

Children's Scholarship Fund – Newark
Program Effectiveness Parent Survey
April, 2003



Children's Scholarship Fund

giving parents a choice ♦ giving children a chance

In an effort to assess the effectiveness of CSF-Newark, we recently sent a survey to a random sample of 200 families who have been participating in our Newark program for the past four years. Within approximately two weeks, 119 surveys (60 percent) had been returned. This is a remarkably high response rate, particularly considering the short amount of time in which parents were asked to complete the survey, as well as the difficulties many low-income parents may experience with writing or with faxing the survey back to us. Parents were given the option of remaining anonymous, which 25 who responded chose to do.

The survey's statistical results demonstrate that families in our Newark program overwhelmingly cannot afford to send their children to private school without the help of the Children's Scholarship Fund. Eighty-two percent of respondents stated that if the Children's Scholarship Fund is discontinued, they will not be able to afford to continue sending their children to private school. Another thirteen percent of those responding answered "maybe" to this question. Of the five respondents who said they could afford to keep their children in private school if the Children's Scholarship Fund is discontinued, four said they would have to work extra hours or take on a second job in order to do this. Many expressed sadness at the prospect of transferring their children to public school, and many feared the effects this would have on their children's academic, spiritual and emotional well-being. Furthermore, families in our Newark program who responded to our survey are exceptionally pleased with their experiences in private school and with the Children's Scholarship Fund. Parents were asked to rank their families' experiences in private school on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 meaning "excellent" and 1 meaning "very poor." The average rating for respondents' and their children's experiences in private school was 9.5. We also asked families to rank their experiences with the Children's Scholarship Fund, which resulted in an average rating of 9.9.

The final section of the survey provided space for parents to write a few words about the effect of the Children's Scholarship Fund on their families. Perhaps the most interesting outcome of this survey is the pages and pages of comments parents wrote in this final section. What follows is a summary of these comments, as well as samples of quotations gleaned from the surveys that were returned. We believe our recipients' words say more than we ever could about the effect of this program on their and their children's lives. The quotations below are extensive, but by no means complete. We have attempted to organize these comments somewhat systematically; however, we acknowledge that several of the themes we have picked out do overlap. Please note that the quotations contained in the following sections are unedited and contain the respondents' exact words.

Survey results demonstrate that parents are extremely grateful for the assistance they have received from the Children's Scholarship Fund. Furthermore, they view this program as a means of helping them achieve what they themselves could not do alone. However, it is clear that parents view themselves as partners with the Children's Scholarship Fund in providing their children with a sound educational, safe, disciplined, and moral environment. Many parents expressed the vital role education plays in their children's chances to lead successful lives, and many expect their children to attend college.

"I have always stressed the importance of a good foundational education to my children and since that day I have worked hard to make sure that they receive exactly what they needed to carry them to the best college. For my children the question is not "are you going to go to college" but "which college do you want to go to and how can I help you prepare for it"? . . . The Children's Scholarship Fund has afforded my children the opportunity to open doors that have no knobs. You have given my children something that I myself have been unable to do without your help and something that the Newark Board of Education was not equipped to handle. For that Nakiah, Malik and I thank you with all our hearts for what you have done in our lives. When we began with your program we were receiving public assistance. I have since moved into the work force, however based on my wages I would not, at this time, be able to continue to pay for the private school without your help. I hope to someday donate to your program as an

alumni parent. I would love for my children and I to one day tell your future students and parents how your program contributed to our lives. . My children have worked very hard to show you and myself that they appreciate all that we have done to make sure that they receive what they need to excel in life. They have been building on their foundation for four years however, the job is not complete. Together we have given them an excellent start and I ask that you continue to help me to support my children in their endeavors."

"Raising seven children is not easy but I would not trade it in for anything in this world They are my pride and joy that makes my 16-hour day quite smooth and easy to bypass. Living in an area of many hardships I try to provide a great educational atmosphere for my children. There are not words that can truly acknowledge the importance of this program. I am fortunate but most of all appreciate those who help me to achieve this goal. There is nothing more important in life than happiness but no matter what in life one may chose to do education is the key to one's freedom."

"The Children's Scholarship program has been a great blessing to my family. It has enabled my children to excel academically. . . I shutter to think what losing the assistance of this fund would do to the future of my children."

"I am so honored to have an opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of the donors of the Children's Scholarship Fund. I thank God everyday for this continued blessing."

"I hope that by reading this letter you will realized that without the helped of the Children's Scholarship Fund I would not be able to give my children the education they deserved which is the most important goal for me and other parents."

