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**A STUDY TO ASSESS PARENTAL CHOICE: WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD DAY SCHOOLS OVER PUBLIC SCHOOL**

by
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A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in School Psychology
of Rowan University
May 1, 1997

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 5-7-97

ABSTRACT

Michael Petrucci, A Study To Assess Parental Choice: Why Families Choose Assemblies of God Day Schools Over Public Schools, 1997, Professor Roberta Dihoff, Master of Arts Degree in School Psychology

This survey study identified reasons why families in New Jersey chose to send their children to Assembly of God day schools. Once these reasons were identified a survey was sent to 17 Assembly of God schools in New Jersey. The survey included a Likert scale which enabled respondents to prioritize their reasons for selecting one of these private evangelical schools. Nine reasons were listed on the scale which would be ranked in order of importance by the families who were responding.

The analysis of collected data revealed that families ranked their nine choices in the following order, from most important to least important, as follows; spiritual environment, academic achievement, quality of teaching staff, disciplinary policy, physical safety, classroom size, quality of facility, quality of equipment, and racial concerns.

The data also demonstrated that there was a difference in responses between families in northern New Jersey and families in southern New Jersey. Although there was consensus on the issues of spiritual environment, academic achievement, quality of facilities and equipment, and racial concerns, there were distinct differences in the areas of physical safety of students, disciplinary policy, classroom size, and quality of teaching staff.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Michael Petrucci, A Study To Assess Parental Choice: Why Families Choose Assemblies of God Day Schools Over Public Schools, 1997, Professor Roberta Diboff, Master of Arts Degree in School Psychology

This study identified and ranked reasons why families choose Assembly of God schools as a substitute to public education. These reasons were ranked in order of importance to families and a comparison of responses was made between respondents from northern New Jersey with those from southern New Jersey.

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Chapter I

Need: What prompted this research

I recently served as administrator of a private evangelical Academy grades K-6 which had little problem maintaining sufficient enrollment until the Logan Township Elementary School District constructed a 14 million dollar educational complex adjacent to our property. During the first year of the public school's operation at this new location, our enrollment decreased by 50% and the following year our census dropped to 30% of the original enrollment. As a result, Beckett Christian Academy closed its doors in August 1994.

The reason for the sudden collapse of this private evangelical school which had a 16 year history of success was obvious. There were several factors which led parents to change their choice about their child's educational environment. Components which precipitated the change in their choice were the location of the new school, physical safety of students within the school environment, a sympathetic approach to religious belief within the local public school district, and the quality of facility and equipment. Basically, the Logan Township Elementary School had become more accommodating to the needs and desires of evangelical parents and won them over.

The enigma which persists in my mind two years later is why these parents transferred their students although Beckett Christian Academy remained superior in other factors such as small class size (not to exceed 15 per class), commitment to the reinforcement of Christian values on a daily basis, and superior results on academic

achievement tests. These areas should have been of primary concern for families who would enroll in a private Christian school. However, it appears that their priorities were not to be assumed in any particular order.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study will be to assess in order of priority, the reasons why evangelical parents choose evangelical schools over public schools. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to determine why families choose Assembly of God day schools in favor of public schools. Although a small number of schools have lost enrollment due to similar situations like those involving the Beckett Christian Academy and the Logan Township Elementary School District, the number of evangelical schools and their enrollment is generally on the increase.

The purpose of this research will be to identify the reasons behind parental choices. Results will be sent to those Assembly of God Schools which respond to this researcher's request for participation. This information should be of great benefit to the future marketing of these schools to their market niche.

Hypothesis:

There are many areas of concern to Pentecostal Christian parents when they must make a decision regarding the enrollment of their children in an evangelical school. Parents are more likely to choose an evangelical school when there is a threat or perceived threat within the public school environment in one or more of the following areas; religious belief, physical safety of the student, low academic achievement, classroom size, quality of teaching staff, disciplinary policy, facility and equipment, and racial integration, etc. Many parents may also feel that by enrolling their child(ren) in an evangelical setting they are simply returning to the foundations of historical American Education.

The determinants which parents will be asked to rank in order of priority may very well be affected by their geographic location in New Jersey as well as the quality of the local public school district in which they reside.

History:

Historically, practically all education in the United States, from its colonial beginnings, included religious training. This religious training was primarily Judeo-Christian in content including the Old and New Testaments as part and parcel of each child's education. It was not until after the First World War and the early 1900's that the two began to separate. The Smith-Hughes Act passed in 1917 was one of the first actions to restrict appropriated federal funds from reaching schools which were religious. (Dierenfield, 1962, p.15-16) The final divorce came on June 25, 1962 with the removal of prayer from the public school environment. This decree was handed down as a result of a Supreme Court case known as Engel v. Vitale. (Dierenfield, 1962, p.v)

This researcher is cognizant that his contemporary in America is unaware of the firmly entrenched roots of religion that were intertwined with every aspect of American culture during its foundation. The following brief history is intended to broaden the reader's knowledge of the relationship of religion to education during the developmental years of our nation. Ornstein and Levine point out that, " the school was seen as handmaiden of the church. Schooling was intended to cultivate a respect for the laws of the theocratic state and for the sanctity of property. In Puritan New England, education encouraged social conformity and religious commitment." (Ornstein & Levine, 19 , p.153)

An early school law enacted in Massachusetts in 1647 was written as follows;

"It being one chiefe project of that ould deluder Satan, to keepe

men from the knowledge of ye Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue...It is therefore ordered, that every township in this jurisdiction after the Lord hath increased it to the number of fifty householders, shall forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to read and write..." (Dierenfield, 1962, p.6)

Joseph Costanzo makes the following summary concerning the pervasiveness of religion and religious belief in American life during the colonial days. He says, "The historical record of our Colonial and Revolutionary periods-the Acts of the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the Constitution, the *Federalist Papers*, the Bill of Rights, the long course of presidential utterances, Congressional acts, and declarations of our supreme judicature-constantly affirms that our American political democracy was conceived in and must survive on moral and religious foundations." (Costanzo,1964, p.28)

Early laws among the colonies reflect the prolific connection between education and religion, such as this royal instruction to Governor Bernard of New Jersey in 1758, "Sec. 67. And it is our further will and pleasure that you recommend to the assembly to enter upon proper methods for the erecting and maintaining of schools in order to the training up of youth to reading and to a necessary knowledge of the principles of religion." (Brown, 1912, p.18) In Massachusetts in 1701 the legislature enacted that every grammar school master should be approved by the minister of the town, and the ministers of the two next adjacent towns or by any two of them. (Brown, 1912, p.34) This appears to be equivalent to what would be described today as a certification process or at the least, a school board acting upon an application to teach. The Massachusetts General Court in May 31, 1654 passed a measure which required exemplary adherence to sound doctrine and moral practice when it stated,

"Forasmuch as it greatly concerns the welfare of this country that the youth thereof be educated, not only in good literature, but sound doctrine, this court doth therefore commend it to the serious consideration and special care of the overseers of the college and the selectmen in the towns, not to admit or suffer any such to be continued in the office or place of teaching, educating, or instructing of youth or children in the college or schools that have manifested themselves unsound in the faith or scandalous in their lives, and not giving due satisfaction according to the rules of Christ."
(Brown, 1912, p.36-37)

