

Where You Go to School May Determine Belief in God, New Study Shows

Recent studies raise myriad concerns about the spiritual state of Millennials. Whether it's by claiming to be "spiritual but not religious," opting for Progressive Christianity or dropping out of church altogether as one Barna study shows, the outlook for the souls of Millennials has been perplexing—until now. A newly released study conducted by Notre Dame's sociology department reveals a better trend, depending on the K-12 school a student attends.

According to the new study "Good Soil: A Comparative Study of ACCS Alumni Life Outcomes," three types of schools provide a better outcome than the median: religious home schools, evangelical Christian schools and classical Christian schools. Of these, graduates from the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS) score noticeably and significantly higher in seven categories.

The study surveyed graduates from government schools and non-government schools, including non-religious independent schools, Catholic and Protestant schools and home schoolers. Among the many measured outcomes considered between the groups of graduates, one of the most notable discoveries is how much more likely ACCS alumni are to maintain the faith, and what this possibly implies about the connection between school environment and spiritual discipline.

The ACCS was founded in the early 1990s to reestablish a highly differentiated form of Christian education that had not been widely practiced for generations. The methodology is often referred to as the Christian *paideia* approach. This approach shapes and aligns all learning toward a system of

knowledge in Christ.

This end is achieved through the integration of the trivium, which includes grammar, logic and rhetoric; interaction with the great historical texts; an in-depth study of language and the Bible; and cultivation of Christian virtues.

Children are educated in a specialized environment that goes beyond the expected norm of “college and career readiness.” It prioritizes a right relationship with God and the view that Jesus Christ is relevant to every aspect of one’s worldview.

From church attendance, to community involvement, to career choice, to the number of friends they have in adulthood, ACCS alumni reflect the outcomes that would be expected from an educational form that has trained children for more than a thousand years in Christian communities.

We partner with parents and churches in this endeavor. Our schools believe that Christian life cannot thrive outside of a Christian community that is deeply committed to the pursuit of Christ in every aspect of life. The survey reveals the importance of this partnership as it shows the different influences of the home and church compared to the school.

At ACCS, we take seriously the scriptural proverb that says to “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). We contend that this applies not merely to how children are trained at home, but in school as well.

Every day, we know we have an opportunity to intentionally plant seeds of truth in our students or let them stumble on their own way. There is no time like the present to spiritually invest in the souls of America’s students. {eo}

David Goodwin is president of the Association of Classical Christian Schools. The comparative survey was conducted by The University of Notre Dame’s Sociology Department in conjunction

with Cardus, an educational foundation unrelated to the ACCS. The ACCS sponsored the survey of its own alumni by Notre Dame, based on the same survey approach used by Notre Dame for the wider study.