

Parental engagement in school choice

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Summary

School choice policies that make alternative school options available for all families are becoming increasingly widespread in the United States. In Minneapolis, more than 20,000 students attend either a charter school, private school or school in another district, compared to 34,000 students attending district schools. In order for parents to maximally benefit from school choice, it is important to understand if, when and how they engage in the different stages of the school choice process.

The Education Transformation Initiative represents 75 leading education organizations and funders aligned around goals and strategies for K-12 systems change in Minneapolis. ETI engaged GreatSchools, the nation's leading provider of K-12 schools information, to create a literature review in order to:

- Identify gaps in the existing research pertaining to the school choice process.
- Share important differences and similarities between groups by race/ethnicity (particularly African-American, Latino, Native American and Somali populations), socio-economic status, and ELL status.
- Illustrate how broadly distributing information about schools and school quality can address important barriers to parent engagement in school choice.

The “Buyer Model” – the stages of the decision-making process – is adapted below to provide a framework to help examine the complex process of choosing a school.

TRIGGER – What triggers parents to engage in school choice? What barriers reduce the effectiveness of triggers? What motivating factors enhance the effectiveness of triggers?

Exact triggers of parent engagement in school choice are difficult to pinpoint as various sources of information can shape preferences long before a parent consciously engages in the process of choosing a school.

Barriers to parent engagement include:

- Parents may not recognize the need to actively choose high-quality schools.
- Parents lack information, resources and time to research schools.
- Complex enrollment and application processes present challenges for parents, particularly parents of low socioeconomic status (SES).
- Myths about school choice may limit effectiveness of parental engagement.
- Limited English language proficiency and literacy may limit parents' ability to research options.

Motivators of parent engagement include:

- Direct invitations from schools, districts and community organizations.
- Illuminating the pathways to higher education may inspire parents to demand higher-performing schools.

PRIORITIZE - What are parent preferences when making a school choice? How are those preferences prioritized?

Parent preferences are complex and malleable, but the following preferences emerge consistently in research:

- Academic quality is a top concern, and parents will look for a variety of signals of academic quality beyond test scores.
- Teacher quality is highly valued but difficult to assess.
- Safety is an important concern; however, parents have different perspectives on what constitutes safety.
- School reputation matters particularly for parents more familiar with the geographic area.
- Racial diversity is a strong preference, but preferred type and level of diversity varies by race.
- Cultural compatibility is an important concern for certain immigrant communities (particularly Somali and Latino).
- While both parents and students consider curriculum and school programs, students are much more likely to look for the “fun factor” (e.g., extra-curricular activities) in high schools.

Parents may sometimes refer to the concept of “fit” when discussing whether schools match their preferences.

SEARCH - How are parents currently learning about and evaluating available options?

Family, friends and other parents are important sources for most parents, but sophisticated shoppers will conduct additional research to validate what they hear. In addition:

- Low-SES and immigrant shoppers rely more on official sources of school information, such as school fairs, pamphlets and school guides.
- School marketing efforts shift focus away from academic quality, and towards extracurricular offerings and emotional appeals.

Further research is needed to determine which sources (people, organizations and institutions) are highly leveraged, trusted providers of school information in Minneapolis.

CHOOSE – Are parents actively choosing? Do they feel their preferences and priorities are being met by existing options?

Participation in school choice is high when options are available to parents; however, not all parents participate and engage at the same levels:

- While most families engage in school choice, many are “passively engaged.”

- Higher proportions of low-SES, Latino and African-American families are not engaged in choice, and have limited experience and skills navigating the educational system.
- Students play a greater role in high school choice.
- Limited options force parents to trade-off important preferences for quality schools.

When parents broaden their consideration set, they may identify more suitable options and face fewer trade-offs, particularly between school quality and distance.

ENROLL - What is the current process for enrolling? How would parents like to enroll their children in school? What strategies are effective in attracting/retaining school enrollment?

New common enrollment systems have been implemented in Denver and New Orleans; however, feedback on satisfaction with these systems is limited and inconclusive.

Further research is needed to understand family preferences and satisfaction with common enrollment systems, and their effectiveness at facilitating active participation in school choice. Single application systems (such as those implemented in Denver and New Orleans) can help parents better understand and navigate their options.

EVALUATE - How satisfied are parents with their choices? Why would a parent choose to leave a school?