Clearly, religion and its resulting morality was part and parcel of the very fiber of the American way of life. There are historic federal court cases which assist in conveying this fact. One such case was *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*, 143 U.S.457 (1892) where Justice Brewer declared that, "Christianity is part of the law of the land," and that "We are a Christian people," and "This is a Christian nation." (Costanzo,1964,p.44)

During the 1800's President Thomas Jefferson worked vehemently to insure that religion was included in public education. Upon retiring from the presidency in 1809 until his death in 1826 he was preoccupied with aiding the State of Virginia with planning the state educational systems. Costanzo says, "Just as he would not allow a man's faith to suffer "civil incapacitations" neither would he allow a man's faith to incur inequality of circumstances and benefits in state schools. (Costanzo, 1964, p. 75)

Jefferson's only desire was to limit sectarian involvement which might offend a person of another sect. Jefferson did believe, however, that there must be religious and moral instruction nonetheless. Some, in fact, most citizens today think of the "wall of separation", a term coined by Jefferson in his letter concerning the Danbury Baptist Association, as a one way issue. They also mistakenly assume that the term had its origin in the First Amendment. It was Thomas Jefferson, not the First Amendment, who in writing to the Danbury Baptist Association sought to calm their

fears by assuring them that the Congress was not in the process of choosing any one single Christian denomination as a "state" denomination. (Federer, 1994, p.324)

The First Amendment does not include the words, "wall of separation" it simply says that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This "establishment clause" as it is sometimes referred to was originally intended to protect religion from the encroachment of government and not the other way around as so many interpret this today.

Dr. Corwin, an authority on constitutional law stated:

"Primarily democracy is a system of ethical values, and that this system of value so far as the American people are concerned is grounded in religion will not be denied by anybody who knows the historical record." (Costanzo, 1964, p.99)

Clearly the aim of the founders of the United States of America was not to exclude religion from the public school system but rather to protect the school system from the dominance of any one group, denomination, or sect. This sentiment remained in place as recently as the 1950's.

One illustration of this is a case involving the federal Supreme Court in *Zorach v. Clausen* in 1952. Judge Desmond states,

"We are a religious people whose institutions presupposes a Supreme Being. We guarantee the freedom of worship as one chooses... When the state encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it follows the best of our tradition. For then it respects the religious nature of our people and accommodates the public service to their spiritual needs... We cannot read into the Bill of Rights (such) a philosophy of hostility to religion." (Costanzo, 1964, p.45)

Further proof of the congenial presence of religion in the schools is the historical fact that the Bible was part of the curriculum in Dallas Public High Schools

as late as 1957. (Barton, 1990, videotape) Though the relationship of religion and education was not always a smooth one, it did endure for more than 300 years of American history, until the removal of prayer from public schools in 1962.

Since Engle v. Vitale in 1962 there have been numerous indications that the public school environment is undebatably an unhealthy one. Academic achievement scores have been on the decline since that year, violence within the public school setting has steadily increased, and there does not seem to be enough money set aside to fulfill the educational objectives of the classroom or to keep facilities up to date in many public school districts. It is as though the Engle v. Vitale court case signalled a rallying cry for the unprecedented emergence of privately funded Evangelical Christian schools throughout the United States.

Prior to this separation of religion from public education there was no clear emphatic call for the advent of Christian evangelical day schools. The only substantial movement towards sectarian education was on the collegiate level in order that there would be schools specifically formed for the training of clergy and other students of the Bible. In Pentecostal circles this level of education was rather informal and provided for through a number of self-accredited Bible Institutes and Bible Training Schools. The emphasis was clearly upon favoring the study of the Bible rather than purely academic pursuits. During the 1920s fundamentalism and pentecostalism became synonymous with anti-intellectualism. (Blumhofer, 1989, v.1 p.321) At any period of time when secular schools appeared to excel in materialism or secularism, these institutes would enter a period of resurgence.

In 1925 CBI, Central Bible Institute opened to serve those who felt called to the ministry. This school was to be the standard for all other institutes. It was to be the first institute set up by the General Council of the Assemblies of God under the direction of the Executive Presbytery of the denomination. (Blumhofer, 1989, v.1 p.319)

In 1953, the development of sectarian institutions took a step forward when the General Council approved the creation of a denominationally-sponsored liberal arts program and 2 years later the Evangel College began operation. In 1959 the college received accreditation by the Committee on Accredited Schools and Colleges of the University of Missouri and in 1965 was accredited by the North Central Accrediting Association. (Blumhofer, 1989, v.2, p.124-125) This was followed by the opening of the Assemblies of God Graduate School some 20 years later, which today is known as the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. (Blumhofer, 1989, v.2, p.128) Today the Assemblies of God boasts in excess of 18 colleges and institutes.

The first significant period of growth concerning alternatives to secular public schools came during the 1970s. As of the publishing date of The Assemblies of God, A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism, there were 1,200 schools sponsored by Assemblies of God churches with an enrollment in excess of 110,000 children. (Blumhofer, 1989, v.1 p.322) It is estimated that there are approximately two million students attending Christian Schools today (Cooper, 1991, pp.63-67) with another one million home schoolers (Mayberry, 1995, p.2) accounting for an approximate percentage of 10% of America's children being educated in a non-Catholic, non-secular, non-public setting. (NCES, 90-075, p.2)

Definitions:

Evangelical: The term evangelical will be used in this research to include all protestant denominations which believe in the basic doctrines of orthodox

Christianity. These same church groups will adhere to the belief that Salvation of man's spirit and soul are only through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God. This term shall apply to all church denominations which are members of the National Association of Evangelicals of which the Assemblies of God is a charter member.

Pentecostal: Describes a branch of evangelical Christianity which believes in the Gift of the Holy Spirit as a subsequent gift from God following personal salvation by belief in Christ as Savior.

General Council of the Assemblies of God: A protestant denomination which is evangelical and pentecostal in doctrine and practice.

Assembly of God: A local church associated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God. Identified by a belief in salvation through Jesus Christ and the subsequent Gift of the Holy Spirit. The Assemblies of God is a sub-group of the larger branch of Protestantism known as Pentecostals.

Environment: Shall pertain to the educational setting, whether it is private and evangelical or public.

Assumptions:

It has been assumed that those schools and parents who will complete a survey will do so thoughtfully and candidly. It is further assumed that the survey was properly constructed and that all of the Assembly of God schools in New Jersey were included in this survey.

Limitations:

Limitations of this study are in the areas of sample size, contents of the sample, the number of schools surveyed, the number of surveys completed and

returned for analysis. The survey instrument has not been tested for reliability or validity, therefore this is another possible limitation.

Overview:

.in Chapter 1 the need, purpose, and hypothesis have been clearly stated. The following chapters will be arranged in the following manner. A review of literature will be presented in chapter 2, the design of the study will be discussed in chapter 3, while chapters 4 and 5 will present an analysis of data and a summary, respectively.

Chapter II

In review of current literature it is readily apparent to this researcher that there are at least three components to be observed when considering the reasons why families choose private Christian education, specifically in Assemblies of God Day Schools. The first and most ubiquitous reason is the steady decline and current condition of public schools in America. A second and closely related essential to this demise of our public school system is the rejection of religion and religious and moral values which began in the 1960's. It is probably not a coincidence that the public schools showed an increase in drug violations, violence, and other crime while at the same time experiencing a 20 year decline in academic achievement scores concurrent with the removal of prayer and religious values in 1962.