" The Children's Scholarship Fund has provided me with the tools the I greatly need to help Keira with the tools she'll need in life. Words cannot express the appreciation I feel for this program. Without it I will have to remove Keira from private school – which I believe would have an affect on her education."

"I was on public assistance at the time when I applied for the Scholarship Fund. As years went by I found a job that I like and enjoy. I had to find a job because I knew what I had to do for my son's future. It would be really nice if they could continue helping me, but if not, I am thanking the inner-city scholarship fund for helping me give my son a better education and good grades."

"When I first received this program I was on public assist. This program was truly a gift that I appreciate and still appreciate. Private school has enhanced my child's life. She now makes honor roll. She also suffers in math, and through private school she is getting the help she needs."

"It is important that at the early years of education we as parents along with their teachers, instill good learning habits, so that when it comes time for them to go on to high school or college, they will take with them the learning skills taught to them and be able to transpose them into their daily rituals."

"It is quite evident that given the financial wherewithal a quality education can be obtained by inner-city children."

"The Children's Scholarship indeed was a tremendous help for our family. It has given my granddaughter a fighting chance at a good education. Her parents are not financial able, and my struggles to help them makes me feel blessed. With the CSF's help, together we were able to make a good choice for her education."

"Being a low-income family it is hard to get support and tends to make us feel alone. The Children's Fund has shown us love and support through their generosity. It saddens me to think that such a great program might not exist anymore. We came to the U.S. and to enroll them in private school has been our motivation and inspiration to keep working hard for them. Two of our children are currently attending

universities. Private school has played a major role in this. We want the same opportunity for our last child."

"I am very grateful to you for helping me send my granddaughter to private school. My son died three months before she was born. I have had custody of her since she was a baby, and I am trying to do everything for her that I think he would have wanted me to do. Thank you so much for your help."

"The Children's Scholarship Fund has had a monumental effect on the enrichment of my family. You can be sure that I thank God each day for blessing my children and I with a program that helps us build a bright future through private education. You should know that without the Children's Scholarship Program the sparkle in my children's lives would diminish. The children and I, through God's grace (through the program) have come to know, trust and succeed in the private school forum. Being blessed to attend private schools allows a child who lives and dwells in the difficult environment of the inner-city to find structure in a classroom of desire. The Children's Scholarship Fund shares an important and vital part of my children's lives. I gasped with utter fear when I received this letter. I called upon God to help me as He so often does. I could not begin to think of how my children would react not being able to stay in the private school system. Without the Children's Scholarship Program I could not afford to continue. My children and I cannot begin to think of such a crushing blow to our lives. We are struggling so much already. Please, please don't take our foundation of education from us. We pray."

"I feel that a proper education with proper discipline creates the very fiber of our characters. I believe the students of this program are tomorrow's doctors, engineers, lawyers, and even teachers, and I feel it would be a moral sin to take away this opportunity."

Specifically, many parents expressed gratitude that their children do not have to attend the public schools in their neighborhoods, which many perceive as dangerous and academically deficient. Furthermore, parents have been overwhelmingly pleased with their children's experiences in the Newark private schools. The following quotations address these sentiments.

"My two oldest children did not attend private schooling in high school and when we had a family meeting they brought it to my attention how hard it is to catch up to level of teaching in school because the lack of education they failed to receive or have been offered attending a public institution in our community. I vow that I would never have to deprive the younger ones with opportunity of attending a private school."

"The program has been most effective and efficient in helping my son's academics. His achievement has improved along with discipline."

"All four of my children have experience attending public schools, and myself. Therefore we all know the difference. When me and my children discuss the difference that parochial school has made in our lives, here's what we came up with. We feel a strong sense of safety, pride, and most of all a family oriented environment. I feel a sense of peace when I leave my children in the mornings because I know and they know the first thing they will do when school starts is say a prayer, and it is proven to us that God answers prayer because they're there. . . We believe that one day God will bless our family so we can be donors just like you."

"Both of my children improves tremendously academically and emotionally."

"Being a single parent trying to raise my children to be successful people is very important to me. Therefore your continued help would be greatly appreciated. . . My oldest son Anthony goes to St. Benedict's where he has done extremely well. Coming from a neighborhood that wasn't as great as I

would have loved to give him he still has excelled. My twins Andrew and Alecia are doing very well also. I like the feeling that they are in a safe environment where they are learning and excelling. "

"I will feel very worried about the safety of my child if he has to go to a public school.

