



December 28, 2004

Dear M.O.S.T. Donor:

We are pleased to enclose the long awaited Descriptive and Comparative Study of the 2002/2003 School Year conducted by Christian Brothers University. This is the third year of a three year study funded by the Hyde Family Foundation. The purpose was to track the effectiveness of the M.O.S.T. program as it relates to student achievement and parental satisfaction. The data includes responses to a 48 item parent survey and the academic achievement test scores from the participating students.

Parents gave high grades (A and B) to their children's schools and report improved academic performance, attitude, and classroom behavior since their participation in M.O.S.T. Parent's satisfaction with school academics is the primary reason parents wanted their children in non-public schools.

On average, reading and mathematic scores for M.O.S.T. students were higher than those for Memphis City Schools, but lower than those for Shelby County School students.

Your support of M.O.S.T. assures that we can continue to fulfill our mission to offer scholarships to private and parochial schools to low-income children in the Memphis area. Thank you for all that you have done to help us in this effort and know that we are counting on your continued support.

Gayle Barnwell
Executive Director



m  st
memphis opportunity scholarship trust

A DESCRIPTIVE AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE
2002/2003 SCHOOL YEAR

by

Christian Brothers University

Memphis Opportunity Scholarship Trust

A Descriptive and Comparative Study of the
2002/2003 School Year

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*"M.O.S.T has afforded me an opportunity to have a choice
in making decisions about my child's education."*

Parent of a M.O.S.T scholarship student

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INTRODUCTION

"Making the M.O.S.T. of our future" is the motto for Memphis Opportunity Scholarship Trust (M.O.S.T.), Memphis' only privately funded school choice program. The motto emphasizes its mission to give parents in Shelby County, Tennessee, the financial opportunity to choose the most appropriate school for their children. M.O.S.T., founded in 1998 by Memphis entrepreneurs, awards scholarships to low-income families, giving them the financial freedom to choose any accredited private school in Shelby County.

M.O.S.T. is partnered with the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF). The Mission of CSF is to maximize educational opportunity at all income levels by offering tuition assistance for needy families and promoting a diverse and competitive educational environment (Children's Scholarship Fund, n.d.). Nearly 40,000 children benefit from four-year scholarships to over 7,000 private schools. Thirty-five local scholarship organizations work with families and schools in the community. CSF programs generally have the following characteristics:

1. Support the CSF mission to open the doors of educational opportunity to families.
2. Scholarship winners are selected in a random drawing.
3. Eligibility determined by standards similar to the Federal school lunch program.
4. Fund tuition for grades K-8.
5. Parents find available seats in private schools.

The purpose of the present study is to track the effectiveness of the Memphis Opportunity Scholarship Trust (M.O.S.T.) program as it relates to student achievement and parental satisfaction. We wish to thank the Hyde Family Foundations for funding this descriptive and comparative study. Special thanks go to the children and to the parents who participated in the survey.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Memphis Opportunity Scholarship Trust (M.O.S.T.) is to provide educational opportunities to families in need, and to promote excellence in both public and private education. M.O.S.T. began in 1998 when Memphis area entrepreneurs raised \$2 million as seed money for scholarships awarded to the first M.O.S.T. recipients (Havron, 2001). M.O.S.T., partnered with the Children's Scholarship Fund, awards scholarships for low- and moderate-income families, up to \$1,700 or 75% (whichever is less) toward education at a private school. M.O.S.T. funded 156 children in 1998, 750 children in 1999, 860 children in 2000, 778 children in 2001, 704 children in 2002, and 629 in 2003.

The following is a summary of the most significant results from the third year of a three-year study funded by the Hyde Family Foundations and conducted by Christian Brothers University. Our purpose is to track the effectiveness of the M.O.S.T. program as it relates to student achievement and parental satisfaction.

The present study looks at student achievement and parental satisfaction for the 2002/2003 school year. Data include responses to a 48-item parent survey and academic achievement test scores from participating students.

SURVEY DATA

The following highlights significant results from the parent survey. Parents and students attended one of two meetings at Christian Brothers University in March 2003. At this meeting, parents completed the parent survey while M.O.S.T. students took a standardized academic achievement exam. We mailed surveys to parents who were unable to attend either meeting. In all, we received 248 completed surveys, a return rate of 71.3%.

BACKGROUND OF RECIPIENT FAMILIES

- 58.3% reported a gross annual household income between \$10,000 and \$30,000
- Race/ethnicity of mother was primarily Black/African American (63.3%) or White/Non-Hispanic (30.2%)
- Mothers were divorced/separated (33.2%), married (32.8%), or single, never married (28.6%)
- Average (mean) size of family was 3.85
- Average (mean) number of children in the home participating in M.O.S.T. for the 2002/2003 school year was 1.62
- 35.4% of the recipient families received assistance from government programs
- 90.3% used a personal car to transport their children to and from school

PARENT'S PERCEPTION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE SINCE ENTERING M.O.S.T. PROGRAM

- 69.76% believed children's academic performance had improved
- 66.49% perceived children's attitude toward school as improved
- 66.76% reported children's classroom and study behaviors had improved

PARENT SATISFACTION WITH PRIVATE SCHOOL OF CHOICE

- Satisfied to very satisfied with school's location (96.4%), safety (98.0%), facilities (97.1%), class size (94.7%), academics (96.7%), principal (95.9%), curriculum (97.1%), discipline

(96.2%), teachers (96.2%), homework (97.1%), and parent-friendly environment (97.9%)
64.5% gave the school an "A"

REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN M.O.S.T.

- Academics (85.9%)
- Religious Teachings (79.0%)
- Morals (69.8%)
- Safety (69.8%)
- Special Needs (18.5%)

PARENT SATISFACTION WITH M.O.S.T.

- 99.6% either very satisfied (95.1%) or satisfied (4.5%) with M.O.S.T. program
- 0.4% (1 respondent) had left the program for financial reasons with 0.4% (1 respondent) leaving the program because they had moved out of the area.

WHAT M.O.S.T. COULD DO TO IMPROVE PARENT SATISFACTION

(from responses to open-ended questions in rank order)

While 46.1% of parents expressed satisfaction with M.O.S.T. in response to this question, other parents noted these ideas for improvements in the M.O.S.T. program.

