percent who mostly or completely agree.

More tolerant, challenging, and public

In this final example of a "combination" metric, there seems to be an attitude of Christian tolerance among ACCS alumni. ACCS alumni are the most likely of evangelically educated students to be tolerant of non-Christian religions—about the same as secular prep schools.

While they are tolerant, they do not believe that religion is to remain private; they are committed far more than the other groups to believe religion should be in the public square. And, to reinforce this distinction, ACCS alumni are far more likely to assert that it's OK to say things that might be deemed offensive to religious groups in public. In order to engage with culture, this level of independence of mind is essential for reasoned discourse in the public square. And ACCS alumni seem to be bucking the cultural narrative and leading the way.

Public, Catholic, and prep schools value the high-tolerance, keep-religion-private view, which is common in today's schools. We predict that their profiles continue to lead young people to reject the free exchange of ideas.

The other Christian groups are somewhat mixed:

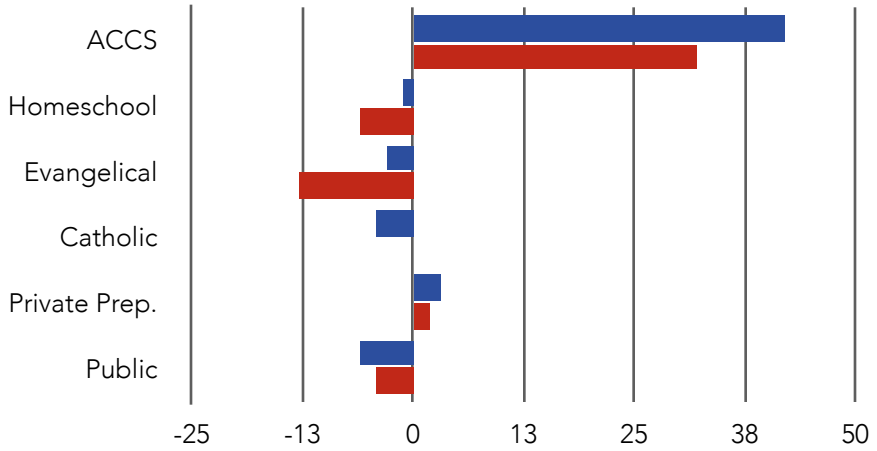
- Homeschoolers do not believe more tolerance is needed, do believe religion is a private matter, but also believe that it's alright to speak your mind about religion in public.

- Evangelical Christian schoolers do not want more tolerance, are weak on religion as private, and do not believe they should say things religiously offensive, at about the same rate as alumni from secular schools. Theirs is perhaps the most perplexing view.

ACCS schools train students to engage their faith in every aspect of life—public and private—and they teach them to respectfully engage in substantive debates through a focus on rhetoric.

Profile 7: Influential

ACCS alumni desire to serve and are able to engage policy makers.



Know elected officials, CEOs, community leaders, atheists, read non-religious books, volunteer and lead non-church org., obliged to take action, believe they can impact, give to any organization, OK to offend in public discourse, job is calling by God, accept low job pay.

(Chart 7)

One of the most significant profile differences for ACCS alumni is "Influence." This metric looks at how likely alumni are to be successful with engagement in culture and society and, how likely they are to influence it. Of course, influence, like college preparation, is not an aim of classical Christian education. The data does show, however, that for some reason, this is the strongest profile for ACCS alumni.

This influence measure is made up of several factors. It measures the connection they have to influential people. A series of questions were asked about knowing CEOs, politicians, local community leaders, etc. Another measure was volunteering. While ACCS alumni reported more volunteerism in general, they were much more likely to volunteer and lead outside of their church.

Much of the strength was in the unique attitudes and beliefs of ACCS alumni. ACCS alumni believe in public debate and that they have an obligation to address problems in our culture. They also seek jobs that will allow them to influence their communities and culture, and they are willing to take lower pay to do it.

