

English Paper

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ENG 101

Why do I send my kids to Blue Grass Baptist School? There are many times others have asked me this question and, if I am honest, a few times I have asked it as well. I have received various questions, some good and some not so good, so I am going to attempt to answer them with this paper.

One of the best arguments I have probably heard is that there are more opportunities available in public schools. Opportunities can mean many things. Perhaps it means that a child is very gifted in an artistic manner and a parent wants to find an environment to foster that creativity. Perhaps it means that a child is very intelligent and a parent wants to find an environment that challenges them. Perhaps it means that a child has special needs and a parent wants to find an environment that will accept and care for that child's specific needs. Or perhaps it simply relates to college scholarship availability when that child reaches college age. There are many different kinds of private schools and most cater to different matters of import. There are private schools where creative students thrive, private schools where intelligent children are challenged to be more, and private schools where children with special needs are cared for and taught in a loving atmosphere. There are also private schools where religion is the focus (Catholic Schools, Jewish Schools, and Baptist Schools). Blue Grass, while being a Baptist private school, functions as a family school. What I mean by this is that its emphasis is on combining the values taught at home and at church with the values filled in at the school to create a valuable learning atmosphere. The school's mission statement is "The mission of Blue Grass Baptist School, in partnership with the home and church, is to provide an affordable, academically-challenging Christian education, set in traditional classrooms with fully-qualified teachers, while cultivating students' hearts and minds for Jesus Christ". This statement is posted on their website, <http://www.bluegrassbaptist.com/>, and is posted as you enter the school. On researching this topic, I found the following article which I feel states very clearly the main differences in opportunities between public and private schools, however it does not point out

that there are private schools that focus primarily on the topics I have mentioned above. “Public schools offer more opportunities in terms of programs such as foreign languages, sports, music and the arts, etc. They have more teachers, more money, more space, and therefore more resources. Private schools often have to fund-raise for money to provide these types of extra opportunities. Private schools, on the other hand, have different types of opportunities, such as religious classes, more one-on-one time with teachers (and therefore a student’s education is more individualized), and smaller classes. Private schools often do have sports outside of school as well, depending on the size of the school.” (Jennifer Lovvorn Parker. “Public School vs. Private Schools.” *GoogoBits.com*, June 3, 2005. Web. April 25, 2011.) The other type of opportunity that parents and students are most concerned with seems to be opportunities in pursuing scholarships. I believe this question answers itself when you Google “scholarship opportunities in public schools vs. private schools”. Numerous sites come up for scholarships specifically intended for private school students as well as the various scholarships that are open to all students regardless of which high school they attend. In fact, it seems that private school students may have greater resources at their disposal in this area.

Some parents and students have argued that there is more opportunity for friendship in public schools. This statement does make sense as there are more students available with which to strike up a friendship, however, there are numerous resources at the public’s disposal where we can introduce a larger variety of possible friends to our children. In Lexington alone, we have Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA of Central Kentucky, Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations, local churches, summer camps, volunteering opportunities in multiple arenas, various sports teams to join, and numerous parks and libraries to participate in as well.

I hear most often the argument made that public schools are free (or already funded by our taxes) so it is wasteful to pay extra money to send them to a private school. I do understand and sympathize with this argument. After all, I am a single mother, a student, and a waitress of no independent means. However, do we not all make sacrifices for those things that are truly important to us? The sportsman spends his/her extra money on boats and fishing gear, a racing enthusiast spends his/her extra money on cars and tools, a smoker spends money on smoking paraphernalia, a gourmand spends money on fine dining or, perhaps, special ingredients for their own cooking. Basically, what I am saying is that every human being has a passion. It is in our nature. We find something we love. We find something that is important to us and we put

any resources at our disposal into making that passion real to us. My passion is my children. I would rather invest in their future than anything else that I love to do. Thankfully, I live in a “free” country where I can make the choice to send them to a private school. Also, depending on the private school you might choose for your child, it is not as expensive as you might think. Blue Grass is one of the cheapest private schools in Lexington. They make a point of trying to keep the tuition as affordable as possible so that those who don’t have a ton of money can afford it. There are tuition assistance programs available at most private schools and some organizations, such as local churches, may award scholarships to members or interested parties.

One of the things I am confronted with most regularly is that I am failing to expose them to the varied cultures, religions, personalities, etc... that a public school would provide. While I agree that it is important for their future success to be exposed to various situations at a relatively young age, I argue that there are other ways to do so, not to mention that there is an amount of exposure at Blue Grass anyways. There are children and teachers of other nationalities, some who speak English as a second or third language. The family lives of other students are varied as well, including their spiritual beliefs and home situations. I do acknowledge that there is a limit to what my children are exposed to at school but I believe and argue that it is my responsibility as a parent to expose them to those things in a setting I decide to be safe. My children, in particular and those specifically on whom this paper is based on, are exposed to atheism through their father. They are exposed to Judaism through one of their grandmothers, a true lack and care of religion through the majority of the world that they come into contact with, Catholicism through many of my friends and some of their own, and Buddhism through a very good friend of mine, not to mention very fundamental Baptist through my family and church. As far as cultures go, I try to travel with my children as much as possible. International travels have not been possible as yet but there are programs and museums and many places in the United States where you can get a glimpse of other cultures. I believe my job is to present these beliefs, cultures, etc... to them and guide them in forming their own beliefs. I also fear the ever-present violence in public schools. As Neal McCluskey states in his article in *School Reform News*, “Overall violence in U.S. schools, and the government's inability to stop it even when using new initiatives designed specifically for that purpose, is a big issue in school districts across the country”. (Neal McCluskey. “Violence in