Overall, parents express satisfaction with their schools, and even the act of choosing may influence their level of satisfaction. Additionally:

- Higher mobility rates may indicate lower levels of satisfaction among low-income students and students of color.
- Satisfaction levels with schools may not be primarily driven by measures academic quality.
- Additional research is needed to understand drivers of satisfaction and student mobility in Minneapolis and other cities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Promising strategies are being modeled and tested by GreatSchools and several local organizations (e.g., Excellent Schools Detroit) to address these barriers. An accompanying appendix lists these strategies along with recommendations from the research community.

Background

The Education Transformation Initiative represents 75 leading education organizations and funders aligned around goals and strategies for K-12 systems change in Minneapolis. In a city facing chronically low academic achievement for students of color and low-income students, ETI – through strategy, a Funder Coalition and a Network of Leaders – leverages the school-based theory of change and systems change to improve educational outcomes for all children. The Minneapolis Foundation is ETI’s operating partner.

GreatSchools is the leading source of K-12 education information in the United States, reaching more than half of the nation’s households with children. GreatSchools Local, an initiative of GreatSchools, leverages the GreatSchools national media and technology platform with local knowledge and relationships from local schools, community organizations, and city agencies to bring school information and tools to families.

ETI engaged GreatSchools to create a literature review in order to:

- Identify for ETI any gaps in the existing research pertaining to the school choice process.
- Share important differences/similarities between groups by race/ethnicity (particularly African-American, Latino, Native American and Somali populations), socio-economic status and ELL status. (Information pertaining to Minneapolis is of particular interest.)
- Illustrate how broadly distributing information about schools and school quality can address important barriers to parent engagement in school choice.

The following literature review includes a wide variety of sources, including peer-reviewed academic literature and policy think tanks; GreatSchools customer and market research is also included in this paper. In order to provide perspectives on communities that are not currently widely researched (particularly Somali and Hmong communities), the review also includes student papers available online and news articles.

ETI provided a framework for the school choice process based on a “Buyer Model.” The paper discusses findings from existing literature pertaining to the specific interests of ETI listed above, and highlights important gaps requiring further study.

Framework component	What we want to know
Trigger	What triggers parents to engage in school choice? What barriers reduce the effectiveness of triggers? What motivating factors

	enhance the effectiveness of triggers?
Prioritize	What are parent preferences when making a school choice? How are those preferences prioritized?
Search	How are parents currently learning about and evaluating available options?
Choose	Are parents actively choosing currently? Do they feel their preferences and priorities are being met by existing options?
Enroll	What is the current process for enrolling (district, independent, charter)? How would parents like to enroll their children in school? What strategies are effective in attracting/retaining school enrollment?
Evaluate	How satisfied are parents with their choices? Why would a parent choose to leave a school?

Minneapolis and school choice

The research cited below provides lessons learned from other cities and states, where school choice policies and family needs may in some cases be similar to Minneapolis, while in other cases they may differ. The research listed here is meant to draw attention to potential obstacles to and motivators of effective parent engagement in school choice. In some cases noted, additional research is needed to determine which approaches are appropriate.

There are several types of policies that support school choice in the United States. While this paper is not focused on the history, purpose and trajectory of school choice systems, it is important to understand the range of policies to better contextualize findings from studies in other cities. The Brookings Institution developed the Education Choice and Competition Index (ECCI) as a framework to understand the efforts of large school districts and local entities to create systems of choice and competition.¹ Key elements of the ECCI framework include²:

- Availability of alternative schools, including charters, magnets, and/or tax-credits and vouchers that make private school options affordable.
- Virtual schools and courses that count toward graduation or matriculation.
- Weighted student funding formulas to create incentives for schools to “compete” for students.
- Restructuring or closing underperforming schools.
- School assignment mechanisms where schools are assigned based on expressed preferences (not geographic zoning), and school-student matching is optimized based on preferences. For schools that have “preferential” admissions (e.g., schools with admissions tests) preferences are not taken into account. For “non-preferential” admission schools,

lotteries are used to manage enrollment to oversubscribed schools, particularly at traditional district schools. However, if a district implemented all of the above assignment policies and the assignment to schools outside of a family's geographic zone is "difficult, unclear or substantially disadvantages parents," the framework would not consider the overall assignment policy as contributing to choice or competition.

- Common applications, and/or no default of a neighborhood or district assigned school.
- Comparable standards and assessments across schools.