Involved

ACCS alumni are much more likely to be involved and volunteer in organizations outside of their church. While we have already seen that ACCS alumni are active in the church, this metric indicates that ACCS alumni are engaged in their community and in charities outside of the church as well. This means that their influence will likely spread further. In these graphs, we used the actual percentages, rather than adjusted for family factors, because these numbers more accurately reflect the potential for influence.

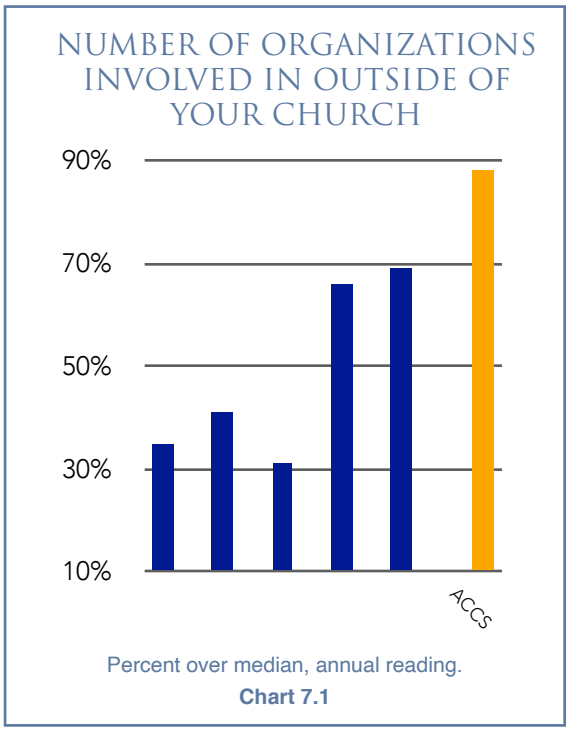


Chart 7.1

Wider Circles

Also of interest is that ACCS alumni know more people outside of Christian circles than other graduates of evangelical Christian schools. This indicates that ACCS graduates have relationships beyond their own believing communities. And they have the desire to advocate for change, as we'll see.