- Provide scholarships for higher grades (9.4%)
- Give more help financially (8.3%)
- Reevaluate financial criteria for eligibility (2.5%)
- Help pay for books (1.4%)
- Develop calendar of deadlines and events (0.7%)
- Finance after-school programs (0.7%)

M.O.S.T.'S INFLUENCE ON FAMILY *(from response to open-ended question)*

Parents expressed the following:

- Wanted to give my child the best education (2.2%)
- M.O.S.T. has helped us financially to educate our child (2.2%)
- Wanted to give my child a religious education (2.2%)

FOCUS GROUP DATA

Twenty parents took part in one of three focus group sessions held during the time their children were taking part in the academic achievement exams. Responses of parents during these sessions reflect the overall results from the parental surveys discussed above. In general, parents were highly

satisfied with their decisions to send a child or children to a private school and with the assistance they have received from the M.O.S.T. program. Reasons given for sending their children to private schools were that they were seeking a superior education in a safe environment that they believed were lacking in their local public schools. Small class size was also a benefit indicated by a majority of parents. Parents also stated that a motivation for sending their children to a private school was for the religious and moral education they would receive.

Parents were also pleased with the interactions they have had with M.O.S.T. personnel. They considered the staff helpful, friendly and approachable.

Many of the concerns expressed by the parents revolved around financial matters. These included climbing tuition rates, the relative lack of aid for the higher grade levels, family financial stress in attempting to afford additional and often unanticipated costs of private schools (special fees or costs for extra curricular activities, events, trips, or opportunities). Other concerns expressed included a need for better communication with parents when changes are made in M.O.S.T. policies and the need for other programs such as after-school care.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT TEST DATA

The following items highlight significant results from academic achievement test scores for M.O.S.T. students (grades 3 through 8) from the 2002-2003 school year.

- median national percentile math composite for all grades combined was 45
- median national percentile reading composite for all grades combined was 45
- M.O.S.T. student achievement test data was analyzed by grade level and then compared to performance by grade level for all students in Memphis City Schools and Shelby County Schools
- the average M.O.S.T. student performance on tests exceeds that of Memphis City Schools but does not match that of Shelby County Schools

CONCLUSIONS

- Parents are satisfied with the M.O.S.T. program.
- Student academic achievement scores are higher than those for Memphis City School students; yet lower than those for Shelby County Schools students.
- Educational expenses are climbing at a higher rate than M.O.S.T. scholarship awards
- M.O.S.T. should continue to seek additional funding for scholarship awards

MEMPHIS OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP TRUST

HISTORY

It is the mission of M.O.S.T. to provide educational opportunities to families in need while promoting excellence in both public and private education. M.O.S.T. seeks to provide a stable, long-term funding source through private, tax-deductible donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations. M.O.S.T. is a philanthropic charitable organization, not a public policy advocate.

In 1991, J. Patrick Rooney created the CHOICE Charitable Trust in Indianapolis, Indiana. The privately funded voucher movement gained momentum in 1994 with the Children's Educational Opportunity Foundation (funded by the Walton Family Foundation). In 1998, entrepreneurs in the Memphis area joined together and raised \$2 million as seed money for scholarships awarded to the first M.O.S.T. recipients (Havron, 2001). The M.O.S.T. scholarships, with matching funds from the Children's Scholarship Fund, are for low- and moderate-income families committed to making the best educational choices for their children.

Financial eligibility is determined by a sliding scale (based on the federal government's free or reduced lunch program guidelines).

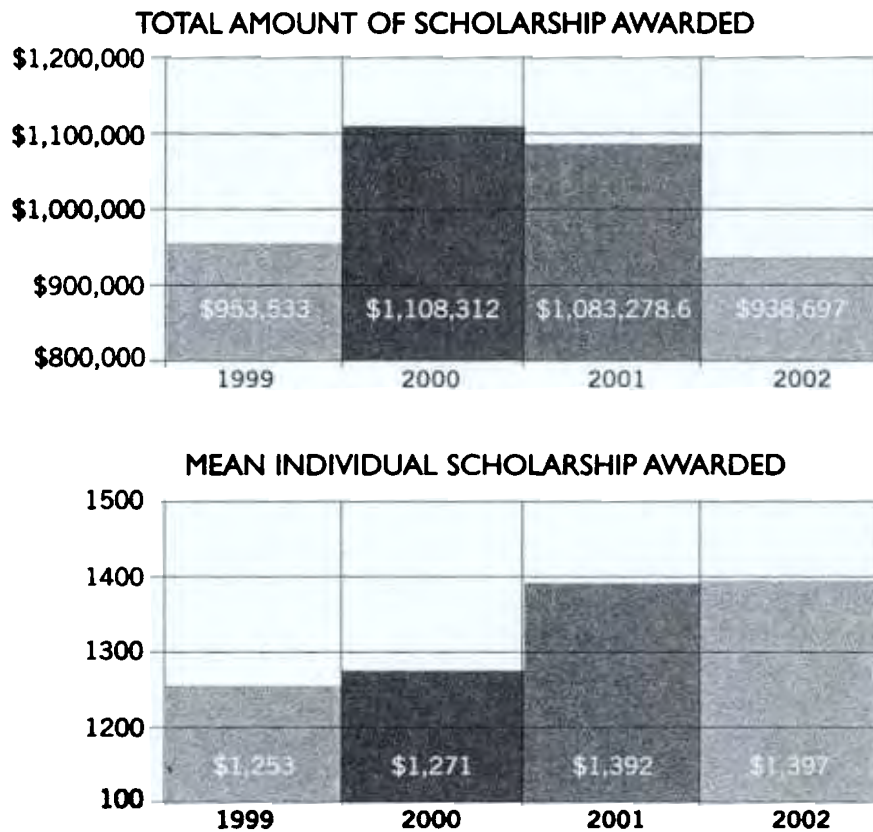
ANNUAL INCOME ELIGIBILITY SCALE FOR 2002-2003 SCHOOL YEAR
MAXIMUM INCOME BASED ON 2001 ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME

Household Size	Up to 75% Tuition (100% Poverty)	Up to 50% Tuition (185% Poverty)	Up to 25% Tuition (270% Poverty)
2	\$11,610	\$21,479	\$31,347
3	\$14,630	\$27,066	\$39,501
4	\$17,650	\$32,653	\$47,655
5	\$20,670	\$38,240	\$55,809

In 2002/2003 M.O.S.T. students attended 75 different private schools of their choice from grades pre-kindergarten through twelve. M.O.S.T. recipients must meet the school's admission standards and maintain its academic requirements.