In 2013, Minneapolis ranked number six out of 107 large districts on the ECCL, and was given a "B" (for comparison, New Orleans' Recovery District received an "A").³ That same year, approximately 34,000 students attended Minneapolis public district schools, while 20,000 students attended charter schools, private schools or schools in other districts.⁴ Minneapolis is home to just over 40,000 families with children under 18 years old.⁵ Residents have diverse needs, as 28 percent live in poverty and 20 percent speak a primary language other than English (8 percent speak Spanish).⁶ In 2014, Minneapolis-based Charter School Partners identified that more than two-thirds of Minneapolis children attended "low-impact" schools, or schools scoring in the bottom 25 percent on student achievement measures statewide.⁷

With school choice a long-standing reality in Minneapolis, an important question for policymakers and local organizations to consider is how to encourage optimal parent engagement in school choice to increase the number of students attending higher-performing schools. This paper highlights findings from existing research to describe how parents engage in school choice in different communities. An accompanying document lists recommended strategies to address these challenges.

TRIGGER

What triggers parents to engage in school choice? What barriers reduce the effectiveness of triggers? What motivating factors enhance the effectiveness of triggers?

Quick look

- Exact triggers of parent engagement in school choice are difficult to pinpoint.
- Barriers to parent engagement include:
 - Parents may not recognize the need to actively choose high-quality schools.
 - Parents lack information, resources and time to research schools.
 - Complex enrollment and application processes present challenges for parents, particularly low-SES parents.
 - Myths about school choice may limit effectiveness of parental engagement.
 - Limited English language proficiency and literacy may limit parents' ability to research options.
- The following motivators encourage parent engagement:
 - Direct invitations from schools, districts and community organizations.
 - Illuminating the pathways to higher education may inspire parents to demand higher performing schools.
- Further research is needed to understand how parents in Minneapolis are or are not engaging in school choice, particularly English-language learners, African-American, Latino, Native American and Somali populations.

School choice “triggers” are difficult to pinpoint

A growing number of cities are adopting policies to encourage market forces and competition to improve the quality of schools. In 2013, 12 large school districts received a “B-“ or higher on the ECCI, up from nine districts in the previous year.⁸

Parent engagement in school choice is influenced by several factors, discussed in subsequent sections, but there is limited understanding of what initially “triggers” a parent to engage in the process. Valant hypothesizes based on his research on the influence of school information that it is difficult to pinpoint a particular moment or process when a parent is prompted or influenced to make a school choice. Even

decisions about where to enroll in school may be made unconsciously during passing conversations.⁹

Clearer triggers for parent engagement include factors that have little to do with school choice policies. For example, a 2013 survey of U.S. parents by GreatSchools found that 27 percent of parents who research schools online said they were moving or considering a move.¹⁰ Wolf's door-to-door survey of school choice in Detroit found there is a seasonal nature to choice where most parents who are thinking about enrolling in another school do so between May-August, just before the start of the new school year.¹¹ The following are barriers and motivators of participation in school choice observed in cities with explicit school choice policies.

Barrier: Some parents may not recognize the need to actively choose high-quality schools

There is research discussing when parent engagement is *not* triggered. Groups of parents may not perceive the importance of researching and identifying high-quality schools. This barrier challenges a core assumption of school choice policies. Sattin-Bajaj's study of participation in the district school lottery in New York City from 2008-2010 found that many parents and students do not engage or are minimally engaged in school choice during the middle to high school transition. In particular, the assumed triggers implicit in school choice policies (e.g., a lottery) do not play out for low-income Latin American immigrant families in the study, who view school choice as a bureaucratic procedure not associated with long-term educational and mobility outcomes (unlike upper-middle class white parents interviewed). Their prevailing attitude was that "there are no bad schools, only the students inside the schools are bad," and it's up to the child to be good, hardworking and successful and they can succeed in any context.¹² If parents do not perceive any variation in school quality, it is unreasonable to expect their active participation in researching and choosing a school for their child.

This phenomenon may also be present among Hmong families. Lee and Green's comparative study of Hmong parents of high-achieving and low-achieving high school seniors found that parents of low-achieving Hmong children became less involved (than in elementary and middle school years), citing that they felt parental involvement was no longer required by the schools, they lacked academic ability, or they felt their involvement was not beneficial to their children. Their role was limited to meeting their child's basic needs.¹³

While observed Somali parents have taken an active role in choosing schools that teach their children Somali and Muslim cultural values, they may not actively search for schools performing at high academic levels. Hussein's small-scale study of Somali parents in Minneapolis found that some parents do not see their role as

educator, nor see the need to become heavily involved in their child's education. Instead, they perceive that as the role of the teacher.¹⁴

Choice policies also assume that parents dissatisfied with school quality will “shop around” for higher-quality alternatives. However, Wolf revealed that dissatisfaction with current schools is not necessarily driving some parents to shop for schools because some parents struggle with the notion of high-performing schools and student achievement. Students also express feeling negative peer pressure around having an academic orientation.¹⁵