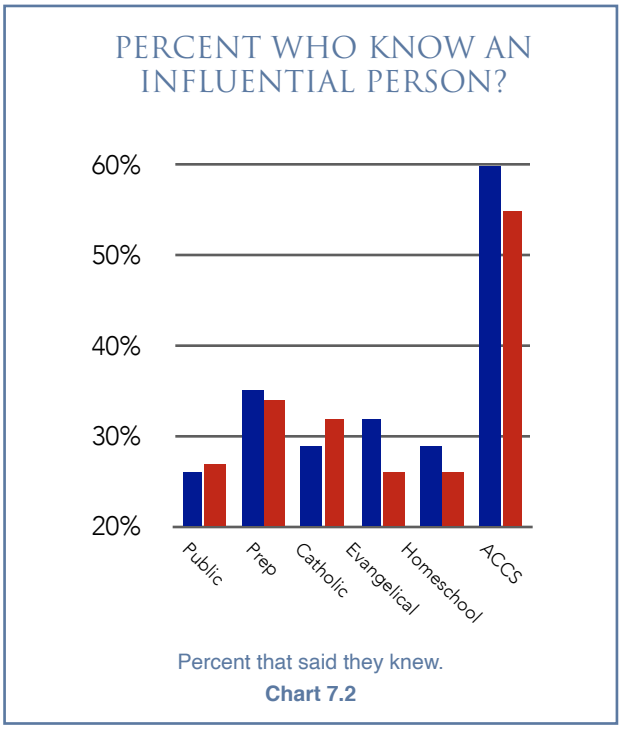


Chart 7.2

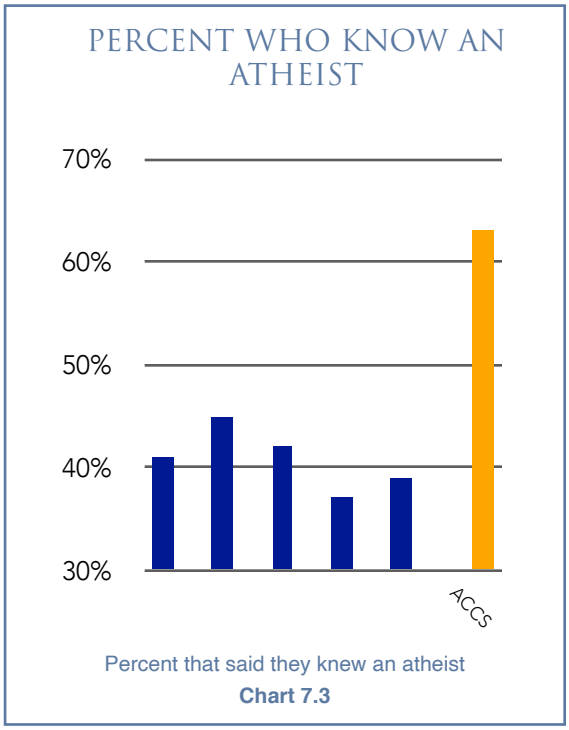


Chart 7.3

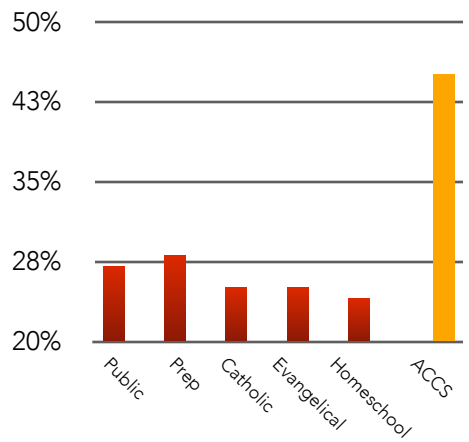
Willingness

In addition to getting involved and connecting with people who believe differently than they do, ACCS alumni are willing to put in the time to protest or actively support their causes. We saw that these causes are mostly conservative and strongly Christian. We can conclude, therefore, that this influence magnifies the impact on our culture in positive ways.

Empowered and Capable

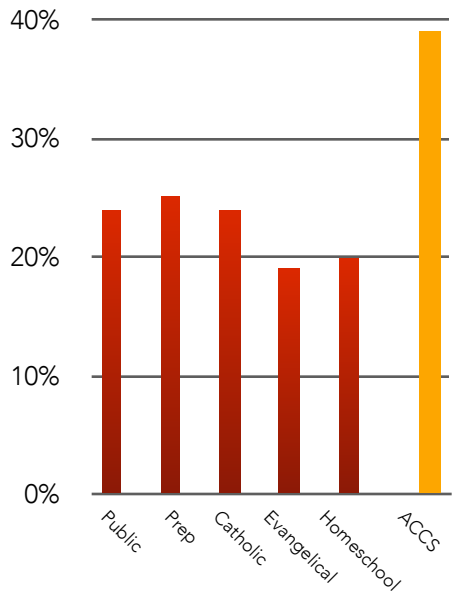
ACCS alumni feel empowered to impact their communities. Compared to other evangelical schools, more than twice as many ACCS alumni believe they can have an impact on their community (Chart 7.5). The next highest margin, preparatory and Catholic schools, are exceeded by a wide margin.

Pair this belief with ACCS alumni's high likelihood of knowing an influential person and you see that the combination is complimentary. Once again, this reflects a combination of survey questions asking if they know a politician, a CEO, a community leader, etc. For those who want to make a difference in our culture, the evidence indicates that ACCS alumni are doing just that.



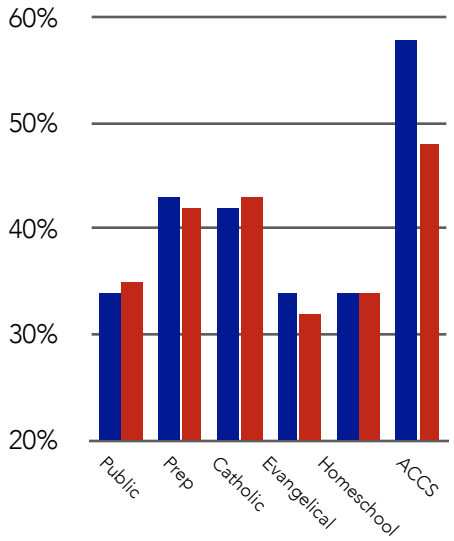
Percent that agree.