HOW THE M.O.S.T. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM WORKS

M.O.S.T. provides \$1,600 or 75%, whichever is less, of the private school's tuition. Families must complete a formal application and show evidence of residing in Shelby County (Memphis, Tennessee) and meeting M.O.S.T.'s financial requirements. Scholarship recipients are chosen by random lottery. M.O.S.T. awarded scholarships to 158 children in 1998, 750 children in 1999, 860 children in 2000, 778 children in 2001, and 704 children in 2002. The mean scholarship awarded was \$1,253 in 1999, \$1,271 in 2000, \$1,392 in 2001, and \$1,397 in 2002. The total amount of scholarship funds awarded was \$953,533 in 1999, \$1,108,312 in 2000, \$1,083,278.60 in 2001, and \$938,697.00 in 2002. Currently, there is a waiting list of 400 students.



Information obtained from M.O.S.T. ACCESS database of scholarship recipients from 1998 to 2000.

PURPOSE OF THE 2002/2003 EVALUATION

The Hyde Family Foundations funded a 3-year evaluation of the M.O.S.T. program for the academic years 1999/2000, 2001/2002, 2002/2003. This report represents the evaluation for the third academic year (2002/2003). The purpose of the study is to evaluate how M.O.S.T. is affecting the lives of children in Shelby County both at school and at home. The report covers the following areas relevant to this purpose:

- Background of recipient families
- Parent/guardian perception of child/children's academic performance
- Educational activities at home
- Parent/guardian involvement in child/children's education
- Parent/guardian satisfaction with private school of choice
- Parent/guardian satisfaction with M.O.S.T.
- Student academic achievement

STUDY DESIGN

RATIONALE

Many studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of voucher programs on student academic performance. Most notably, Green, Peterson and Du (1999) report analyses of a randomized experiment on the Milwaukee Choice program that avoids the problems of earlier studies such as selection bias (unobserved background characteristics of scholarship recipients). Selection bias can occur under a variety of circumstances such as when scholarships are given out on a first-come, first-served basis, or when families are required to pay part of the tuition. Both of these examples of bias may be based on student and/or parent motivation. More highly motivated students and parents would more aggressively seek out scholarship opportunities and be more willing to spend their own money on their education. And, more highly motivated parents and students are likely to result in higher student academic achievement. Randomization effectively eliminates these sorts of biases. Due to unique circumstances that involved a random selection of students not directly applying to the Choice program (therefore minimizing the motivation bias), Greene et al. were able to conduct a randomized experiment and collect data that allowed comparisons to be made between public and private school student academic achievement.

However, other researchers cite potential bias problems inherent in most voucher program studies that cannot be randomized. For example, Lanese (1999) reports selection reasons confounding results of a study of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program. Capell

(1981) studied alternative educational programming in the elementary schools of California's Alum Rock School District and found the following problems: the experimental group (students in the alternative program) and the control group (students in the regular program) did not represent randomized samples; no information was gathered concerning parent motivation; test data were imperfect. A study of the Washington Scholarship Fund Program used randomized samples from all qualified applicants (recipients were chosen by lottery), yet could not control for selection bias (Peterson, Greene, Howell, McCready, 1998). A later study of the Washington Scholarship Fund program compared student academic success before and after entering the voucher program (Wolf, Howell, Peterson, 2000). Students had previously been attending public school, but had changed to private ones. The researchers collected data from student scores in reading and mathematics as well as other educational and social outcomes. This study had the advantage of having collected baseline data from its recipient students. However, it still did not control for motivational factors. Howell and Peterson (2000) conducted a similar study in Dayton, Ohio. Prior to a lottery awarding scholarships to private schools, the researchers collected baseline data on student test scores and family background characteristics. One year later, students were retested and parents surveyed about their children's academic experiences. Even though it was a tightly controlled study, motivation was not measured.

As with most studies of voucher programs, the present study does not have the unique advantages afforded the Milwaukee study. Although there are limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from the data, we have used a design and measurements similar to those of previous studies. We have used reading and math scores from the CAT-5 standardized achievement test (Wolf, et al., 2000); National Percentile Rankings from the CAT-5 standardized achievement test (Howell, Wolf, Peterson, & Campbell, 2000); and survey data on family background, school experience, educational outcomes, classroom behaviors, motivation for participating in a voucher program, parent satisfaction, and parent involvement (Goldhaber, Brewer, Eide, & Rees, 1999; McKinley, 1996; Peterson, Myers, & Howell, 1999; Wolf, et al., 2000). The following limitations apply to this study: no baseline data were available; data were collected from voucher recipients only.

PROCEDURE

Instrument Design. The survey instrument used in this study was unchanged from the parent questionnaire used in the 2001/2002 study. The questionnaire had been modified last year following the analysis of the first year's data. Based on that analysis we:

eliminated item number 18, "What public school would your child/children have attended in 1999-2000 if not enrolled in a private school?" Too many parents did not know the answer to

While the students were taking their exams, the parents completed the satisfaction survey. We mailed parent satisfaction surveys to families of students in pre-kindergarten through second and ninth through twelfth grade as well as to families unable to attend either of the two sessions.

After the parents had completed their surveys, we asked them to participate in focus groups. Twenty (20) parents volunteered to participate in one of three focus groups. Focus groups composed of six to eight parents met with M.O.S.T. program evaluators for about an hour per group.

Focus group questions probed the following topics:

Motivation for sending children to private school and utilizing the M.O.S.T. scholarship program to support private school attendance

Both positive and challenging features of the decision to use private schools to educate children

Best and worst features of private school participation

Comparison with public schools

Relationship with the private schools attended by M.O.S.T. children

Relationship with M.O.S.T. as the scholarship-granting organization

Sustainability of private school participation for the family

RESULTS

BACKGROUND OF RECIPIENT FAMILIES

The majority of respondents (58.3%) reported a gross annual household income between \$10,000 and \$30,000. Median monthly educational expense (not covered by M.O.S.T. or other sources) per child was \$321.30.