It is because of this decline in the public school sector that educational alternatives have been fueled. These choices, which have had their genesis as a reaction to the calamity of public education, is a third factor. Alternatives which have gained in popularity are those such as private secular schools, home schooling, and evangelical church schools. Each of these choices have very definite and separate advantages and parents must choose between these three and public education.

This chapter will be segmented into four main divisions. The first section will provide a historical background of the events which led to the decline of public education, section two will enumerate the present condition of the public education

sector as evaluated through current literature, thirdly, the astronomical growth of religious day schools will be considered as a reaction to this history, and finally, reasons will be given for the popularity of existing educational alternatives, specifically, Assemblies of God Day Schools.

The Decline of Public Education:

The reader must be reminded that church and school were not always separated. Religion, specifically, Judeo-Christian beliefs once permeated all aspects of American society including the education of its citizens. In the New England colonies, for instance, "the school was seen as a handmaiden of the church. Schooling was intended to cultivate a respect for the laws of the theocratic state and for the sanctity of property. In Puritan New England, education encouraged social conformity and religious commitment." (Ornstein, 1993, p.153).

George Stewart Jr. provides us with a picture of how diligently the colonies acted upon legislation which would secure religious education of its citizens. He states, "Connecticut had legal provisions covering nearly all school matters in 1712. Statutes had been passed which provided that: (1) No parent or guardian should 'suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as to have a single child or apprentice unable to read the holy word of God, and the good laws of the colony,' and every one was also 'to bring them up in some lawful calling or employment.'" (Stewart, 1967, p.155)

Next to the Bible itself, the book that was most widely used was the New England Primer which was "the most universally studied school book that has ever been used in America" with more than 3 million copies of it having been printed. (Fleming, 1933, p.80) A sampling of the New England Primer clearly displays its religious content. "The alphabet in the famous New England Primer from

In Adam's Fall
We sinned all
to
Zaccheus he
Did climb the tree
His Lord to see

was definitely religious". (Morison, 1956, p.80)

This was the way that it remained for decades until gradually the United States of America shifted away from its religious beginnings and became increasingly secularized. Very simple and subtle court rulings facilitated this move away from America's foundation. One example of this can be found in the U.S. Supreme Court case, (McCollum v. BOE 1948), where the U. S. Supreme Court held that cooperation between schools and churches was a violation of the establishment clause of the the U.S. Constitution. (Michel, 1994, p.4) Chester E. Finn Jr. believes, "by the 1960's, however, America began a steep and uninterrupted slide toward what might be called decivilization." (Commentary, Oct 1994, p.30)

Today we find ourselves in a situation where the public school system is in a religious vacuum and our society is suffering for this loss. Crime and violence on the school campus is symptomatic of crime and violence in society as a whole. However, it is on the public school campus that the cycle can be broken through educating with values. Adult citizens must be taught moral and religious values when they are young so that they may assimilate them as their own as they grow in years. Christopher Dawson expressed the dangers we face today some 35 years ago in terms which sound highly contemporary. His words sound as though they were written just yesterday. He says,

"The predicament in which the world finds itself today is due essentially to two factors: first to the acute secularization of Western culture and secondly to the revolt of the rest of the world against it. For more than two centuries Western civilization has been losing contact with the religious traditions on which it was originally founded and devoting all its energies to the conquest and organization of the world by economic

and scientific techniques; and for the last fifty years there has been a growing resistance to this exploitation by the rest of the world- a resistance which has now culminated in a revolt which threatens the very existence of Western society." (Dawson, 1961, p. 169)

The institution which has been most sanitized from religious influence has been the public education system. Rather than teach students about varying religious heritages, the goal of public education, intentional or not, has been to exclude all religious references even when they do directly pertain to the history of our nation. "In the name of scrupulous neutrality about religion, we succeed in neutering religion. Our petty squabbles and battlings as religious people have made public education administrators and teachers shy away from religion. With the intent not to offend any religious or irreligious student, our public schools and textbook publishers have been bleaching out all references to religion in textbooks and classrooms. Many religious leaders who are sensitive to the diversity of religious views among students, teachers, and administrators have welcomed this restraint. But the clorox approach to religious pluralism is beginning to weaken the fabric of faith it was intended to respect." (Shriver, 1988, p.31)

Clearly there is as much danger to bleaching out religion from the public school arena as there is danger in promoting one faith above another. It would be proper to remind the reader once again that the intent of the first amendment and Jefferson's coining the phrase, "wall of separation" was not to remove religion from the American society so as to secularize this society but rather only to prevent the establishment of a national or state church. David Purpel in his text, The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education, states, "It is my general position that education is at root a moral endeavor and that its present crisis is best seen as such in order to reflect not only on the educational process but on the larger culture as well." (Purpel, 1989, p.65) He continues, "We say officially that we are one nation 'under God', yet we constitutionally have mandated separation of church and state." (Purpel, 1989, p. 37)

The negative results of removing all trace of religion from education is being felt today. French Philosopher, Alexis deTocqueville once said,

"In the United States the influence of religion is not confined to the manners, but it extends to the intelligence of the people.... Christianity, therefore reigns without obstacle, by universal consent; the consequence is, as I have before observed, that every principle of the moral world is fixed and determinate... I sought for the key to the greatness and genius in her harbors...; in her fertile fields and boundless forests; in her rich mines and vast world commerce; in her public school system and institutions of learning. I sought for it in her democratic Congress and in her matchless Constitution. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great." (Federer, 1994, p. 205)

The American public has been sold short on the importance of religion in the classroom. Emile Durkheim knew well the power of religion in social context. He lists four aspects;

"First religion is necessary to society, not merely in an abstract sense, but as a vital mechanism of human beings and as a realm of unifying symbols....Second, religion is a key element and a basic context of social change....Third, religion's...most fundamental and enduring elements are social....The greatest power of religion lies not in what it teaches man about the after-life or about cosmology, but in what its symbols and rituals, cults and churches and sects of membership in society, the feeling of belonging to what Edmund Burke had called the partnership of the dead, the living, and the unborn....Fourth, there is an unbreakable relation between religion and the origins of human language and thought." (Nisbet, 1974, p.164-165)

Removing religion from the arena of public education has cost public education the measure of excellence which it once took for granted. Certainly there are other related causes to the decline of public education as we know it. Myron Lieberman says that, "Like individuals, social institutions die...." (Lieberman, 1993, p. 1) He further states that there are three kinds of factors which can explain the demise of public education. One is social and demographic change, we live in an aging population. The involvement of public education in controversial policies such as

sex education is another factor which can contribute to a lack of support for the institution. Thirdly, a move towards a market approach to education may also be hurting the public school system. (Lieberman, 1993, p.3)

This researcher would propose that the underlying reason for the demise of the public education system is the removal of religion from its domain. A slow and gradual drifting away from America's moral moorings have left her adrift not only as a society in general but with an educational system which is struggling and gasping for direction.