Barrier: Parents lack information, resources and time to research schools

Researching schools can be an extraordinarily time-consuming, stressful and anxiety-provoking task for active choosers, and parents who have limited resources and time to devote to researching schools will face higher barriers to engaging in school choice.¹⁶ Lack of information continues to be a barrier for parents. One 2014 survey in eight cities with high levels of choice found that on average one-quarter of parents reported that they struggled to get the information they needed to choose the best school. In Cleveland, parents with less education are significantly more likely to cite information as a barrier.¹⁷

In Detroit, Wolf identifies single women heads of households as being particularly in need of support services to help with child care, scheduling and transportation so that they can adequately explore options for their children. Wolf suggests that family, friends and community organizations can be engaged in providing these supports.¹⁸

Barrier: Complex enrollment and application processes present challenges for parents, particularly low-SES parents

Understanding eligibility requirements is a barrier for many, especially those with a high school diploma or less and those with children in special education programs. Enrollment deadlines, number of applications and confusing paperwork present challenges for parents living in cities with multiple school options.¹⁹ Studies in Detroit and Minneapolis hypothesize that complex applications, zoning, and eligibility requirements may be a barrier to effective participation in school choice.²⁰ In 2012, GreatSchools interviewed parents in Milwaukee, Washington, D.C., and Indianapolis, where parents expressed a need for clear information about the application process, such as student eligibility and enrollment deadlines.²¹

Barrier: Myths about school choice may limit effectiveness of parental engagement

Anecdotal references to parents' misconceptions about school choice are scattered in available literature. These misconceptions, particularly if reinforced by other parents, can potentially severely limit effective parental engagement in school choice programs. Gross and Denice's study of Denver parents makes reference to parents worrying that if they name too many options in their application, they will be matched to less than ideal schools. However, the researchers found that putting down too few schools has a negative impact on their probability of getting assigned one of their choices at all.²²

One of the more unsettling accounts of misinformation comes from New York City, where guidance counselors at a large middle school recommended students to select schools based primarily on location, despite many students living in close proximity to high schools with very low graduation rates.²³ This example illustrates the importance of aligning messages and incentives across formal information providers.

GreatSchools frequently conducts community feedback sessions and focus groups to understand community perspectives on school choice and has noted similar misconceptions. In a recent Delaware focus group, parents expressed misconceptions such as "you cannot choice into a school into another district" and "special education students are not eligible for 'choicing.'"²⁴ One can reason that, absent accurate information and guidance, such assumptions may prevent parents from researching and choosing options that may be the optimal fit based on their preferences.

Barrier: Limited English language proficiency and literacy

Language may be a significant barrier for some immigrant communities. More than 40 percent of Hmong Americans over the age of five speak English less than "very well."²⁵ In a student project, Naley and Seashore interviewed 10 Somali mothers in Minneapolis about their engagement in school choice. Six of the 10 interviewed were illiterate, and three were semi-literate.²⁶ While this is a small sample, it is important to consider the education levels of families when creating school information programs.

Motivator: Direct invitations can guide parents to engage in school choice

Parents who are not aware of the role they are expected to play in choosing a school for their child may be more likely to engage if they are directly and formally invited to engage in specific ways.²⁷ Hoxby's experiment to send direct mail invitations, with application information and custom information about costs at selective colleges, to high-achieving, low-income high school students increased the number of these students applying and attending more selective colleges.²⁸

More research is required to understand how direct invitations can influence engagement with K-12 school choice with groups of parents.

Motivator: Illuminating the pathways to higher education may inspire parents to demand higher performing schools

Both Sattin-Bajaj and Valant hypothesize that communicating long-term benefits to attending a high-quality school to both students and parents may help make high-quality schools look manageable and desirable. Research by psychologist Hal Herschfield in motivating individuals to save for retirement by showing them projected images of their “future self” may serve as a helpful analogy²⁹ that helping parents imagine their child in college may inspire them to invest in choosing schools that will better prepare their child.

Gaps in the research

The following questions are not adequately addressed by current research:

- What are signs that parents are/are not engaging in school choice in Minneapolis?
- How do Native American parents and students engage in school choice?

PRIORITIZE

What are parent and student preferences when making a school choice, and how are they prioritized?

