

# OCTOBER 2002 ISACS E-Bulletin

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## **A Plethora of Report Cards, Worthy and Not-So-Worthy**

Who didn't hear about last summer's Worth Magazine article, ranking the "top 100 high schools" with a high percentage of graduates attending Harvard, Princeton, or Yale? All but 6 were independents, a handful of them ISACS schools. The article taught us much about how hard it is to stop a bad story and silly thinking about education. The Chronicle of Higher Education chimed in with an incisive piece by Rachel Toor, author of Admissions Confidential: An Insider's Account of the Elite College Selection Process. To read it, click here: [Tip for Parents: Want Harvard? Try a Dakota](#)

Report cards on our ISACS schools may be in the future, if you believe we need to be accountable to the public in that way. But what might be the criteria? "Measuring Up 2002" grades all 50 states on their ability to prepare students for college work, but it also scores the affordability and benefits of each state's colleges. Click here for the article: [Report Card](#)

## **Three Best Bets: Professional Development for Teachers**

The inside word: The Mandel Teacher Fellowship Program may be the best intellectual and inspirational short fellowship, an all-expenses paid, 5-day summer institute at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. There is a November deadline. Details at [Mandel Teacher Fellowship Program](#). Number two on my list is the Fulbright Memorial Fund. It will send 600 teachers on a 3-week study in Japan. There is a December deadline. See details at [www.iee.org/pgms/fmf](http://www.iee.org/pgms/fmf). Best of all, the program strand for ISACS Teacher Reps at the Annual Conference will take leadership skills to a new level. See [ISACS Teacher Reps 10-02](#) for a description of the role for teacher reps. Registration deadline: Oct 25.

## **Fortune Telling about School Enrollment**

"The marketplace for independent schools is formed by the intersection of demographic, sociological and economic cycles," says Scott Looney, from Cranbrook Schools. For his recent analysis of trends and access to his PowerPoint presentation, click here: [Population Demographics\\_vs the Economy](#)

## **Announcing Conversations Fit for a Mansion**

David Brooks, NPR correspondent, Yale faculty member, and author of "The Organization Kid" will keynote the 2003 ISACS Heads Conference, January 16-17. Joining him for conversations about education and its discontents will be Brown University's Janet Cooper-Nelson. Talk about a dynamic duo! A program committee of heads worked with John Braman to plan the event. The conference hotel is the fabulous La Mansion del Rio in the heart of San Antonio's cultural district. See [www.lamansion.com](http://www.lamansion.com) for images of hotel splendor. David Brooks's Atlantic Monthly article will frame the discussion. See it at [The Atlantic Apr 2001 The Organization Kid Brooks](#)

## Working Smarter with University of Chicago

ISACS professional development now linked to a world-class university. Click here for a feature article with photos on the ISACS summer leadership program [fish.pdf](#). Graduates of "Leaders and Learners" were awarded certificates from the University of Chicago. More to come, including graduate credit options for ISACS professional development experiences.

## Diversity without the Excuses

I don't often refer people to the corporate world these days, but for clues on inclusion in the workplace, see this expert's compelling advice as you head into the hiring season. [Diversity without the excuses](#)

## Warning: Student Visas Not Getting Any Easier

If you have foreign teachers or students at your school, prepare for increasing levels of bureaucratic red tape. Click here for directions about how to register with the Student Exchange Visitor Information System by November 15 to avoid delay in your ability to issue I-20 forms [International Student Legal](#)



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## Population Demographics are Up, the Economy is Down...Now What?

Population growth rates rise and then fall; the economy surges and recedes; "private" schools gain and lose favor; and so forth, *sic transit gloria mundi*. The marketplace for independent schools is formed by the intersection of demographic, sociological, and economic cycles. Each of these cycles in itself is formidable; fully understanding their interaction is impossible. However, looking at historical data related to independent school enrollments, population demographics and economic indicators does suggest some patterns.

For many schools the current economic recession brings (*or threatens to bring*) decreases in endowment, annual giving, auxiliary program income, student retention and admission activity while also heralding increased interest in financial aid. With the need to increase teacher compensation and manage escalating benefit costs it seems that both the expense and revenue sides of the ledger are concurrently under attack. For most schools the greatest annual financial variable is tuition income.

It was not long ago, the late 1980s to be exact, that market forces conspired against independent schools. The school age population was declining, "recession" was near to everyone's lips, and Americans in general saw reason for public school improvement, led by a strong commitment to public school reform in Chicago and elsewhere. No surprise to most, the late 1980s witnessed declines in private school enrollment and either coincident or concomitant drops in admission standards. Indeed, many less well-established schools went so far as to rewrite mission statements or even close their doors. The mid to late 1990's saw exactly the opposite phenomenon, with both population demographics and the economy booming. This current recession is the first time since the early 1980's that the population and economic trends are in opposition. In order to understand how the current recession might affect enrollment health I wanted to answer the following question: which matters most, population demographics or the economy?

I took data from a variety of demographic and economic indicators during the time frame from 1986 to 1999 and placed them on a common scale (using the Z-score formula). I analyzed trends in the following data: population of school age children, public school enrollment, private school enrollment (including parochial schools), NAIS school enrollment, the number of SSAT test takers, the Gross Domestic Product and the Average per Capita Income. While my research did not provide any concrete conclusions, it did suggest that NAIS school enrollments mirrored demographic trends much more closely than economic trends. In other words ***the enrollment health of our schools is more likely to be related to the number of school age children in the geographic areas from which we draw students than from the fluctuations of the economy.*** (For more information on this topic and my research, the PowerPoint presentation is posted at <http://www.nais.org/docs/ppt/Demographics.ppt>). While the impact of the current recession on enrollments might be mitigated by the record population of school age children, not all areas of the country are provided that buffer. Many areas of the Midwest and the Plains states have seen population decreases or suppressed growth in comparison to other areas of the country...most notably the West and the South. All demographics that matter are local, so schools should make certain they are aware of the demographic patterns (particularly the population of school age children) in their local areas. Even boarding schools tend to draw most of their students from within a three-hour drive of their campus. I am not trying to suggest that the economy is not a powerful force in determining our enrollment fate, simply that demographic forces may prove to be even more important. While the power of population decline was particularly bad news for schools in the late 1980s, and will be again around 2010 or so, the current boom may allow many schools to survive our current economic recession.

Fortunately for schools today, the population demographics for the next few years look as favorable as the current economic climate looks frightening. The population of school age children in the United States should continue to grow until about 2007, then level off for about three years, and then begin a ten-year precipitous decline starting sometime around 2010. Many economists and demographers site a strong relationship between population demographics and the economy. The Harry H. Dent foundation studied the relationship between overall population demographics and stock market performance. They found that there was a strong positive correlation between the population of people in the U.S. who are in their peak income earning years and the performance stock market. If this historical trend proves predictive, then we should see a relatively strong economic boom for the next 18 years or so.

While it is nearly impossible to predict the economic future accurately, we can predict population demographics. Population demographics and their relationship to independent school enrollments and the economy suggest that independent schools should face good times for most of the next decade (the current recession not withstanding), but also that we should be bracing for a return to the conditions of the late 1980s sometime around 2015.

D. Scott Looney  
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October 12, 2002

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