Female guardian/mother

The female guardians (henceforth referred to as "mother(s)") were a mean age of 39.41 (n=244). They were primarily Black/African American (63.3%) or White/Non-Hispanic (30.2%). They were most often divorced/separated (33.2%). Thirty-three percent were married. Less frequently, they were single, never married (28.6%). Only one mother was not married but living with a partner. They had had some college education (44.1%). Twenty-four percent graduated from college. Seventeen percent were high school graduates. Mothers reported their religion as Baptist (40.5%), Catholic (20.2%), Pentecostal (7.4%), or other Protestant (3.3%). Seventy-four percent of mothers worked outside the home at a full- or part-time job. Thirty-three mothers (13.7%) were not working and not looking for work.

this question;

reworded item 35 so that parents gave the monthly instead of yearly amount of educational expenses not covered by M.O.S.T;

converted items 40 ("What could M.O.S.T./Children's Scholarship Fund program do differently to improve your satisfaction") and 41 ("Please list any barriers that you have in continuing your participation in the M.O.S. T./Children's Scholarship Fund program) into forced choice instead of open-ended questions;

divided item 43 into four separate items: "Please comment on your decision to utilize the M.O.S.T./Children's Scholarship Fund program"; "How has it positively or negatively influenced your family?"; Please comment on your decision to send your child/children to a non-public school"; "How has it positively or negatively influenced your family?"

Data Collection. Some of the schools participating in M.O.S.T. administer the TerraNova at their schools. M.O.S.T. students from these schools had their TerraNova scores sent to us. In order to obtain equivalent achievement scores for the remaining students, the CAT-5 (California Achievement Test, 5th edition) was purchased from the same company, McGraw-Hill/CTB, that developed the Terra Nova series used in the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). The Department of Education of the State of Tennessee did not lift its embargo on the use of the Terra Nova test for the evaluation study. McGraw-Hill/CTB offered the ability to convert CAT-5 scores to the Terra Nova.

Students in grades three through eight and their parents were required to attend one of two testing sessions in March 2003 at Christian Brothers University, with continued participation in the M.O.S.T. program attached to the requirement. Parents and children, however, were assured that scores on the tests would not be used to determine future participation in M.O.S.T. and that the tests were required only for purposes of this evaluation study.

Parents and children gathered in the university's theater. Students sat according to grade level (3rd through 8th grades). Parents sat in a separate area of the theater. Graduate students in education at Christian Brothers University volunteered to proctor the CAT-5 academic achievement exam. The proctors led their group of students, based on grade level, to a classroom on campus. The exam began at 12:45 pm and concluded at 4:00 pm. Students had two breaks during the exam. Students completed the following portions of the CAT-5: reading, vocabulary, language, language mechanics, math, and math computation.

Scores in the several subtests selected were normed to the TerraNova test in order to compare M.O.S.T. student scores with Memphis City and Shelby County students' scores. Norming to the Terra Nova test was part of the scoring service provided by McGraw-Hill/CTB.

Male guardian/father

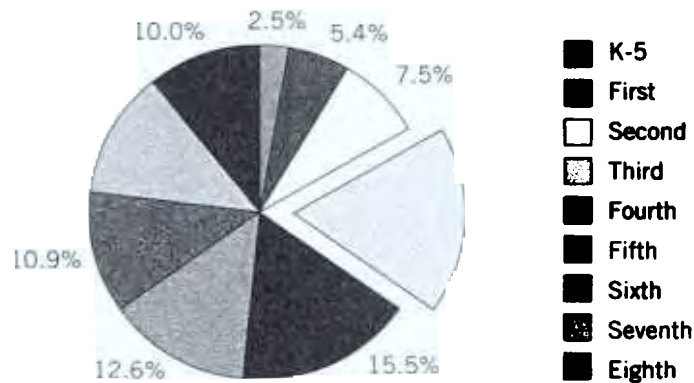
Male guardians (henceforth referred to as “father(s)”) were a mean age of 41 (n=166). They were primarily Black/African American (56.1%) or White/Non-Hispanic (34.5%). They were most often married (56.4%). Twenty-one percent were divorced/separated. Less frequently, they were single, never married (18.2%). Five fathers were not married and living with a partner. Thirty percent had had some college education, with eighteen percent graduating from college. Thirty-three percent had graduated from high school. Fathers reported their religion as Baptist (49.4%), Catholic (15.7%), no religion (7.2%), Pentecostal (5.4%), or other Protestant (2.4%). Eighty-one percent of fathers had a full- or part-time job outside the home. Fifteen fathers (9.7%) were not working and were not looking for work.

The families had 2 to 8 people currently living in the household (mean=3.85). Thirty-four percent of the children had begun in the M.O.S.T./CSF program in 1999 (23.4% in 2000, 22.2% in 1998, 10.1% in 2001, and 9.3% in 2002). Although 1 to 5 children in the home participated in M.O.S.T., the average number of children was 1 or 2 (mean=1.63). Therefore, data is reported here for the oldest and second-oldest child only.

Oldest child

Gender was equally represented (44.3% female, 55.7% male). The oldest child was most often in the third grade (16.7%) or fourth grade (15.5%).

GRADE LEVEL OF OLDEST M.O.S.T./CSF CHILD



The oldest child was primarily Black/African American (63.4%) or White/Non-Hispanic (27.6%). Seventeen percent of the oldest children had a learning or physical/mental challenge

Forty-six respondents cited the following physical/mental challenges for the oldest child: 15.2% attention deficit disorder, 24.2% attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, 9.1% reading disorder, 6.1% developmental delay, 3.0% dyslexia, 3% learning disability, and 39.4% other disorders or a combination of the listed disorders.

Second oldest child

Gender was equally represented (53.9% male, 44.3% female). The second oldest child was most frequently in the second (15.5%) or third grade (16.5%). The second oldest child was primarily Black/African American (59.4%) or White/Non-Hispanic (27.6%). Ten percent of the second oldest children had a learning or physical/mental challenge.

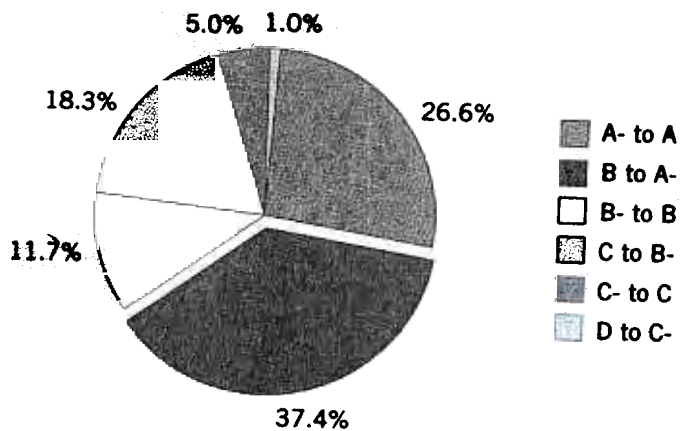
Thirty-five percent of the recipient families received assistance from government programs (AFDC, SSI, Food Stamps, Social Security, HUD, etc.). Ninety percent of the families used a personal car to transport their child/children to and from school. Families rarely used public transportation (2.4%), walking (1.2%), or car pools (4%). Mother usually provided the transportation (82.3% mother, 10.5% father).