Chart 7.6



Percent that agree.

Chart 7.4



Percent that said they were willing.

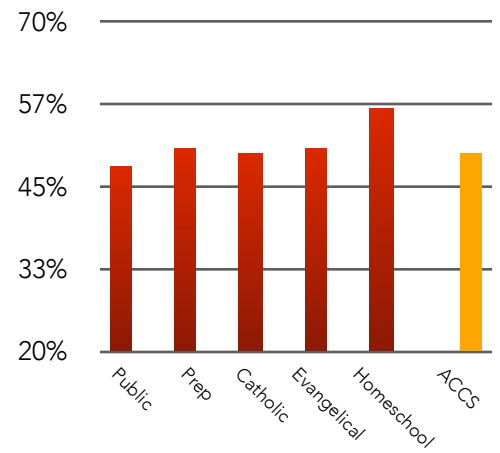
Chart 7.5

The Unexpected

Results for further study

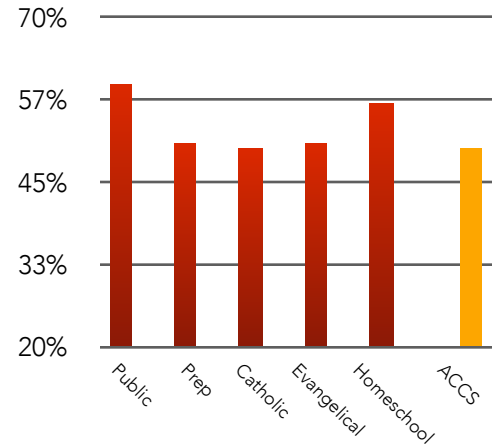
At the end of the seven profiles, we can address two remaining "outliers" that may be areas for improvement. As trusting as ACCS alumni are of strangers, they are not particularly different in how, or how often, they share their faith. Essentially, ACCS alumni did not stand out in the area of evangelism (Chart 7.5).

ACCS alumni are not as close to family as Catholic or homeschool families (Chart 7.6). While similar to evangelical schools, it does seem like ACCS alumni, based on other answers in the survey, would be closer to family. This could be an area for future study and improvement.



Percent who had in the past 12 months.

