

GOOD SCHOOLS, GOOD CITIZENS

Do Independent Schools Contribute to Civic Formation?

Ashley Berner | June 2021

Key Points

- The heart of education in modern democracies lies in civic formation: preparing the next generation with relevant knowledge, understanding, and attitudes to join a community of citizens and create the social cohesion necessary for negotiating political differences through democratic processes and institutions.
- This paper addresses the role of independent schools in the process of civic formation and social cohesion and explores whether independent schools help or hinder the development of democratic citizenship. It also assesses whether governments should fund such schools as part of public education.
- This study finds that independent schools do not inherently harm social cohesion. School-sector research shows that, on almost every measure, independent school attendance enhances civic outcomes. International comparisons of students' civic knowledge and engagement show plural educational systems also perform well.
- Policymakers can have confidence that expanding access to independent schools and ensuring their quality is likely to enhance the civic capabilities of young people and can lead to a more civically integrated and politically engaged public.

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For the full publication, see Berner, Ashley. "Good Schools, Good Citizens: Do Independent Schools Contribute to Civic Formation?" <https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/reports/good-schools-good-citizens/>.