

# You don't have to pay for private school to get your children ahead

**T**hey will never admit it, but when the Fraser Institute issues its annual school report card, school principals everywhere grit their teeth and think of England.

The principals of the expensive private schools, who traditionally find themselves at the top, may worry they might have slipped a notch or two. The ones at the bottom, always the public schools, brace themselves for a flood of media calls. Everyone wants to know how terrible it feels to be at the bottom of the heap.

And while the top schools bask in this annual confirmation of their superiority, the teachers at the low-rated ones are forced to find ways to explain why the rankings unfairly cast the school, its teachers and students as losers.

Being at a school ranked one of the worst in B.C. isn't exactly good for morale.



**Christy Clark**

OPINION

Meanwhile, the elite schools trumpet the results. They play to the belief that the higher-ranked schools deliver a better education. They play to parents willing to make financial sacrifices to set their kids on a path for success — one that will lead them to a great university.

British Columbia is home to a great university.

UBC is recognized internationally as one of the world's finest post-secondary institutions. It's also home to George Bluman, one of Canada's most highly regarded

thinkers in mathematics.

Bluman has been comparing the success rates of students from private and public schools since the 1970s.

You won't find his results in the glossy brochures from those swishy private schools.

Eighty per cent of the students who enter UBC take first-year calculus. Bluman tracks their marks.

His conclusion after 30 years of study? That the annual school rankings paint a misleading picture of how well our schools are doing.

Bluman has discovered that public-school kids do better. A lot better. And, in Vancouver, he has noticed little difference between public-school kids from the east and west side.

They are all more likely to pass and they are all more likely to get 'A's, than kids from private schools.

The students who graduate from the private, but much less expensive, Catholic

schools are the next most likely to succeed. The ones from the rest of the privates fare the worst.

Bluman doesn't have a definitive answer for why kids from the tony private schools are most likely to struggle. He's a mathematician, not a social scientist.

Maybe it's because the freedom of a big university campus comes as a shock to kids who have spent 13 years being closely supervised at a private school.

No one really knows for sure.

Nonetheless, it's hard to avoid drawing one crucial conclusion from Bluman's work.

If you want a great education for your child, if you want to give them the best chance possible to succeed at a world-class university, save your money.

Send them to your local public school.

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