Chart 7.5



Percent who had in the past 12 months

Chart 7.5

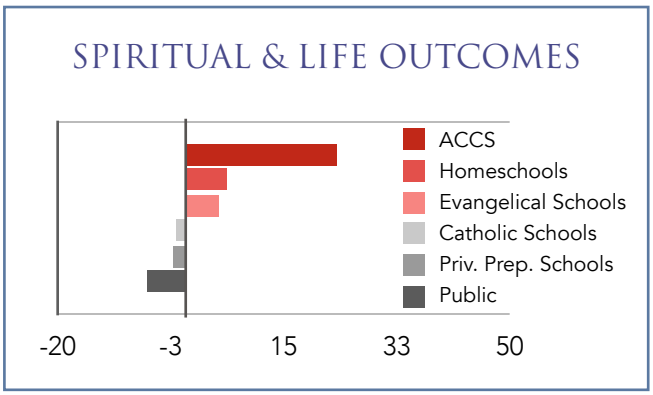
Conclusions

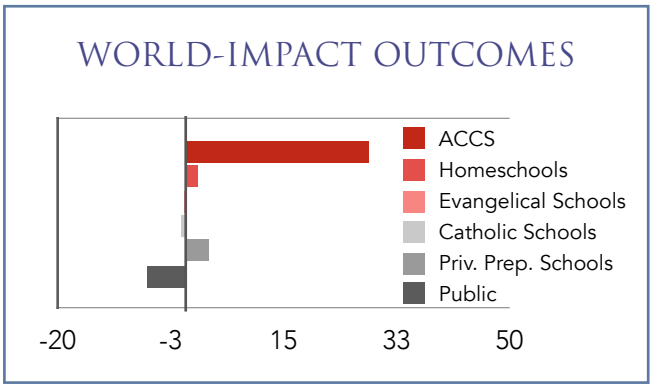
The *"paideia effect"* was recognized early on during the recovery of classical Christian education. If history is an indicator, we would expect significant impacts from well-executed classical Christian education. Twenty or thirty years into recovery, a sufficient number of ACCS alumni moved into adulthood which allowed the predicted *paideia* effect to be measured. With the measurement tool designed by Cardus in conjunction with the University of Notre Dame Sociology Department, these effects were reflected through a combination of many granular data points.

Seven profiles tell the story of this research. These, grouped in two categories, help to synthesize this broad-ranging survey.

- **"Spiritual and Life Outcomes"** include life outlook (2), Christian practices (3), and Christian living (4). This study showed that ACCS alumni were more grateful, more trusting, and lived with purpose. And, they viewed suffering in the context of God's plan for their lives. They had more and closer friends. Spiritually, 90% were above the median on church attendance, they read their Bible more, and they talked with their friends about religion.

- **"World-Impact Outcomes"** include preparation for college and career (1), traditional & conservative beliefs (5), independent thought (6), and influence (7) together. These can be thought of as "impact multipliers." Adults who score highly on these profiles are likely to influence those around them and lead lives of service outside of their immediate circles. ACCS alumni have the most conservative views about Scripture (with the possible exception of young-earth creation), more conservative views about government (with the possible exception that they trust government more than other conservative groups), and more traditional views of the church. Through cross-referencing different questions, we see they have a greater capacity for independent thinking. Their strongest difference is in their willingness and ability to engage our culture as evidenced through their leadership positions held, greater connection with influential people, and their desire and obligation to engage on social issues. Their academic preparation exceeds even private preparatory schools, and far more ACCS alumni earn high grades and a degree in college.





The most significant finding here is just how big the differences are between ACCS alumni and the next highest groups in every profile. Typically, these differences are an *order of magnitude* above the differences between others in the study.

Implications for key audiences

Through this research, three implications for parents, pastors, and supporters are evident:

- ACCS alumni are the most prepared for college and have healthy outlooks on life. For parents who realize that school is about more than just college admissions, the life outcomes and spiritual outcomes combine with the best college preparation to make a compelling case for classical education.
- ACCS alumni continue and grow in their Christian faith and this impacts how they live their lives, particularly with marriage, church, and volunteering. For pastors and churches, this means healthier churches and stronger communities.
- ACCS alumni's influence, independence, and commitment to traditional values makes them potentially the "saltiest" of the groups tracked. Those who are concerned with weaknesses in our culture and the church can expect high "ROI" on investments in classical Christian education.

Other conclusions

It matters where parents send their children to school. Patterns emerged that reflect on broader concerns in education.

- Two clear groups emerged: Those who graduated from public or Catholic institutions and those who graduated from evangelical schools (Protestant, home, or ACCS). A third group, private non-religious preparatory schools were unique in aligning with both groups in different ways, most of which would be expected — they were lower on spiritual outcomes and higher on academic and influence outcomes.

- Public school alumni fell below the median in every measure. Family influence only countered this shortcoming slightly in the area of Christian commitment. But, when compared to other categories, family influence seemed to make little difference for public school students— in other words the blue and red bars were closely aligned. Public schools' weakest areas were college preparation and slightly, Christian lifestyle.

- Catholic schools seemed to be the nearest the median, and the least influential. This is probably the result of the wide-ranging groups that Catholic schools serve. They are slightly above the median on college preparation and Christian practices. They also seem to follow progressive trends on many data points. Note: Classical Christian schools are taking root in Catholic communities. We believe these schools will likely share attributes with ACCS schools in this survey. The Institute for Catholic Liberal Education (ICLE) offers resources and organization for about 200 Catholic classical schools. These were not specifically surveyed for this study.