Current condition of the public education system:

With the foundation of America's morality having been compromised and removed from the educational system there has been a related fallout in areas of academic achievement. In a report to the nation, A Nation at Risk, one of the indicators of an ailing educational system which is listed is a "virtually unbroken decline" in SAT scores from 1963 to 1980. Another indicator is that "the average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests is now lower than 26 years ago when Sputnik was launched." (US Dept of Ed 1983, p. 8) "SAT verbal scores have dropped from a mean of 478 in 1962 to 423 in 1994- a drop of 54 points. The SAT mean math score has fallen from 502 to 479- a drop of 23 points", says Charles Sykes. (Sykes, 1995, p.22) This is the academic condition of public schools, there is also a need to consider other current indicators of the condition of America's public schools and these do not show much improvement. A 1988 estimate of school violence found that 500,000 incidents occurred every month in public secondary schools. Furthermore, the three greatest problems reported by the fifteen largest school districts were weapons on school grounds, gangs, and drugs. (Hagerty, 1995, p. 72) School security today now beckons for the aid of experts in criminal law enforcement. J. Barry Hylton, Ph.D., CFE has recently published a guide for security

and loss prevention in the public school setting entitled, Safe Schools, A Security and Loss Prevention Plan. In this text he informs the reader that,

"The issues in school security today are not much different from the issues with which most police departments and communities are dealing except that they involve children in the eyes of the law. School campuses, once 'islands of safety,' now face violence every day. Violence among young people and in our schools has increased at an alarming and unacceptable rate." (Hylton, 1996, p.xi)

Other reports give these grim numerical statistics;

525,000 attacks, shakedowns, robberies occur each month in public high schools
3 million crimes committed on or near school property each year- 16,000 per day
135,000 students carry guns to school daily
1/5 report carrying a weapon of some type
21% avoid using school restrooms for fear of harm
1/3 of public school teachers have thought about leaving teaching because of student misbehavior (Kilpatrick, 1992, p. 14)

Nationally,

40% of all high school students have tried marijuana
35% have used stimulants
16% have experimented with cocaine (Marshall, 1985, p.37)

Academically,

SAT scores plunged to an all time low in 1980
13% of the nation's high school graduates read and write at a 6th grade level
the national drop-out rate is 25% (Marshall, 1985, p.5)

Concerning facilities,

More than 22,000 school buildings are inadequate
13% of these are structurally unsound (Hoppenstedt, 1989, p.13)

A teacher survey on safe, disciplined and Drug-free schools found these results;

51% of teachers had been verbally abused
19% had been verbally abused within the last 4 weeks
16% had been threatened with physical injury

8% had been threatened with physical injury in the last 12 months
7% has been physically attacked
2% had been physically attacked in the last 12 months (NCES 91-091
p.13)

Still there are other factors that are listed as reasons why the nation's public schools get such poor educational outcomes. These are;

Poor public image
lack of supplies
work overload, non-teaching duties
over crowded classes
absence of disciplining codes
threats of violence
difficult students
passive students
student absenteeism
work environment of teachers (Felt, 1985, p.33-38)

The New York Times reported in December 1994 that according to the State's Education Commissioner, Leo Klagholz, 14% of New Jersey's seniors had failed the state proficiency exam required for graduation. (NY Times, p. B10)

If the students themselves are an accurate indicator of the condition of our public schools, then a national survey reporting that children rate their schools lower than their parents may be even further revelation that something is wrong. Westar, a research firm for the National Center for Educational Statistics found that although 83% of parents believed that their children were being challenged at school, only 28% of the students felt this way. (Wall Street Journal, May 9,1994, p.B1)

Frederick Close of the Washington D.C. based Ethics Resource Center gives his summation of today's public schools when he is quoted in the Christian Science Monitor as saying, "The fundamental tragedy of American Education is not that we are turning out ignoramuses but that we are turning out savages." (Christian Science Monitor, Aug 29, 1994, p.7) The irony in this is that this is the surprising result when America has spent more money than ever before on its educational system.

"Per pupil expenditures in the public schools have tripled in real terms since the 1950's, have doubled since the mid-60's (when, by most gauges, our troubles began), and rose by about a third during the Reagan-Bush years of the 80's", says Chalres E. Finn Jr. (Commentary Oct.1994 P. 30) He continues,"Parents all over the country are increasingly aware that the public education system in America is an embarrassment." (Commentary Oct.1994,p.27)

Money does not seem to be the answer for reforming our schools, it hasn't worked nationally, and it has not worked in New Jersey. The problem is a moral one, not a fiscal dilemma. In 1990-1991 New Jersey spent over \$8,000.00 per pupil, this is \$3,000.00 more than the average for all states. (Howe, 1993, p.98)

Experimenting with Alternatives:

School Districts are searching for answers to the problems which are ailing our nation's public schools. The Federal government has attempted plans for reform. President Bush proposed America 2000 which never passed into law and then Congress passed Goals 2000 in March of 1994 when President Bill Clinton signed it into law. (America, June 1994, p.6) However, these pieces of legislation have had little impact. As a result, school districts have resorted to taking matters into their own hands by privatizing their schools. Thirty-two public schools in Hartford, Connecticut were slated for private management by Educational Alternatives of Minneapolis according to an August 27, 1994 article in the New York Times. (NY Times, p.26) An editorial in the San Diego Business Journal encourages its readers to be responsive to any future proposals of privatization. (SDBJ, May 1994, p.11) In Baltimore, the Barclay public school has borrowed and implemented the same curriculum as the private and prestigious Calvert School in hopes that academics will improve. (NYTimes, Feb 1995, p.B7) The results of each of these alternatives are yet to be measured.

It is obvious that to many parents, these possibilities have come "too little too late". From the beginning of the decline of the public school system parents have sought out viable alternatives in order to fulfill their desire for a quality learning environment for their children. Private secular schools have been around for decades and were always accessible to the affluent and status conscious.

However, with the secularization of our public schools, parents began to investigate newer alternatives, such as home schooling and the church-related religious day school. The growth of both of these educational choices has been phenomenal. Actual growth of home schooled children has reached the level predicted by John Naisbitt who in 1982 in his book Megatrends had foreseen 1,000,000 children being educated in Home Schools (Naisbitt, 1982, p.144) Concerns about children's physical safety, academic and moral training, and socialization experiences led parents to seriously consider the option of home education. (Mayberry, 1995, p.2) According to Mayberry, there were approximately one million home schooled children in our nation during the 1993-94 school year. (Mayberry, 1995, p.8)

Concerning the growth of private Christian schools the figures are even more startling. Non-denominational private schools increased in enrollment from 199,000 in 1965-66 to approximately 915,000 in 1988-89 while denominational schools increased from 110,000 to 985,000 during this same period. For the most part, these enrollments were from families who had previously been supportive of the public school system. (Cooper, 1991, p.63-67) It is also interesting to note that Catholic schools had a decrease in enrollment from 9.1% of all students in the United States to 6.0% during this same time period while nonpublic religious schools grew from 2.0% to 4.7% of the student population. (Doerr, 1991, p.49-50) By the 1987-88 school year all private schools made up almost 25% of the total, with 26,807 private schools in our nation as compared to 78,561 public schools. (NCES 90-075, p.96)

It is evident that these alternatives to public education are here to stay and that they will continue to grow in size and influence. As long as there are problems in the public school sector parents will continue to support the choice for private Christian education.

Reasons why parents choose private Christian Schools:

Barbara Gaddy in her book School Wars employs 234 pages outlining reasons why Christians have rejected the public school arena. (Gaddy, 1995) However, we need to keep in mind that not only have parents been driven from the public schools because of their lower academic achievement, danger to physical safety of students, removal of religious and moral values, and lack of disciplining codes, but they have also been drawn to the brighter prospects of a private Christian education for their children. It is very possible that the decline of the public school was only a catalyst to cause the parent to consider an alternative. Now once inside the alternative school setting the parent may realize first hand the many benefits of being part of a private Christian school.

