Did You Know? Facts about America’s Public Schools

While the back-to-school season is an important time to draw attention to the education issues most directly impacting your community, it is also a good time to consider the national context. Here are a few facts about the state of public education in 2017.

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Basic Numbers:

- 50.3 million students are enrolled in 91,430 traditional public schools and 6,450 public charter schools
- 3.13 million teachers work in public schools
- 9.4% of public school students are English language learners
- 13% of public school students ages 3–21 receive special education services
- Per pupil spending is $11,222

Future Readiness:

- 83% of students graduated high school—the highest graduation rate in the nation’s history
- 69% of recent high school graduates enrolled in 2-year or 4-year college
- Over 2.6 million students took over 4.7 million AP exams in 2016
- Public high school graduates earn an average of 3.6 career/technical education credits

Education Technology:

- 70% of parents see the development of technology skills as critical to their child’s future success
- 98.5% of high school students report using the internet in school, with 46% using it daily
- 96.5% of high school students are required to use the internet to complete homework assignments
- 87% of districts allow students to bring personal devices (such as smartphones and tablets) to school
- Mobile learning is the top priority of school IT leaders
- Budget issues are the number one challenge school IT Leaders face in “planning and implementing technology-enabled learning environments”

Nutrition and Health:

- 30.3 million school lunches are served each day, including 20.1 million free and 2 million reduced price
- 14.57 million school breakfasts are served each day, including 11.53 million free and 0.86 million reduced price
- 45.2% of school districts use Medicaid to expand health related services for students (such as immunizations, asthma and diabetes treatment and vision/hearing screenings)
- School nurses serve an average of 924-1,072 students and 3 school buildings

Additional Information:

- 67% of parents rate their oldest child’s school as an “A” or “B”
- 63% of 8th graders take music class, and 42% take a visual arts class
- The student-to-school-counselor ratio is 491:1
- Approximately 60% of 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool
- More than one in four of America’s public schools are rural, and nearly one in six students are in rural areas
- School safety is up—between 2001 and 2015, the percentage of students ages 12-18 who report being victimized at school dropped from 6% to 3% (with violent victimization down from 2% to 1%)

Compiled July 2017. Data reflects latest available from the National Institute of Education Statistics’ The Condition of Education 2017, the College Board, NCES Career and Technical Education Statistics, the Speak Up Research Project, the Family Online Safety Institute, the Consortium for School Networking, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, AASA, the School Superintendents Association, the National Association of School Nurses, 2016 PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, NAEP Arts Assessment 2016, the American School Counselor Association and the Rural School and Community Trust.

The Secret Life of Public Schools

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