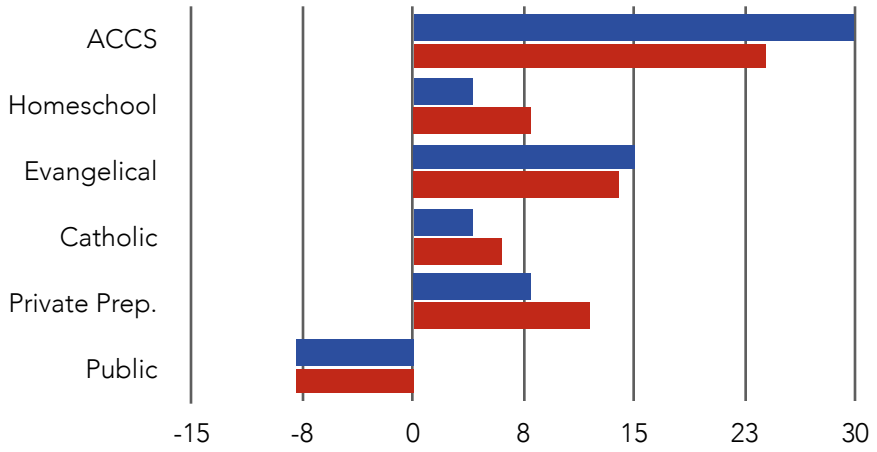
- Evangelical Christian schools excel in three areas—Christian life, Christian practices, and conservative and traditional beliefs. They are near the median in the areas of independent thought, college preparation, and, somewhat surprisingly, outlook on life. They are well below the median on their alumni's influence. This seems to tell a story of schools that behave progressively in academics, but do impart a healthy measure of Christian practice and conservatism.

- Homeschoolers were similar to evangelicals in their Christian metrics, but they had higher scores in independent thought and their college and career ranking was lower. The college ranking reflected their poor completion rate for a BA, and their opinion of how prepared for college they were.

- Because these conclusions seem consistent with what we know intuitively about each type of school, the results make sense. In other words, among the five comparative groups, only the Catholic group seems to have some measure that seems counterintuitive. The ACCS group's strong differential is also surprising to some.

Appendix A

Bonus Profile: Experience Reported in High School



Reported good relationship with teachers, administrators, and other students, a close-knit high school, teachers cared, enjoyed high school, and were proud to have graduated from their high school.

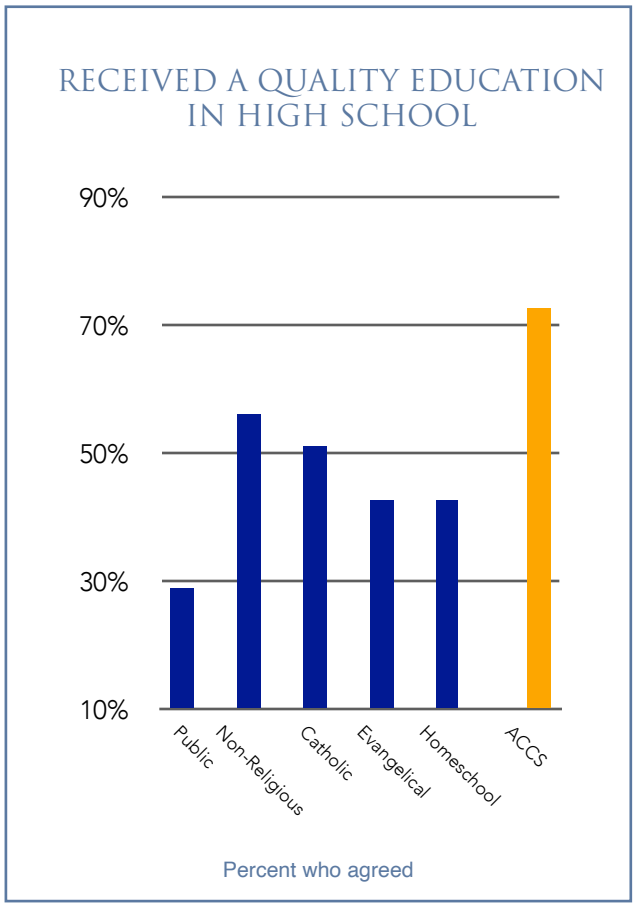
(Chart 8)