Parents may enjoy their new found benefits that are characteristic of all independent Christian schools. Kane provides a list of "Characteristics of Independent Schools" and they are as follows; self-governance, self-support, self-defined curriculum, self-selected students, self-selected faculty, and small class size. Autonomy is characteristic in all areas of operation. (Kane, 1992, p.5-12) These parents are often most satisfied with their child's school because they are involved with the school. Parental attitudes towards the school appear to be linked to their level of involvement in the school. (Kane, 1992, p.228)

There is almost a pioneer feeling about being a Christian School parent. Parents believe that it is their responsibility to fulfill the Biblical mandate to educate their children. Scripture verses such as Proverbs 22:6, Deut.6:6-7, and Ephesians 6:4

all serve to encourage the parents to raise their children according to their own belief system. (Randall, 1994,p.125)

Class size is another benefit of this educational setting. Typically, the class size in a private Christian school is around 15 students. Mayberry suggests, "when classrooms are smaller than 15 students it is possible to see an increase in achievement." (Mayberry, 1992, p.43) Discipline becomes a non-issue in this setting. Positive characteristics become more numerous such as better school-parent relationships, school spirit, and character development. Each of these is an indicator of a good school. (Wynne, 1980,p.1-16)

Although Christian School teachers are usually paid much less than their public school counterparts they seem to be more satisfied. In a 1987-88 survey it was found that public school teachers average an annual salary of \$27,255 while Assembly of God teachers average only \$12,583. (NCES 92-079,p.23) One teacher at a Christian Academy in a small Wisconsin city explains anecdotally why some individuals would be willing to work for such a disparate salary, "After you've been here several years, you realize you're in the place the Lord wants you to be. You could go elsewhere and make more money but you probably wouldn't be happy." (Peshkin, 1986, p.64)

As for academic achievement, Kane says," In essence, we believe that private schools outperform public schools because they are more effectively organized—they have clearer goals, stronger leadership, more professional teachers, higher academic expectations for all students, and a coherent, team approach to education." (Kane,1992, p.306)

Christian parents choose their schools for the same reasons that other parents choose theirs with of course the added dimension of spirituality. One study done in 1978 by Bridge and Blackman concludes that the following factors are influential in parental choice of a school for their children:

1. Parent's child-rearing values affect their choices.
2. Geographic proximity is a factor.
3. Better-educated parents use more sources of information in making their choices.
4. About 1/3 of parents choose a school because of what is taught.
5. About 1/5 choose a school because of the staff.
6. Lower-class parents choose a school for basic skills and strict discipline while more affluent parents choose a school for its flexibility. (Haggerty,1995,p.5-6)

Parents choose private Christian schools and Assembly of God schools because there is a difference. A few of the differences are best shown in direct comparison as below;

Graduation rate of students:

Public School	92.3%
Religious	96.0%

Percentage distribution of teachers by perceptions about seriousness of problems:

Verbal abuse of teachers

Public School	34.1% not a problem
Assembly of God	76.2% not a problem

Student drug abuse

Public School	44.8% not a problem
Assembly of God	90.8% not a problem

Student possession of weapons

Public School	69.2% not a problem
Assembly of God	98.6% not a problem

Physical abuse of teachers

Public School	80.7% not a problem
Assembly of God	99.6% not a problem

Vandalism of school property

Public School	29.1% not a problem
Assembly of God	64.7% not a problem

Student pregnancy

Public School	58.0% not a problem
Assembly of God	97.1% not a problem

Student use of alcohol

Public School	48.1% not a problem
Assembly of God	90.4% not a problem

Student absenteeism

Public School	16.7% not a problem
Assembly of God	28.1% not a problem

(NCES 92-079,p.35-39)

As may be seen by the comparisons above there is a wide gap between the problems of public schools and those which are church related. Parents everywhere are looking for something better, with fewer negative elements and many more positive advantages for their children. "There is a growing hunger for a return to old-style values and morality, values education is growing in popularity." (Hilary, Times Ed Suppl July 1994 p.12) The research would appear to indicate that schools which respond to the needs and wants of parents will continue to flourish.

Chapter III

Sample:

Information concerning Assembly of God schools in New Jersey was available through the annual publication of the Christian School Directory which is published by the Christian School Representative's Office and the Executive Director of the Association of Christian Teachers and Schools. These are ministries of the Assemblies of God Division of Christian Education located in Springfield, Missouri.

The 1996 publication of the Christian School Directory contains a listing of 38 Assembly of God church sponsored schools throughout New Jersey. The schools listed in the directory, although similar in purpose, mission, and religious emphasis, are distinct from one another in categories such as the size of their student body, grade levels of instruction which are offered, and methods of administration. The New Jersey schools listed in the 1996 directory have a total enrollment of 4,280 students including preschool age children (CSD, 1996, p.38-40). Individual school enrollments varied from 9 students in one school to as many as 381 in another location. Grade levels in all schools included preschool age children, however, the highest grade level offered varied greatly. Not every school went to as high as twelfth grade, many continued only until the 6th or 8th grade level.

This research will include all of these schools, even those which have only a preschool and do not offer education in the elementary, junior high, or senior high levels.

Operational Measures:

The device used to measure the characteristics of this study is a self-report survey which will determine the priority and significance of reasons why families choose Assembly of God Schools over public schools. The main section of the survey contains nine reasons listed for parents to rank in order of importance regarding their child's enrollment in an Assembly of God school. They were not permitted to add their own reasons apart from the survey choices, however, they were provided with an area for any comments which they might like to add.

Two other areas of information that was gathered in the survey asked parents to estimate the annual tuition cost of their choice and to express their perception of what type of community they lived in, whether it was rural, suburban, small city, large city, or inner city. Although these two areas are not critical to the hypothesis of this research, they may add helpful insight concerning the level of parental commitment to private Christian education as well as providing a description for the community environment surrounding the public school choice which they have decided to avoid.

An illustration of the survey is provided on the following page. The template that is shown was printed onto card stock and used as a 4" X 6" postcard with the survey questions on one side and the reply address on the opposite side. It was decided that respondents would be more compliant with this request for information if they knew that confidentiality would be strictly honored. By being able to mail the survey back to the researcher directly parents would have no concern for their school's administration learning of their individual responses.

Survey: Why families choose Assembly of God Schools over Public Schools
 Please complete this brief survey and drop into a mailbox within 2 days. This survey is part of a Graduate Research project that I am conducting. Individual responses will be kept in strict confidence, however the results as a whole will be supplied to all participating schools to assist them in future planning.

Please select **only one** which best describes the type of community in which you live

1. Rural
2. Suburban
3. Small City
4. Large City
5. Inner City

Which choice best represents your annual total tuition cost?

1. under \$2,000, per year
2. between \$2,000 and \$3,000.
3. between \$3,000 and \$4,000.
4. between \$4,000 and \$5,000.
5. more than \$5,000, per year

Please rank the following choices from 1 to 9 with #1 being the most important and #9 being the least important reason for your family choosing this school.

1. Physical safety of students
2. Spiritual environment
3. Academic excellence
4. Effective student discipline
5. Racial concerns
6. Quality of teaching staff
7. Quality of facility
8. Quality of equipment
9. Class size

Comments: _____

School _____

Michael Petrucci
 16 Lynn Place
 Swedesboro, NJ 08085

Cover letters were also included with each survey card thanking the respondent in advance for their participation in the survey, informing them of the purpose for this study, and assuring them that a summary of all results would be reported back to each school which participated in the study. A cover letter was also sent to each school administrator including similar information. Both letters may be found in the appendix of this research.