PARENT/GUARDIAN PERCEPTION OF CHILD/CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Oldest child

The average grades for the oldest child were high with the highest percent reporting B to A- (37.5%).

AVERAGE GRADES FOR OLDEST CHILD



The majority of parents believed the academic performance of the oldest child had improved since entering the M.O.S.T. program (68.5%) while only 0.4% felt the oldest child's academic performance had worsened. The majority of parents perceived their oldest child's attitude toward school as improved (67.2%) while no parents felt the child's attitude had worsened. Parents reported that their child's classroom and study behaviors had improved (67.8%) while only 1% saw classroom and study behaviors worsening.

Second oldest child

The average grades for the second oldest child were high with the highest percent reporting B to A- (32%). The majority of parents believed the academic performance of the second oldest child had improved since entering the M.O.S.T. program (67.3%) while 1% felt the second oldest child's performance had worsened. The majority of parents perceived their second oldest child's attitude toward school as improved (65.3%) while 1% felt the child's attitude had worsened. Parents reported that their child's classroom and study behaviors had improved (64.6%) while only 1% saw classroom and study behaviors worsening.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AT HOME

Educational activities were occurring in the home. The most frequent type of educational activity at home was homework. Ninety-five percent of respondents reported that homework occurred at home often (response choices were never, rarely, sometimes, or often). Other educational activities occurred often at home: reading (88%), math (85.7%), writing (79.8%), athletics (54.4%), and educational television (42.5%).

PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT IN CHILD/CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Parents report being involved (sometimes or often) with their child's school: 81.9% volunteer for school activities, 71.8% participate in PTA/PTO meetings, 62.1% meet with the principal, 86.3% go to parent/teacher conferences, and 83.8% visit the classroom.

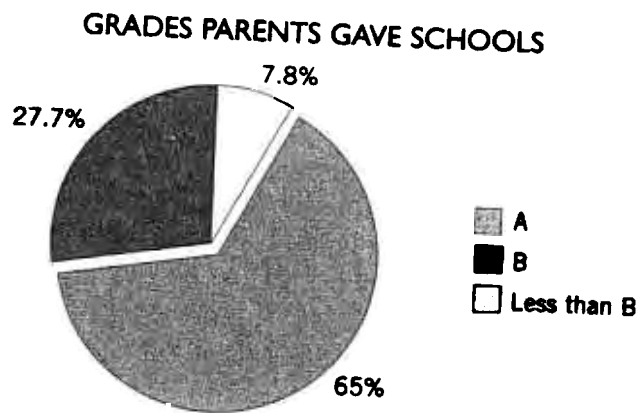
PARENT/GUARDIAN SATISFACTION WITH PRIVATE SCHOOL OF CHOICE

Parents reported the following mean satisfaction ratings for the following characteristics of their school of choice. Parents rated each school characteristic on a scale of 1=very satisfied, 2=satisfied, 3=dissatisfied, 4=very dissatisfied.

- Location: **31**
- Safety: **1.24**
- Facilities: **39**

- Class Size: 1.37
- Curriculum: 1.36
- Academics: 1.34
- Principal: 1.40
- Discipline: 1.43
- Teachers: 1.42
- Assigned Homework: 1.42
- Parent Friendly Environment: 1.39
- Child's Happiness: 1.36
- Child's Learning: 1.37
- Child's Effort: 1.41

Sixty-five percent of parents gave the school an "A"; 27.7% a "B"; 7.8% less than a "B".



PARENT/GUARDIAN SATISFACTION WITH M.O.S.T.

Parents heard about the M.O.S.T. program from the following sources:

- School: 33.5%
- Word-of-mouth/friend 25.8%
- Radio: 15.7%
- Television: 11.7%
- Newspaper 8.5%
- Church: 6.9%

Parents chose the following reasons for participating in M.O.S.T.

- Academics: 85.9%
- Religious Teachings: 79%
- Morals: 69.8%
- Safety: 69.8%
- Special Needs: 18.5%

Nearly one-hundred percent of parents were very satisfied (95.1%) or satisfied (4.5%) with the M.O.S.T. program (mean satisfaction rating of 1.06, where 1=very satisfied, 2=satisfied, 3=dissatisfied, 4=very dissatisfied).

Parents made the following suggestions to improve the M.O.S.T. program: provide scholarships for higher grades (13.6%); give more help financially (12%); reevaluate financial criteria for eligibility (3.7%); help pay for books (2.1%); develop calendar of deadlines and events (1%); finance after-school programs (1%).

While 77.2% of the respondents saw no barriers to their continuation in the M.O.S.T. program, 10.4% listed financial concerns, and 3.2% noted their concern with losing their scholarship. Four parents (1.6%) surveyed had left the M.O.S.T. program. One left due to financial problems.

Respondents commented on their decision to utilize the M.O.S.T. program: 38.8% wanted to give their child the best education; 29% needed the financial assistance from M.O.S.T.; 5% wanted their child/children to have a religious education. Twenty-one percent gave general positive statements about the program (5.9% gave other responses).

Parents indicated that the M.O.S.T. program had positively influenced their families in the following ways: 26% felt their child is receiving a good education; 28.5% made general positive statements about the program; 8.1% said their child is receiving a moral/religious education; 12.8% said M.O.S.T. is helping their family financially; 12.8% reported that their child has a better attitude toward school; 5.5% said their child is receiving better grades; and 2.9% reported that their child is a better person.

Parents gave the following reasons for sending their children to a nonpublic school: 34.3% wanted their child to receive a better academic education; 20.2% wanted their child to receive a religious education; 21% believed nonpublic schools have better teacher/student ratios and smaller class sizes; 8.1% believed nonpublic schools are safer; and 0.4% felt nonpublic schools have better discipline.

Children attending nonpublic schools had the following positive influences on their families: child is receiving better education (18.4%); child has better attitude about school (2.6%); and child is receiving better grades (10.5%).