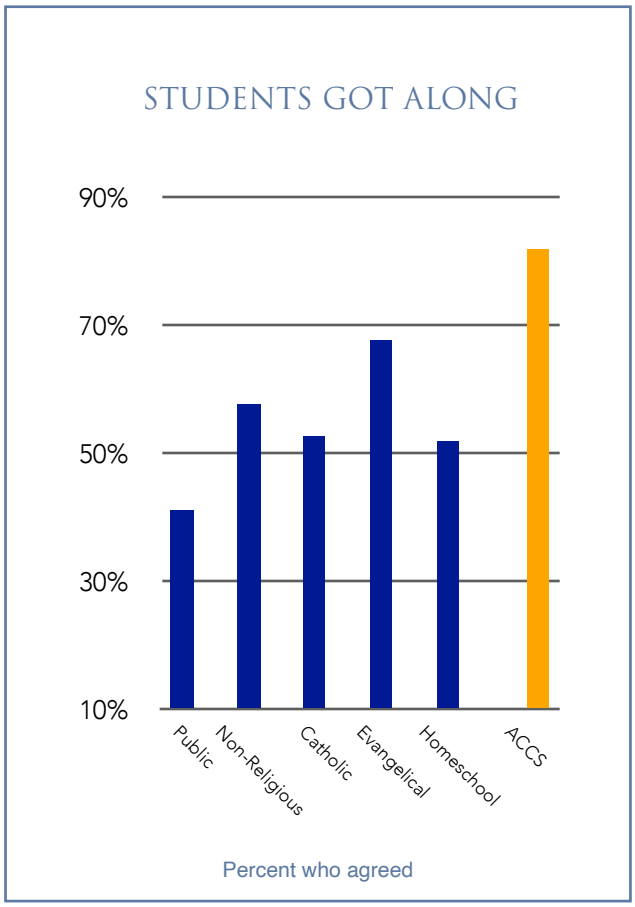
The first seven profiles reflect the outcomes, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of alumni. With the distinct differences of outcome seen from the alumni of ACCS schools, it stands to reason that the classical school experience is quite a different experience for the student. This at times can lead parents and students to question whether it's worth it.

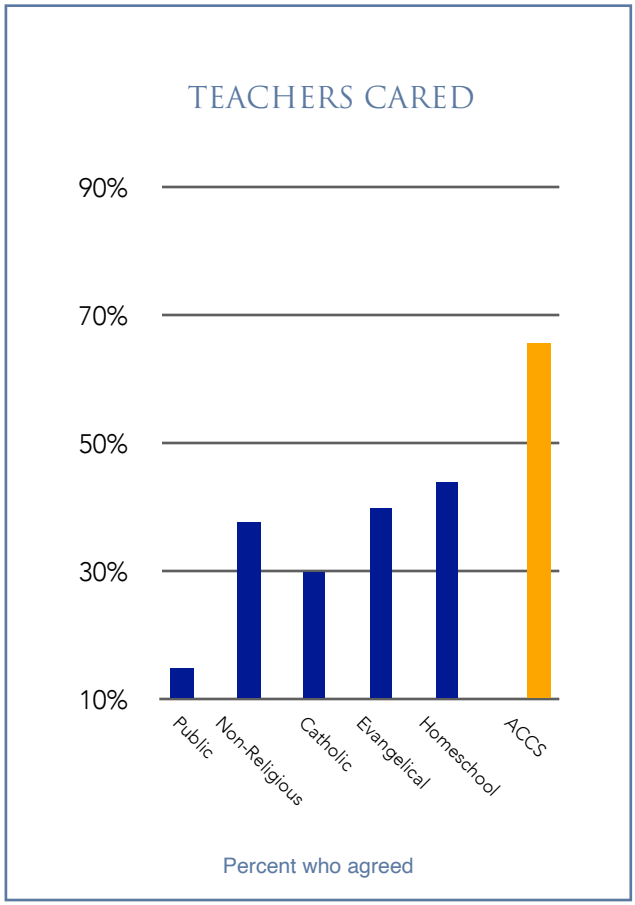
This final metric is included as an extra for parents with this question. Often, students in the midst of a difficult time in school will seek other alternatives. They may not see the relevance of reading so many books from old authors. They may not like to write or speak so much. Or, they may seek a STEM-based future career. Or, parents may think the rigor will make their children "hate school." Parents should realize that, with the perspective of time and experience, not only do these concerns fade, but the students express that they are grateful for the discipline and rigor that their education gave them once they have entered college and the workforce.