"My children are progressing well and are on grade level in reading, writing, and math. I live in East Orange where the school district is rated poorly. . . I am striving very hard to equip my children with the tools they will need to become productive members of our society and to give back to their fellow man in whatever way they can. We are having an extremely stressful day and time due to war, inflation, unemployment, gangs, drugs, and violence, just to name a few. It becomes very disheartening and depressing sometimes until I remember this is hope in our children for the future of the world. It truly takes a village to raise a child. . . You have provided a foundation upon which our children will hopefully continue to grow. "

"The school system in the City of Newark is not good. The private schools that my children have gone to have helped them academically. If the program is not able to assist me, I will have to find a part-time job in order to send them to private school. Working two jobs as a single parent will effect my children academically also. I really need the assistance in order to keep my children on the right path for college. "

"This school has provided an excellent education and positive experiences for them. It also gives a safe and comfortable environment which every child needs in order to learn. When I am at work, I know that Keira is getting the very best. "

"I would like to say that this program has been most beneficial to me and my son because it has enable me to put him in one of the best schools I know of for this urban area. . . Without your program I would not have been able to give him the best. I know for sure he would not have learned half as much and he would not have the great self-esteem in which they have helped him develop. They spend a lot of time with the children. Thank you so much. "

"Our school in this area are not doing good and by keeping them at private school will help them stay away from gang, drugs and violence. "

"I chose to send them to private school because I did not want them to be exposed to the disruptions that are often seen in local elementary and secondary public schools. My neighborhood is afflicted with urban blight where drugs and violence are rampant. Public schools in communities such as mine, unfortunately reflect the shortcomings of the neighborhood. Hence, sending my children to public school in my neighborhood will threaten their well-being. I do not want my children to be victims of physical attack or robbery. It is my responsibility to make certain that my children are well nourished, safe, loved, and educated. It is imperative that I do all that is possible to prevent "my boys" from falling into the cracks of urban blight. I ask that you extend The Children's Scholarship Fund so that my children may remain in private school where they will receive quality education in a safe environment. "

"I truly would not want to have to remove him from private school because he has gotten so much out of it. The knowledge and the way he conducts himself I fear would not have been gotten in public school. "

"With the help of CSF, I was able to send my son to private school where I knew he would receive a decent education and didn't really have to worry to much about his safety. The thought of losing CSF would be detrimental to us, because I wouldn't be able to send him to a decent school without CSF. "

"The teachers and office staff are very professional and are truly concerned about the welfare and education of the children. The school provides a positive and safe atmosphere for the students, which makes me very comfortable while I am working. . . . If this program is discontinued, I can personally attest that there will be a financial burden on me as a working mother trying to provide the best learning environment for my daughters, not to mention additional time away from home to work extra hours and weekends. However, if working additional hours is required I will make the necessary arrangement, as I am not pleased about sending my daughters into the public school system. "

"If this doesn't continue I would have to move away in order to not send my children to a Newark public school. "

"We live in a drug-infested neighborhood and I am trying to let them see and understand that with education they can succeed in anything, become whatever they want to be. So this is why I am trying to keep them in private school to shelter them from having no confidence in themselves to do better. "

"My son is disabled in the private school that he is presently in they offer him one on one help, he has great teachers in his school that care about him and that give him that extra words of encouragement that he needs. He is very happy in the environment that his school offers. Every month when he goes to his physiologist appointment the first things he says to his doctor is "I Love My School and my Teachers, my Friends they feel like they are part of my Family, they care about me." This school has been a blessing for him. Unfortunately I can't afford private school, because I can't work. I am disabled also, with two small children. Please help my children continue in the same school especially for my son, who loves his school. I don't want to see him sick with depression, he loves his school where all he gets is great teachers, helping hands, one on one assistance and great friends. . . . If you only knew how important my son feels in his school there is not one day that one of his teachers and myself tell him how special he is to us. Please help my family. "

"Thanks to the CSF my children are able to receive an excellent education at a safe haven school as an alternative to a dangerous Newark public school. "

"I'm a single parent who adopted two children and I want the best education for them which I found that public schools didn't offer. I want them to have a better life then their biological parents who weren't given the opportunity to experience. I feel that private school could do this. I feel that my children have develop age appropriately in mind as well as spiritually. My oldest has two years to complete before entering High School and if she continues to go to private school and keep up with her grades and good study habits which private school has motivated her to do, she will be ready and able to get a good score on the SAT test and be able to compete with the kids from suburbia. "

"Several years ago my child was awarded a scholarship that helped my child attend Saint Joseph School. Ever since my child's entrance into this school, he has done a complete turn around. His work habits have improved since removing him from our local public schools, and his eager for learning has increased. He actually enjoys learning, and every day he speaks of all the new information he gained that day. He never was this happy about anything. Sometimes, I cannot keep him quiet. It seems he always has something to share with me. . . . I do not know what will become of him if this program does not continue. I never seen his mind so made up about all the possibilities he has in life. I would hate to lose this spirit that has been nourished by his school and myself. Private school unlike public school has been a benefit for my son and so many others like him. Personally, I would blame myself if my son was unable to continue with his full potential in a private school of his choose. This program has offered those who have nothing, hope. And, as parents, we see this hope in our children's eyes whenever they come home from school. "