Public Schools: A Dirty Secret". *School Reform News*, June 1, 2005. Web. April 29, 2011.) I, as a parent, can choose to have my children enrolled in a small, private school where I am made much more aware of any breaches of school policy such as weapons being found in the school or drugs being found on the premises or threats being made against my children or other students. Plus, due to the size of my children's school, it is much easier for the administration to monitor the facility and who enters and exits the premises.

An argument that I think any parent would be most concerned about would be the quality of education your student is receiving (as school is, first and foremost, supposed to be about education). My studies of this topic brought interesting results. I expected private schools to be providing an education that exceeded public schools. Studies show that, while this is true, many individuals claim it is only because those who can afford private schools, and therefore private tutoring, are enrolled in private schools and that private schools only have these results because they do not educate the diverse students that public schools do. Despite the statements that private school students are able to enlist private tutoring because of the money their families possess, I do not personally know of more than a handful of students that partake in one on one tutoring sessions and I am aware of several different affordable tutoring solutions to parents who cannot afford much, including tutoring available at local public schools and online. There is, however, truth to the claim that public schools have a more diverse student body and, therefore, more diversity in testing results. The NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) makes allowance for these claims in the following statements: "In grades 4 and 8 for both reading and mathematics, students in private schools achieved at higher levels than students in public schools. The average difference in school means ranged from almost 8 points for grade 4 mathematics, to about 18 points for grade 8 reading. The average differences were all statistically significant. Adjusting the comparisons for student characteristics resulted in reductions in all four average differences of approximately 11 to 14 points." but "...In particular, private schools are "schools of choice." Without further information, such as measures of prior achievement, there is no way to determine how patterns of self-selection may have affected the estimates presented. That is, the estimates of the average difference in school mean scores are confounded with average differences in the student populations, which are not fully captured by the selected student characteristics employed in this analysis." (Henry Braun, Frank Jenkins, and Wendy Grigg. "Comparing Private

Schools and Public Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling”. *US Department of Education Institution of Education Sciences (NAEP)*, July 2006. Web. April 25, 2011.) Further searching found a website that states “The National Center for Education Statistics periodically administers the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to test the knowledge and skills of the nation's students in grades 4, 8, and 12. Students in private schools consistently score well above the national average. At all three grades a significantly higher percentage of private school students score at or above the *Basic, Proficient, and Advanced* levels than public school students.” (<http://www.capenet.org/facts.html> ) This website provides specific percentages of what proficiency levels 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in both types of schools tested at and shows that private schools test well above public schools in math, reading, writing, history, and geography. An article in *Time Magazine* states that “Combined with high-school grades, SAT scores are the best predictor of how kids will do in their freshman year of college. And the data in the new study shows that private-school students outperform public-school students on the SAT.” and “...the data suggests that the type of school a kid attends does affect how well he will do.” (John Cloud. “Are Private Schools Really Better.” *TIME*, October 10, 2007. Web. April 27, 2011). These studies and articles prove that a private school does provide a better education than a public school.

For me, the motivating point in sending my children to Blue Grass Baptist School is that it is a Baptist school. This is important because I want my children to be free to practice their religion, pray, etc... without retribution from others. I truly believe that, though the school is coming from a conventional, religious viewpoint, the administration and families are more truly loving and accepting of individuals and their issues and demonstrate a true “Christ-like” love. This has been shown to me time and time again. The school provides a safer, more familial environment in which my children thrive while providing the parents with greater input and control over what their children are taught. As parents, it is each of our responsibility, first and foremost, to educate our children and teach them to think for themselves, always to question what they are told, and form their own beliefs. I have definitely answered the question I asked at the beginning of this paper. I send my children to Blue Grass Baptist School because it provides the best education in the best manner I could ask for.

References in MLA style:

-Jennifer Lovvorn Parker. "Public School vs. Private Schools." *GoogoBits.com*, June 3, 2005. Web. April 25, 2011.

-Neal McCluskey. "Violence in Public Schools: A Dirty Secret." *School Reform News*, June 1, 2005. Web. April 29, 2011.

-Henry Braun, Frank Jenkins, and Wendy Grigg. "Comparing Private School and Public Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling." *US Department of Education Institution of Education Sciences (NAEP)*, July 2006. Web. April 25, 2011.

-John Cloud. "Are Private Schools Really Better." *Time*, October 10, 2007. Web. April 25, 2011.

Other references:

- <http://www.bluegrassbaptist.com/>
- <http://www.capenet.org/facts.html>