FOCUS GROUPS DATA

Focus groups data confirm the general pattern of high parent satisfaction with the opportunity to send their children to private schools. The following themes from the parent focus groups underline and support the findings from the parent questionnaire:

Motivation for private school choice. In terms of this theme, parents expressed the following reasons for their choice of private schooling:

The belief that a private school education would provide a superior academic background for their children because of small class size and the personal attention from teachers and administrators

Seeking a strong religious and moral education for children

Seeking a safer environment for their children than what they would find in the public school system

The ability to become personally involved in their children's education

Positive features of the decision to use private schools. In terms of this theme, parents who were relatively new to private schooling noted the following:

- Children have good peer relations with other students due to the smaller school and classroom size
- Their children appear to be more motivated to attend school and to take part in the learning process
- Their children are obtaining a strong moral and religious education
- Children's academic performance and self-esteem have improved due to the personal attention received from teachers

Challenging features of the decision to use private schools. Parents tended to bring up the following difficulties:

- Even with the financial assistance from the M.O.S.T. program, parents indicate that a private education is financially demanding
- The "scholarship students" are easily recognized when compared to students who come from prosperous families
- Lack of cultural diversity – many of the private schools have few minority students

Best features of private school participation. In response to this topic, parents again spoke of the importance of academic strength and religion and morals in the private schools, as well as of the

positive features of smaller schools and classrooms and the encouragement of parental involvement.

Comparison with public schools. Focus group data revealed that many M.O.S.T. families did not make a shift from public to private education because of the availability of M.O.S.T. scholarship. Instead, a number of families in the M.O.S.T. program have always had some or all of their children in private schools and can only compare private schooling with public through their own experience, rather than by gauging differences in their children due to a public to private transition. It should be noted that M.O.S.T. attempts to start children in the program at the earliest age possible, meaning that many children will never have attended public school. However, M.O.S.T. parents who have made the transition generally noted highly positive differences in their children's academic achievement, attitudes, and behaviors, with a rare parent indicating that a child still has preferences for public school and wishes to return to public schooling, largely due to the greater number of extracurricular activities and opportunities.

Relationship with private schools. Parents in the focus groups spoke in very positive terms regarding their relationship with their children's school:

There tends to be good communication between teachers and parents

Most parents welcomed the opportunity to become involved in school activities

Some parents expressed some concerns with their children's private schools. Most of these concerns revolved around the expense of "extras" and lack of programs or resources such as athletic activities.

Relationship with M.O.S.T. Parents consistently and universally spoke very highly of the administration of the M.O.S.T. program, describing communication from the M.O.S.T. office as consistently clear and supportive. Parents described numerous instances of helpfulness expressing an attitude of care and concern for M.O.S.T. families and their efforts to afford private schooling for their children.

Sustainability of private school choice for M.O.S.T. families. The largest concern expressed by focus group participants involved financial strain. Several parents worried about their ability to continue their financial support of the private education, particularly with the steady increase of tuition. M.O.S.T. parents who participated in the focus groups were worried about their ability to keep their children in private schools especially when they reach high school age. In summary, financial concerns about the cost of private schooling seemed never to be far from the minds of

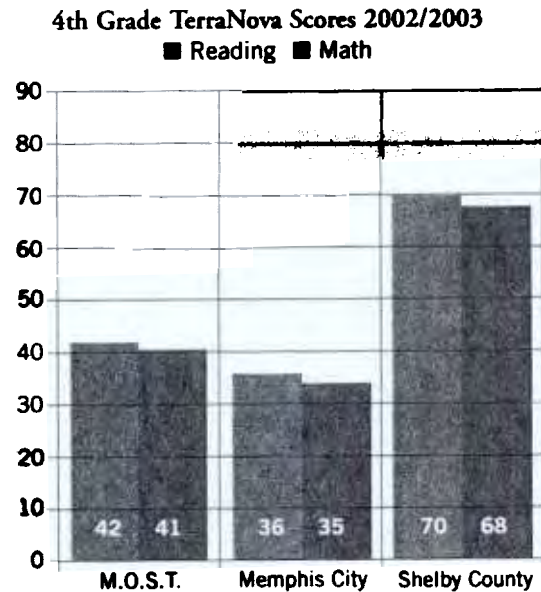
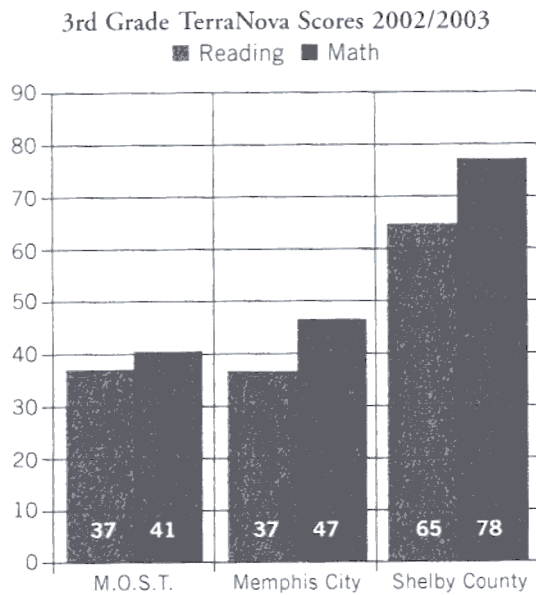
M.O.S.T. parents, along with appreciation for the benefits and advantages their children are gaining from private school attendance.

STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

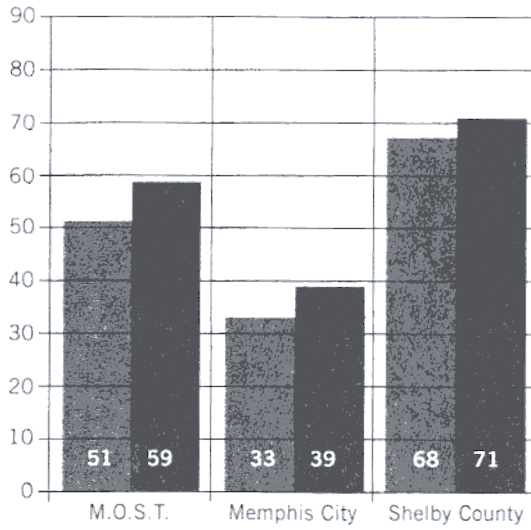
Terra Nova Equivalents from CAT-5

Median National Percentiles

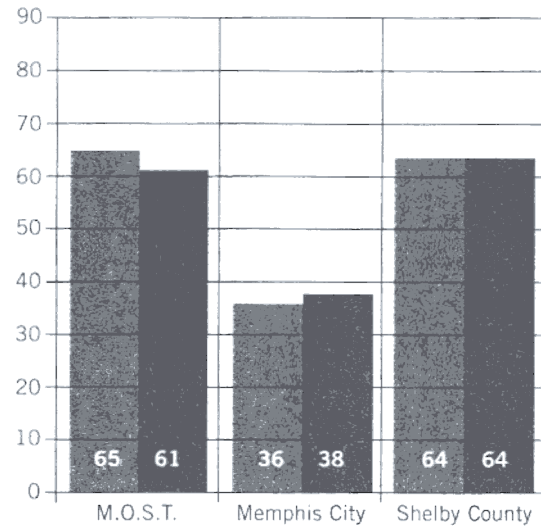
The following graphs depict the results of the CAT-5 test administered to M.O.S.T. students, broken out by grade level, and comparing M.O.S.T. students at that grade level with all students at that grade level in both Memphis City Schools and Shelby County Schools. In other words, the median scores of M.O.S.T. students who were tested for purposes of this evaluation study were compared with the median scores of all students in two large public districts with distinctly different levels of median student performance. Readers are urged to remember that M.O.S.T. students are a particular population of students attending private schools and do not constitute all private school students and that the limitations of this evaluation study will not accommodate comparisons of M.O.S.T. student test scores with those of an appropriately matched population of public school students.



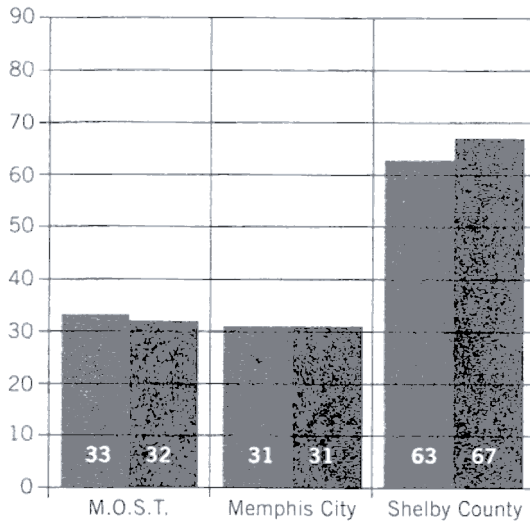
5th Grade TerraNova Scores 2002/2003
 ■ Reading ■ Math



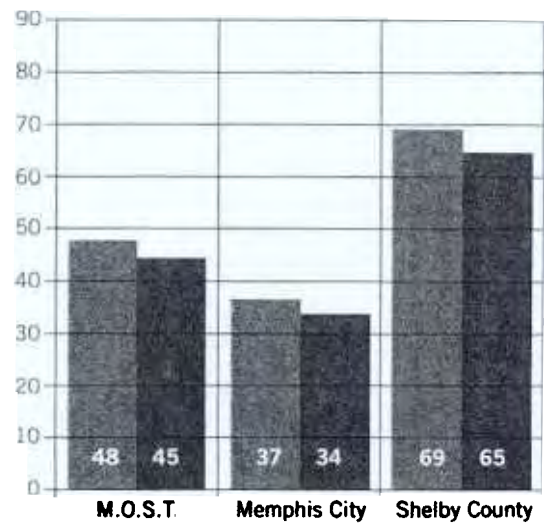
6th Grade TerraNova Scores 2002/2003
 ■ Reading ■ Math



7th Grade TerraNova Scores 2002/2003
 ■ Reading ■ Math



8th Grade TerraNova Scores 2002/2003
 ■ Reading ■ Math



COMPARISONS OF MEDIAN NATIONAL PERCENTILES WITH 2001/2002

The following tables show comparisons of the reading and mathematics median national percentiles between 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 academic years. While the data appears to indicate a declining trend in scores with M.O.S.T. students, this is likely due to a "cohort effect". When comparing percentile scores based on advancement from one grade to the next, the scores are relatively similar. For example, the average 2001/2002 5th grade reading percentile score (60th) is relatively comparable to the same students' average percentile score as 6th graders (65th).

MEDIAN NATIONAL PERCENTILES (Reading)

	M.O.S.T.		Memphis City		Shelby County	
	2001/2002	2002/2003	2001/2002	2002/2003	2001/2002	2002/2003
3rd	51	37	41	37	67	65
4th	66	42	39	36	70	70
5th	60	51	34	33	70	68
6th	39	65	33	36	64	64
7th	50	33	30	31	65	63
8th	55	48	33	37	68	69

MEDIAN NATIONAL PERCENTILES (Math)

	M.O.S.T.		Memphis City		Shelby County	
	2001/2002	2002/2003	2001/2002	2002/2003	2001/2002	2002/2003
3rd	55	41	54	47	74	78
4th	59	41	42	35	72	68
5th	53	59	45	39	73	71
6th	41	61	36	38	61	64
7th	49	32	34	31	67	67
8th	58	45	31	34	64	65

COMPARISONS WITH THE 1999/2000 AND 2001/2002 SURVEY STUDIES

Survey data showed that the background of the recipient families remained virtually unchanged.

	1999/2000	2001/2002	2002/2003
Academic Performance Improved	61%	58%	69%
Children's Attitude Improved	60%	62%	66%
Classroom and Study Improved	63%	65%	67%
Gave School an "A"	62%	61%	65%
Participation for Academics	83%	89%	86%
Participation for Religion	76%	76%	79%
Participation for Morals	74%	72%	70%
Participation for Safety	70%	72%	70%
Participation for Special Needs	22%	18%	19%
Left the M.O.S.T. Program	6%	0.7%	2%
Financial Barriers	28%	15.3%	15%
Fear Loss of Scholarship	5%	4.8%	3.2%
Needed Financial Assistance	20%	30%	10%
Median Monthly Educational Expenses Not Covered by M.O.S.T. or Other Sources	\$134	\$220	\$321
Median Reading Percentile Scores		52	45
Median Math Percentile Scores		45	45

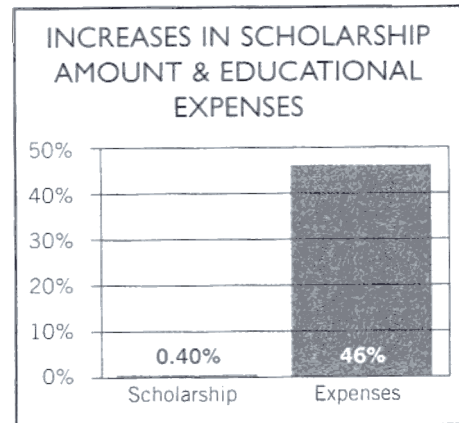
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Parents gave high grades (A and B) to their children's schools and saw improved academic performance, attitude, and study and classroom behaviors in their children since their participation in M.O.S.T. Parent satisfaction with school academics is very important as academics was the primary reason parents wanted their children in nonpublic schools.