Design:

Upon the receipt of all completed surveys, an independent t-test will be utilized in order to compare rankings as designated by the respondents. A comparison will be made between those responses received from parents in North Jersey with those received from parents in South Jersey.

The regional distinction between North and South Jersey residents will be made arbitrarily by drawing a boundary across the state from Trenton through New Brunswick. This essentially divides the state into two geographically equal halves. The reader should be aware that although North Jersey will consist of more inner city locations there is also the possibility that responses will include those who are enrolled in schools in rural areas of the northern part of the state as well.

Hypothesis:

The null hypothesis of this study will be that there are no differences in the ranking of the reasons why families choose Assembly of God Schools over Public Schools in a regional comparison of families in Northern New Jersey with those who reside in Southern New Jersey.

The alternate hypothesis will be that families in Northern New Jersey choose Assembly of God schools for different reasons than their counterparts in Southern

New Jersey. Families in North Jersey will choose "physical safety of students" as their primary concern while families in South Jersey will choose "classroom size" as their main reason for selecting an Assembly of God school for their children.

Analysis:

The data collected in this research survey will be descriptively presented and analyzed using graphic representations comparing the frequency of responses to each of the nine choices to be ranked. Non-parametric methods will be used to compare the responses from the families in North Jersey with families in South Jersey.

Summary:

By surveying Assembly of God schools in New Jersey it will be possible to determine the reasons why some families are choosing private Christian education as an alternative to public education. The survey will also illustrate the ranking of these reasons in order of significance. Whether or not there is a difference in the ranking of order between North Jersey and South Jersey residents, the information gleaned by the survey will assist Assembly of God sponsored schools to know why families are choosing their educational setting instead of a public school setting.

Chapter IV

Report of Survey:

In this chapter a report will be presented which will analyze the rank order of responses as to why parents have chosen to send their children to an Assemblies of God school. There will also be a comparison of these choices between the ranking of reasons given by families in northern New Jersey with those reasons given by families in southern New Jersey.

The hypothesis given in chapters 1 & 3 stated that there would be a difference in responses between these two regions of the state. The results will be stated in written form and then in graphic presentation.

A total of 1,608 surveys were mailed to Assembly of God schools throughout New Jersey, a sample of which is included in chapter 3. Each school principal was pre-approached by telephone and asked if they would kindly participate in this research project. They were also asked for a census of families in order that a sufficient number of surveys and coverletters could be mailed to their school.

Seventeen schools, ten from northern New Jersey and seven from southern New Jersey agreed to participate. Eventually, 482 surveys were returned representing sixteen of the schools that were approached, one school from northern New Jersey did not return any responses. Of these 482 surveys 71 were improperly completed and could not be included in the data summary. Therefore the statistical calculations are based upon 411 surveys representing better than a 25% response rate.

The following (Table 4.1) is a summary of the ranking of nine variables which were to be listed in order of importance to each family on the survey. These nine areas are; spiritual environment, physical safety of the student, academic achievement, classroom size, quality of teaching staff, disciplinary policy, quality of the facility, quality of school equipment, and racial concerns.

The list below shows the ranking of the nine choices as they were selected in order of frequency of responses. The percentage score which follows each choice indicates the degree of consensus which this item received regarding its placement. For example 61.8% of the respondents agreed that spiritual environment was a deciding factor in ranking this item as a number one priority. On the other hand 67.2% of the 411 respondents believed that racial concerns were least important and they agreed to rank this item as number 9. When any other item shows a low percentage it means that there was not a strong consensus concerning its ranking, that responses were actually very similar, and that there was a broader range of opinion. The percentage is the percent of votes the item received from the respondents.

Table 4.1

1	Spiritual environment	61.8%
2	Academic achievement	41.8%
3	Quality of teaching staff	26.5%
4	Disciplinary policy	19.7%
5	Physical safety	17.3%
6	Classroom size	15.8%
7	Quality of facility	24.1%
8	Quality of equipment	37.5%
9	Racial concerns	67.2%

From the numerical presentation in Table 4.1 it is exceptionally interesting to note the strength of opinion which is illustrated by the ranking of items number 1 and number 9. Regarding item number one, the families who were surveyed made a very clear statement when 61.8% of them chose the spiritual environment of their school as the number one reason for why they chose an Assembly of God school for their educational needs instead of a public school. Furthermore, when considering the number of families who ranked this item as being of either primary or secondary importance, almost three-fourths of those surveyed, 74% believed that this was an extremely important reason for sending their students to an Assemblies of God day school.

On the other end of the scale families made it clear by the strength of their choices that racial concerns were of very little importance. More than 67% of the families placed this choice in last place and a combined 78% ranked it in the lowest two levels of concern.

It appears obvious then that beyond the primary reason of selecting a spiritual environment for their students, that is one which will encourage moral, ethical, and religious development, families who chose an Assemblies of God school made this choice purely for educational reasons. As the numerical listing on the previous page demonstrates, the areas of most concern beyond that of the spiritual qualities of the chosen school are related to academic issues, the quality of the teaching staff, and disciplinary policies within the educational setting. These families felt that a private Christian setting provided them with more in these areas than they would have received in the public arena.

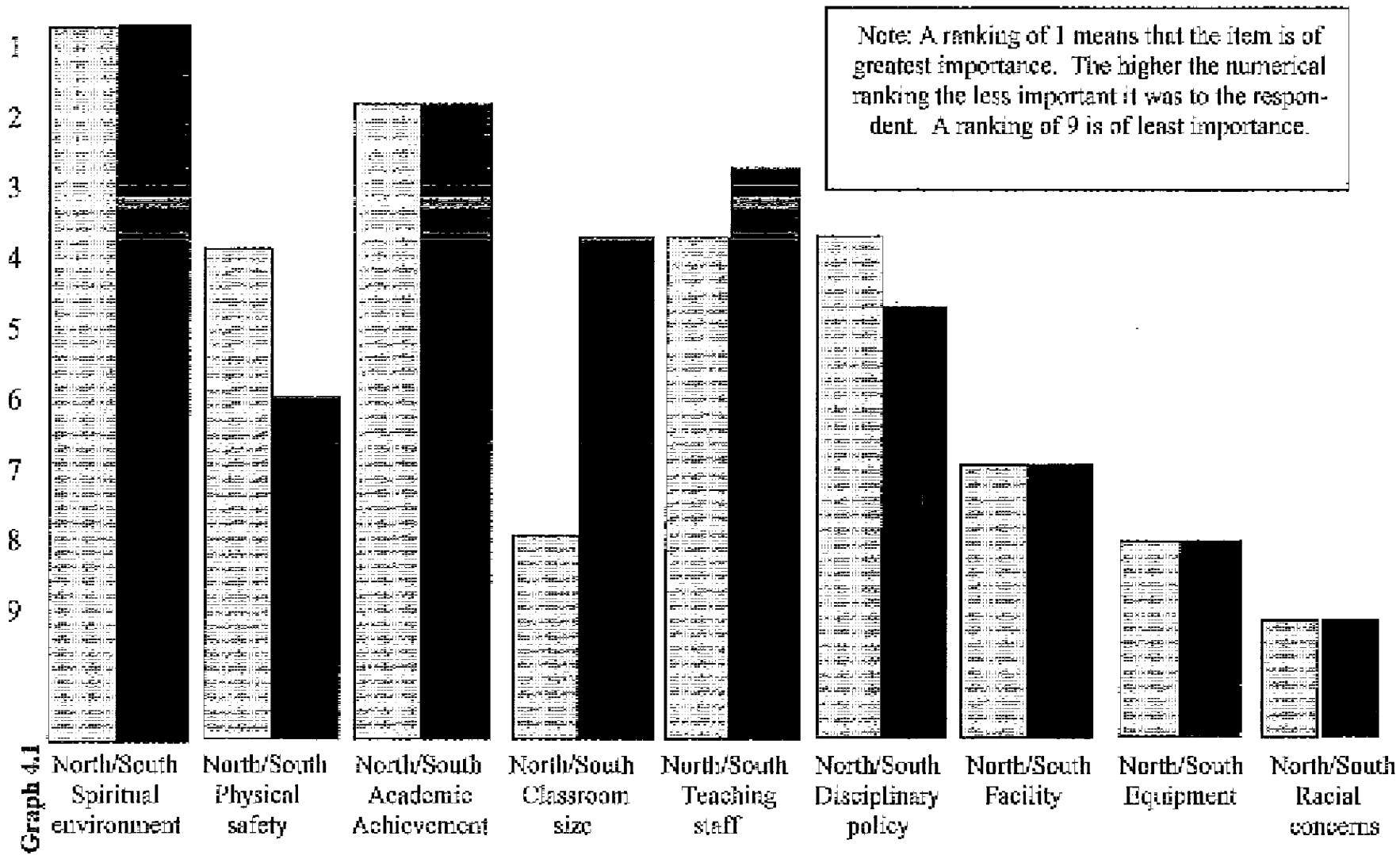
It should also be mentioned that the fact that families ranked such items as the physical safety of their students, classroom size, the quality of the facility and school equipment at the lower end of the scale displays that they believe that these are only