"Without all the assistance you provide, there is no way in the world that I could enroll him in a school of such high quality. The education he receives is outstanding, and I believe it is his ticket out of poverty. For the rest of our family, we never seem to get anywhere with our dreams and aspirations. However, Abraham is the star of the Reed family. He is very bright, ambitious, polite, and punctual. He rarely misses even part of any school day. We are so proud of him, and that is why it is so beautiful that the Children's Scholarship Fund helps him get a good education. I assure you that we constantly encourage him to take full advantage of the opportunity to excel in life, which your organization allows him. He knows this too, and he is grateful for the education he is getting. . . . I ABSOLUTELY CANNOT send Abraham anywhere except the substandard public school without the same amount of assistance."

"This program has been a blessing to many families. Families seeking a more controlled environment. The children are less fearful going to school."

"It would be very sad for my children and I, if they could not continue to go to private school. Then I would have to put them back in the schools from which they originally came from. I would have to worry more about the gang activities in schools and my children's education would be at risk. Since, my children been in private school they have been more exposed to other races and cultures than African-Americans or Hispanics. My children have improved in their self-confidence, self-esteem, and grades. They have also participated in Programs for Feeding the Homeless, Senior Citizen Groups, and Cleaning up the Environment."

"My children have been able to attend private school. That itself is a blessing as the public schools in our area are not the greatest. And I as a parent take comfort in knowing that they are in a safe environment."

"My son didn't do well in public school because he has Cerebral Palsy and there were too many kids in that school. He was not allowed to have access with them because the school was afraid he may be pushed down and hurt. Besides being picked on he would have felt like an outcast. The private school is smaller and has less children so they are able to take more time with him. He is doing very well and is a lot happier."

"This program has enabled me to choose schools to help mold, cultivate and prepare my children for their future. . . My son Jonathan who is currently attending St. Benedict's Preparatory High School is being molded and transformed into what a young man should be. My son is not only being challenged in the areas of academics but he is also being motivated and being held accountable for his actions. These tools he is being taught are so valuable for our young men today. I know he will become a young man that society would love to interact with. . . The Children's Scholarship Fund, if continued will allow me to continue to offer my children the best."

"The scholarship has shown my daughter what it's like to learn in a small environment, family-style. Also on personal attention when needed."

"I thank God that I have this program to help me with my son's tuition. The public school near my home in Newark is terrible. The children actually run the school. My son attended public school until 3rd grade. He now attends a Catholic school where they are concerned about his academics. Also, the students are well-behaved and mannerable. I do not know what I would do without this program. He loves his school."

"The public school system, for what its worth, has failed many children as well as many families. They have failed to provide a proper education, due to overcrowding and the lack of attention that some students require. They have failed to ensure that the level of violence in public schools will decrease due to the lack of proper security measures. They have only been able to provide mediocre services due to lack of necessary funding. I also have doubts as to what they consider a nutritious meal. . . Private schools offer a smaller classroom environment, which gives the teacher a chance to give the students

more individual attention. This in turn helps to create a more in-depth teacher student relation. They also offer a more modern curriculum and more intense subject matter, which forces the students to achieve higher grades and better test scores. This level of discipline will properly prepare them for the future. Private schools also provide a safer drug free community in which my children wouldn't have to worry about the violence that we see plaguing our public school system today. In a private setting, uniformity and discipline are the standard, as well as extracurricular activities. I feel that these teachings have helped to make my son and daughter more well rounded individuals. I too have learned along with my children new values and lessons that will prepare them for the coming future."

"The CSF has given my children a great opportunity to learn in a very disciplined and loving atmosphere. The thought of putting them back into the failing public schools in the city of Newark is devastating to me and my children. On a low income, I cannot afford private school without this scholarship."

Furthermore, many parents are pleased to be able to send their children to schools where the family's religious beliefs are taught each day in school. Many acknowledge that without assistance from the Children's Scholarship Fund, their children would not be able to learn religion.

"We are a family of ten. The root of my family, is deeply planted in Christianity with many morals and beliefs. I, as a father, has taught my family that we are all children of God and we need to assist to all those in need."