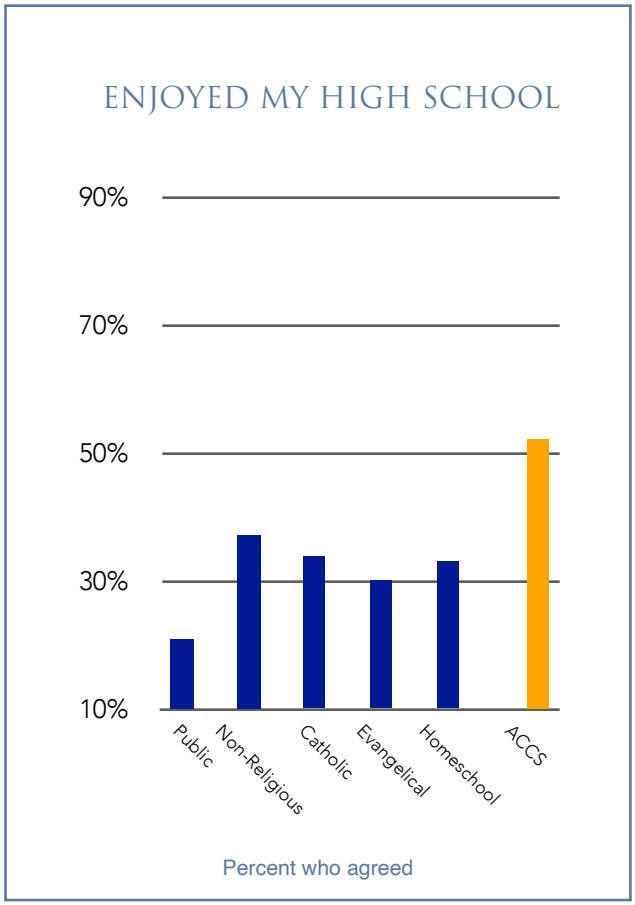
From the testimonies of students, it is evident that ACCS schools are appreciated more by the students, when looked back upon from adulthood, than any other type of school.

Parents should realize that, with the perspective of time and experience, not only do these concerns fade, but the students express that they are grateful for the discipline and rigor that their education gave them once they have entered college and the workforce.


RECEIVED A QUALITY EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOL
90%
70%
50%
30%
10%
Public
Non-Religious
Catholic
Evangelical
Homeschool
ACCS
Percent who agreed


STUDENTS GOT ALONG
90%
70%
50%
30%
10%
Public
Non-Religious
Catholic
Evangelical
Homeschool
ACCS
Percent who agreed


TEACHERS CARED
90%
70%
50%
30%
10%
Public
Non-Religious
Catholic
Evangelical
Homeschool
ACCS
Percent who agreed


ENJOYED MY HIGH SCHOOL
90%
70%
50%
30%
10%
Public
Non-Religious
Catholic
Evangelical
Homeschool
ACCS
Percent who agreed

The Classical Difference, on behalf of the ACCS, would like to thank Cardus for developing, conducting, and sharing their research.

We would also like to thank David Sikkink of The University of Notre Dame's Sociology Department for leading this research effort.

The Classical Difference organization is a division of the ACCS and advocates for classical Christian education nationally and internationally. It publishes The Classical Difference Magazine, blog, and other media supporting the classical Christian movement.

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