cursor to the educational process and of much less importance. Racial concerns, having been selected as a final choice demonstrates that these families are not seeking a Christian school for the purpose of segregation but instead demonstrates the Christian ethic of tolerance for all others regardless of race or national origin.

In comparing the responses by region within the state there seems to be some agreement on how items were ranked. Respondents from both the northern and southern portions of New Jersey agreed that spiritual environment and academics are of primary and secondary importance, respectively. There was no geographical difference in these two choices. Likewise, the quality of facility and the quality of school equipment also found agreement between the two groups and racial concerns were equally unimportant being ranked in last place.

The greatest differences between these two groups of families were in the areas of physical safety and disciplinary policy which appeared to be of much greater significance in the schools which are located in North Jersey. Schools located in South Jersey were more concerned than their northern counterparts with issues such as the quality of the teaching staff and classroom size.

A graphic presentation of this comparison is shown on page 34 (Graph 4.1) which follows. As the graph illustrates, the alternate hypothesis can be accepted since there is clearly a difference between the responses received from families whose children attend Assembly of God schools in northern New Jersey and those who attend schools in southern New Jersey. The greatest distinctions can be made in their concern about the physical safety of students and classroom size. These findings would indicate that families in North Jersey are more often faced with the problem of school safety issues while the classroom size in public schools are of more concern to families living in southern New Jersey.



As may be seen by the graph on page 34, families who live in northern New Jersey ranked the physical safety of students with a priority of 4 out of the nine choices given while families in the southern area of the state thought that it was of a lower priority of only six. Concerning disciplinary policy families in the southern area of New Jersey ranked this item by selecting it as number 5 on their list of priorities while their northern counterparts felt that this item was less important and expressed their choice with a rank of 6.

It also appears that families in South Jersey are more concerned with overcrowding in public schools than families in northern New Jersey. This item received a rank of number 4 from families in the southern region while northern New Jersey families listed it in eighth place being just more important than racial concerns. One final difference between the two areas was in the choice of the quality of teaching staff. Southern New Jersey families were more concerned about this aspect of education than those families who live in North Jersey.

It is obvious then that there are regional differences within New Jersey as to why families choose Assembly of God schools over public schools. It should also be added that families who make the decision to choose an Assembly of God school do so at an average annual cost of between \$2,000 and \$3,000 as indicated from the surveys. A numerical description of survey data concerning tuition costs per family is shown below (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Annual tuition	Number of families from Northern New Jersey	Number of families from Southern New Jersey
Less than \$2,000 per year	24	14
\$2,000-\$3,000 per year	105	67
\$3,000-\$4,000 per year	40	47
\$4,000-\$5000 per year	29	17
\$5,000+ per year	36	32

The largest group, which spends between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per year on tuition for Christian education accounts for 41.8% of those surveyed. The next largest group pays between \$3,000 and \$4,000 per year in tuition expenses and account for 21.2% of respondents. The smallest grouping of families are those who spend less than \$2,000 per year towards their student's education and they make up 9.2% of survey participants.

The survey questionnaire not only asked about annual cost of tuition, but also presented a question about the type of community in which each family lived. More than half of the respondents described the community in which they live as being suburban, more than 54% chose this response. On the other end of the scale, less than 3% described their community as being inner city and only slightly more than 2% described their place of residence as being located in a large city. This information is interesting since it appears that some of the respondents are driving their children from a domicile in a suburban area to an Assembly of God school which is located in an area which could be described as a city. Apparently the perceived quality of education is not diminished by the location of the school. Table 4.3 below provides a summary presentation of this data.

Table 4.3

Community Type	Number of families	Percentage of families
Rural	99	24.1%
Suburban	225	54.7%
Small City	65	15.8%
Large City	10	2.4%
Inner City	12	2.9%

An effort was also made to look for a correlation between the cost of annual tuition and the ranking of the nine issues which are displayed in Graph 4.1. The results of this search demonstrated that there was in fact a different order of priorities for those who spent the average tuition as compared with those who spent \$5,000 or more per year on education. It was found that these two groups agreed in only four areas of concern. These four areas are spiritual environment, academic achievement, quality of facility, and racial concerns. The comparison is illustrated below in

Table 4.4

Table 4.4

Ranking by Families spending \$2,000-\$3,000 per year	Area of Concern	Ranking by Families spending \$5,000 or more per year
1	Spiritual environment	1
2	Academic achievement	2
3	Quality of teaching staff	4
4	Disciplinary policy	3
6	Physical safety of students	7
8	Classroom size	6
5	Quality of facility	5
7	Quality of equipment	8
9	Racial concerns	9

In summary not only was the alternate hypothesis found acceptable, not only was there a different order of priorities based upon regional responses in New Jersey, but there was also a different order of priorities found based upon the amount of tuition paid by families. It should further be noted that when the northern and southern regions found agreement regarding the importance of an item it was in a

most demonstrable fashion and included the three areas with the highest level of consensus, spiritual environment, academic achievement, and racial concerns.

Chapter V

Summary:

This survey study identified major reasons and their order of importance regarding why families select Assemblies of God day schools as alternatives to public education. This research demonstrates that there is both a perceived and a genuine difference between the two types of education. Although some of the areas in which respondents judged the quality of teaching staff, quality of equipment, and facility may be considered as perceived differences, it is indisputable that the greatest difference between the two types of schools is in the area of spiritual environment. It is also noteworthy to mention that this very real difference was the number one reason given for why families choose Assembly of God schools instead of public schools. Families in New Jersey, regardless of which region they live in are convinced that only Assembly of God schools can provide the spiritual environment which they desire for their children. One parent offered this comment explaining why the spiritual environment of an Assemblies of God school was so important. The parent stated, "The subject matter in public schools has gotten far too liberal and humanistic. One of my sons encountered teachings on the occult when they were told to make an amulet in Art class and write a spell for it. I could cite other incidents too."