"The Scholarship my children received allowed access to an educational system with higher standards of living and Christian values. . . We have found a school that is a perfect match with our belief system and profession of faith. The day we walked into the building we were awestruck with the level of professionalism, character, demeanor, and sincere concern for the welfare for the children we observed and felt. . . The extreme hardship would be the lack of focus and concentration often indicative of the public school system. . . I presently work in the public school system and witness constantly the children who are lost and overlooked."

" My family now (my daughter, son and myself) live in a city that I feel lost most morals, values and virtues and it would break my heart if my children needed to be removed from the school they are now attending and proceed their education in the public school system where there is no prayer or teaching of God and the church. . . I feel that if they had to be removed now it would be like the sowing of the seed story in the Bible. The seeds are scattered, some seeds don't fall on the dirt, they never get a chance to grow. Some seeds grow and get so tall, but than they get choked and wither and die and others grow tall and healthy and prosper until they are harvest. . . If my children were to have to leave the school now, it would be like they only received knowledge of God to a certain point and then it would be taken away. In my own opinion no matter how educated one gets and attains much money from it without God and faith in Jesus, one has nothing."

"My son Jose is 11 and attends Sacred Heart School in Vailsburg. The staff and teachers have been very helpful with his special needs. I believe that he has received more services at Sacred Heart than he had received at Speedway Ave. School, when he attended part of the first grade. At Speedway he was taken out of science and social studies classes for help in reading and math due to large class size and scheduling issues. He then missed out on that class work. I also felt the environment was not helpful to him. I am a grown women and some of the bad language I heard coming from the mouth of these young children was unbelievable to me. I don't even use language like that! My son was hit by another child that was a girl. He didn't hit her back and she kept on hitting him. My son didn't hit her because she was a girl and has been taught that boys don't hit girls. . . I haven't had that type of problem at Sacred Heart. I can't afford to live in another area where the public school system hasn't been taken over by the state."

This School is our parish school, my oldest daughter Jasmine is in her third year of college at Bucknell University in PA. Jasmine has attended Catholic schools and is doing very well. I feel this is from a strong educational background and the positive environment and friends. My youngest daughter Amber is six and is attending OLS, she has been tested and has special needs. She is able to receive extra help at OLS. Amber has the opportunity to join Brownie Scouts, Cheerleading, and Track and begin to make friendships with her classmates."

"In the area that I live in the school system is failing and I would hate for my children to have to be a part of that. Please help my children get the education that is needed."

"It will break my heart to have to remove my children from private school. There's a sense of assurance when there is a stable and secure environment for children to feel free to actually learn something other than gangs and drugs and fighting. Private school has been a life saver for my family."

"By you helping me with the scholarship has motivated my child to study more and be motivated to become something in the future. If my child was to be removed from the program it would really affect him because his academic level won't be the same because certain public school teachers don't care and my child really feels that his teacher care and help him a lot."

Perhaps most heartwarming is how proud our participating parents are of their children. Many parents took the time to write of their children's academic and personal achievements. Many believe their children could not have been as successful as they have been if they had to attend their local public schools.

"My son didn't want to attend private school at first. I think the uniform had something to do with it. But after he got by that he started coming home telling me things about his new school experiences that his old public school didn't have. He didn't even want to stay home when he broke his foot. . . I am proud of him for his enthusiasm he is displaying since his new experiences with private school."

"The scholarship program has been an awesome experience for my children and family. It has given my children an opportunity to excel with outstanding grades and other special skills. . . My children have exceeded the expectation of their grade level."

"The experience at Sacred Heart of Vailsburg has been very rewarding for Renee and myself. Renee has received 1st honors and perfect attendance awards. She enjoys her teachers and classmates and looks forward to attending school and participating in the math and newspaper clubs. Ever since my child was in the private school she always got straight A's, and my daughter loves the school"

"From having the scholarship I was able to put my child in a class of 10 children and giving him individualized attention. My son became brilliant and skipped a grade and is also reading on pre-college level. Without the program I don't think my child would have excelled like this. Public schools don't give children opportunities like this."

"These have been wonderful years for me because both my children have attained excellent grades. They have become very enthusiastic and disciplined with their work. They have both made the honor roll since they started at St. Joseph's school and like to be involved in activities. You can see what I am a grateful parent, because if it were not for the fund my kids would not have had the opportunity to attend a school as wonderful as St. Joseph. The teachers and staff have been awesome. They have provided my children with the tools they will need to succeed in their present and future education."

“My son is doing so well in private school and I’m so afraid that in public school he would not do as well, with all the gangs in the public schools my son would be more focus on staying away from gangs than his studies.”

“My daughter had so many problems in public school. Her reading level was two grades below. Since she has been in private school, her reading level is excellent. Her grades are A-List list honor level. I need this program, it’s the best thing that happen to my family.”