On average, parents were involved with their children's schools and promoted school-related activity at home. Parental involvement is widely believed to be important for student academic achievement.

On average, reading and mathematics scores for M.O.S.T. students were higher than those for Memphis City School students, but lower than those for Shelby County School students.

While the average M.O.S.T. scholarship given to an individual student went up only .4% from 2001-2002, the educational expenses not covered by M.O.S.T. or other sources went up 46% for the same period.



LIMITATIONS

The research team encourages caution in using M.O.S.T. student test scores to indicate overall academic achievement in the private schools for M.O.S.T. students or any students attending private schools. Two factors should be considered: first, the nature of the comparisons with students in Memphis City Schools and Shelby County Schools and, second, testing preparation and conditions for M.O.S.T. students.

As indicated earlier, test scores reported in this study compare M.O.S.T. students with Memphis City Schools and Shelby County Schools students. There are well-known patterns of low performance in a significant number of Memphis City Schools as well as high performance in many of the Shelby County Schools. The limitations of this study, which include not using the random assignment of a doubled pool of students, half sent to private and half to public schools, requiring testing of all, do not give the research team a more appropriately matched comparison group for M.O.S.T. students. Further, the lack of baseline data on M.O.S.T. students, many of whom have been attending private schools all along, as well as the decision not to fund a more complex evaluation study limit the utility of test data.

Second, while students were likely encouraged by their parents to do well on the tests,

M.O.S.T students were tested under conditions very unlike children testing in the public schools. They were tested in an unfamiliar environment, among strangers, on adult-sized furniture, rather than in their own classrooms by their own teachers with parent proctors often known to them before a test. They were also tested for an exceptionally long period of time (about four hours), which was particularly trying for the 3rd and 4th graders. Students in public schools are typically tested only on one subtest at a time, i.e., on reading one day, then vocabulary on another, then still another for math, and often for periods of time as short as 20-25 minutes. Students in public schools often are prepared extensively for specific subtests and complete numerous practice worksheets before taking a specific subtest. Most students received no advance preparation in either the specific content of the test or in test taking skills in general.

CONCLUSIONS

M.O.S.T. is fulfilling its mission to provide educational opportunities to families in need while promoting excellence in education. M.O.S.T. seeks to provide a stable, long-term funding source. With the educational expenses increasing more rapidly (46%) than the M.O.S.T. scholarship awarded (.4%), M.O.S.T. will have to increase its donations at least to the level of the increase in educational expenses in order to maintain its current level of operation. Donations will have to increase even further to reach more eligible students in the Shelby County community.

M.O.S.T. can improve the program by reevaluating the financial criteria for eligibility, helping families pay for student textbooks, developing a calendar of deadlines and events, and financing after-school programs.

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and public Education, Cambridge, MA.

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

Dr. Ellen S. Faith is the chair of the Department of Education at Christian Brothers University. She received her doctorate at Harvard University and serves the M.O.S.T. evaluation study as educational consultant as well as evaluator. Her research focus in the field of education is on collaborative action research for the improvement of both private and public schools.

Dr. Elizabeth Nelson received her Ph.D. in psychology from Kansas State University in May 1992. She is trained and does research in the area of human experimental/cognitive psychology. She is an associate professor of psychology at Christian Brothers University where she has been a full-time faculty member since August 1992. She was chair of the department of Behavioral Sciences at Christian Brothers University from August 1997 to May 2001.

Dr. Sandra Nicks is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Christian Brothers University where she teaches courses in research and statistics. She received her Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from St. Louis University and a M.A. in Clinical Psychology from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

Jack Hargett is the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness and Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Christian Brothers University. He received his M.S. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Memphis in 1996 and is currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Educational Research at the University of Memphis.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Alcy SDA Jr. Academy	Immaculate Conception High School
Bishop Byrne Middle and High School	Immanuel Lutheran School
Breath of Life Christian Academy	Lamplighter School, Inc.
Briarcrest Christian School	Lausanne Collegiate School
Central Baptist	Little Flower Elementary School
Central Day School	Lord's Tabernacle Christian Academy
Christ Methodist Day School	Macon Road Baptist School
Christ the King Lutheran School	Madonna Learning Center
Christ the Rock Christian Academy	Marcus Mosiah Garvey Institute
Christian Brothers High School	Margolin Hebrew Academy
Concord Academy	Maria Montessori School
Creative Life Preparatory School	Memphis Catholic Middle and High School
Cross Creek Christian Academy	Memphis Junior Academy
De La Salle Elementary at Blessed Sacrament	Memphis University School
Elliston Baptist Academy	Mississippi Boulevard Christian Academy
Evangelical Christian School	New Hope Christian Academy
Faith Heritage Christian Academy	New Hope Christian Academy Middle School
First Assembly Christian School	Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Frayser Academy of Christian Education	Our Lady of Sorrows
Frederick Douglas Wesson Christian Academy	Pleasant View School
Grace St. Luke's Episcopal School	Presbyterian Day School
Great Beginnings School	Rossville Christian Academy
Grey Road Christian Academy	Shady Oaks School
Harding Academy	Solomon Schechter Day School
Holy Rosary School	Southern Baptist Educational Center
Holy Names Elementary	St. Agnes Academy-St. Dominic School
Hutchison School	St. Ann-Bartlett
Immaculate Conception Elementary School	St. Anne-Highland

St. Augustine School
St. Benedict at Auburndale
St. George's Day School
St. George's Day School-Memphis
St. John School
St. Joseph Elementary School
St. Louis Catholic School
St. Mary's Episcopal School
St. Michael Elementary/Middle School
St. Paul School

The Bodine School
The Neighborhood School
Thrifthaven Baptist Academy
Tipton-Rosemark Academy
Wesley School
Westminster Academy
Woodland Presbyterian School
Woodlawn Baptist Academy
Word of Faith Christian School
World Overcomers Christian Academy

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