The survey that is shown on page 27 was administered to parents who currently have children enrolled in an Assemblies of God school in New Jersey. It may be assumed that many who responded to the survey have previously experienced

public education and that their preferences are appropriately based upon an accurate comparison of the two types of educational settings. In fact, some of the respondents revealed that they were teachers in the public school system who were sending their children to an Assembly of God school. One comment by a parent who is a public school teacher expressed the opinion that their child was receiving an education which trained the child in every dimension, not just academically. Another parent in describing the contrast in educational settings commented, "Public school did not meet the needs of my child."

The survey instrument was constructed with a desire to be simple and direct with a minimal imposition being placed upon the respondent. Information was requested concerning the type of community in which the respondent lived. A second question asked about the tuition cost of their school choice and then the final section was a Likert scale requesting a ranking of nine reasons for choosing an Assemblies of God school. These nine possible choices were taken from a review of current literature.

Conclusions:

This study arrived at 4 primary conclusions:

- 1) The first and most obvious conclusion is that parents who have their children enrolled in an Assemblies of God school do so with the spiritual environment of the school foremost in mind. The survey indicated that respondents believed that this was the number one reason for choosing an Assembly of God school as an alternative to education in a public school setting. One parent may have spoken for most others when they wrote, "Christian schools are an extension of most family values that are very important to parents." This one choice, spiritual environment, outdistanced all others on the survey list. Even the second most popular choice, academic excellence, was a distant contender for the number one

position. To illustrate how academics and spiritual environment compare with one another, a parent made this comment, "You can buy a good education at a lot of schools but a Christian environment with Godly teachers is priceless."

2) The second conclusion which can be drawn from the survey is that racial concerns are somewhat insignificant to those who attend Assembly of God schools. Families appeared to be in agreement that they are not seeking a method of segregation via privately funded Christian education. In fact, many of the respondents made comments adjacent to this choice on the survey card strongly indicating that race should not even have been a choice. Several respondents simply wrote "N/A, not applicable" next to this choice. More families agreed that racial concerns were of least priority than those who agreed that spiritual environment was of the highest priority.

3) A third conclusion of the survey found that most families who responded spend between \$2,000.00 and \$3,000.00 per year to send their children to an Assemblies of God school with many others spending even higher amounts on tuition. This is a sizable self-imposed tax which families appear willing to spend in order to insure their right to choose their child's educational setting. One parent who indicated spending more than \$4,000.00 per year on tuition commented, "It's a big sacrifice financially, but it's worth it!" Another parent said, "I feel that I am getting my money's worth, more than in public school."

4) A final conclusion which proved interesting is that the bulk of respondents indicated that they lived in a community which could be described as suburban. This would seem to demonstrate that public schools in suburban areas are not considered to be any more desirable to these families than those which are in large populated areas or in the inner city. It also indicates that the majority of respondents were not attempting to flee the inner city and problems associated with that type of educational environment.

Implications for Future Research:

Further research on this topic could include a survey which would be expanded to inquire about the respondent's opinion of the public school in the community where they live. A comparison could then be made between the public school they would have or may have already utilized and the school which they are now attending. Another question could be asked concerning the grade level of their children in order to determine if there was a distinction regarding which items are of importance at different ages. Several respondents in this survey mentioned their desire for more Christian High Schools, indicating that their children were probably enrolled in a K-8 setting at present.

It may also be interesting to devise a survey to inquire about deficiencies within the Assembly of God schools. The Likert scale that was used gave instructions for rating their child's school in a positive manner. There were no options for a respondent to list any possible weaknesses in their choice of school. For example, some respondents had indicated in the space provided for comments that their private Christian school was lacking in physical education equipment and facilities.

Further research could also be done by expanding the survey to include the opinions of those families in other states. It is quite possible that the concerns of families in New Jersey are different than those who live in other less densely populated states. Also, those who reside in the southern and western regions of our country may differ in their preferences from those who domicile in the Northeast. It would also be interesting to compare this study with the results of families who have enrolled their children in non-denominational Christian schools.

It is clear that there is a need for much further research in the area of school choice. The information which would be gleaned from future research would be of

value to all schools, public and private. Research similar to this study would assist all schools in determining their strengths and weaknesses and in clarifying their mission and purpose to their constituents. Further research like this would also enable schools to assess how they are achieving the goals which they have set for themselves.

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APPENDIX

Michael Petrucci
16 Lynn Place
Swedesboro, NJ 08085
(609) 467-1631

November 1996

Dear Pastor/School Administrator:

I am currently enrolled in a Graduate Program at Rowan College of New Jersey. I am working on my Thesis for the partial fulfillment of graduation requirements. My thesis requires not only literature review and library research but also a survey similar to that which is enclosed.

I am enclosing an appropriate number of coverletter/survey postcards for the parents of your school. If you would be so kind as to distribute these to your school's parents and urge them to follow through I will not only be able to graduate this coming Spring but I will send you a summary of the survey which may help you to know why families are choosing your school over public school. This should prove to be very helpful for future marketing. In a way, it will help you to know for sure what your school's strengths are compared to public education.

When I had administrated a Christian Academy I was always wondering why our parents chose us. Sometimes I thought that I knew and then other times I was sure that it was only a guess. I am surveying all Assemblies of God schools in New Jersey and if you will participate I will share my findings at no cost to you.

Please look over the attached information and distribute as soon as possible. Should you have any questions or need additional survey postcards please do not hesitate to contact me. **Please distribute only one postcard per family.** I very much appreciate your help in this endeavor.

Thank you and God Bless,

Michael Petrucci

P.S. Please distribute no later than December 6.

Michael Petrucci
16 Lynn Place
Swedesboro, NJ 08085
(609) 467-1631

November 1996

Dear Christian School Parent:

Your school's administrator has graciously permitted me to circulate the very brief questionnaire attached to this cover letter. Please notice that there are only three areas which need your response and these should take no more than 3 minutes of your time.

The reason for this postcard questionnaire is two-fold. First, I need to gather the information on the postcard in order to partially fulfill the requirements of the Graduate Studies Program that I am enrolled in. The **second purpose** is to provide your school, as well as all other Assemblies of God sponsored schools in New Jersey, with a summary explaining why families choose Christian Schools over public schools.

I believe that this information will be valuable to your school's administrator. Thousands of these questionnaires have been mailed out this week and if each recipient responds candidly and in a timely manner a summary of the information collected will be sent to each school at absolutely no cost. I am personally underwriting the cost of printing and postage for this project.

Your immediate response to this survey is extremely important. Please take a few minutes **right now**, respond to the questions on the postcard and deposit in your nearest mail drop as soon as possible. Be assured that all individual responses will be kept in strict confidence and that only a summary of the survey will be forwarded to your school.

Thank you, in advance, for your willingness to help me and your child's school.

Should you have any questions at all please do not hesitate to call me at the number above. **Please complete only one postcard for your family.**

Sincerely in Christ,

Michael Petrucci



Registration Sheet Mode	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Divide files
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Storage Setting						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FRONT SIDE	<input type="checkbox"/> F/B 2 PAGE	<input type="checkbox"/> F/B 1 PAGE				
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Total Number of Marks					
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