Quick look

- Parent preferences are complex and malleable, but the following preferences emerge consistently in research:
 - Academic quality (test scores and beyond) is a top concern.
 - Teacher quality is highly valued but difficult to assess.
 - Safety is an important concern.
 - School reputation matters.
 - Racial diversity is a strong preference, but preferred type of diversity varies by race.
 - Cultural compatibility is a concern for certain immigrant communities (particularly Somali and Latino families).
 - While both parents and students consider curriculum and school programs, students are much more likely to look for the “fun factor” in high schools.
- The concept of “fit” ties these complex preferences together.

Parent preferences are complex and malleable

Researchers have attempted to characterize parent preferences when choosing schools through observations and interviews, self-reported data from surveys, web analytics and complex regression models applied to school lottery data sets; however, the weaknesses of these sources makes it difficult to “force rank” preferences. Self-reported ranked preferences may be compromised by social desirability bias, or the respondent’s reluctance to say something that may be construed as socially unacceptable (e.g., choosing a school based on racial composition of the student body).³⁰ Respondents may also vary significantly in their interpretation of prompts (academic quality may mean high test scores to one parent, and one-on-one attention to another parent). Analysis of “revealed” preferences through revealed choice data will accurately reveal preferences only when 1) families choosing are consciously making trade-offs which would require the family to have actively chosen the schools and 2) there exist sufficient variation in the options available. Furthermore, preferences are malleable, and can be influenced by providing information. For example, parents in Philadelphia who received a directory of schools with simple school ratings were more likely to prefer schools with higher academic quality than those who

did not receive the booklet.³¹ While each source provides inconsistent and seemingly conflicting perspectives on how parents and students prioritize schools, there are important insights about parents' preferences that should be considered when developing parent engagement strategies.

Academic quality (test scores and beyond) is a top concern

Surveys where parents self-report preferences consistently show academic quality as one of the most highly ranked.³² For example, in Wolf's survey of Detroit parents, nearly all surveyed expressed preferences for schools that prepare students for college, with most preferring schools that prepare students for both work and college, and academic performance was most frequently cited as the number-one preferred school characteristic.³³

Demand for schools with higher academic quality seems to increase when families receive clear and simple test score ratings³⁴, suggesting that families use such information to help them act on a preference for schools of high academic quality.

Parents interested in academic quality of schools will at times consider factors in addition to or other than test scores. In one example, parents whose students are high-achieving on tests may be less interested in schools that strive to improve student test scores (there may be a de-emphasis on test scores), whereas for parents of lower-achieving students evidence of student growth may be more important.³⁵ Self-reported survey data has even shown low-income, African American and Latino parents rank preparation for taking state tests and high test scores significantly higher than white parents.³⁶ In Detroit, parents express skepticism about using test scores as a measure of academic performance (training students for tests and over-emphasis on testing can be negative for children).³⁷ Parents may also discount school-level test score data because it does not help parents understand how their own child would do in the school.³⁸

Furthermore, not all parents have adequate information about academic quality, which may at least partially explain why their choosing patterns do not always follow their stated preferences.³⁹ For example, Detroit parents define quality by using terms such as, "safe and secure environment, with good discipline; active communication with and involvement of parents; good teachers; small class sizes and one-on-one attention to the needs of students; high academic standards and performance."⁴⁰

The following "CHOOSE" section contains more discussion of how parents trade-off their preference for academic quality with their need to manage transportation and child care costs.

Teacher quality is highly valued but difficult to assess

Teacher quality is also often cited as a top preference among parents. However, parents must rely on the information available to them, and they are more likely to have test score data than teacher quality data.⁴¹

Safety is an important concern, but definitions are inconsistent

Safety is frequently self-reported as a top preference.⁴² Low-SES families are more likely to cite safety as a top concern than high-SES parents.⁴³ There is large variation in what signals safety to parents, for example the presence of metal detectors may signal a safe environment to some parents and an unsafe environment to others.⁴⁴

Reputation matters

Many parents value schools as a “positional good” where the perceived value of the school increases with the reputation or desirability of the school, and the value placed may not correlate with the quality of the school. Wolf’s research in Detroit revealed that the reputation of the school is very important to parents and students, which he noted is an important consideration for new school operators.⁴⁵ Harris cites similar anecdotal observations among parents in New Orleans, who appear to value schools with a long tradition or “legacy.”⁴⁶

Reputation may not be as highly valued by recent immigrant populations. In Sattin-Bajaj’s ethnographic study in New York City, she found that upper-middle class white parents, unlike recent immigrant Latin American parents, expressed high anxiety over their child being accepted into a one of a small set of high-performing schools, and a willingness to move to suburbs for good schools or pay for private school. For these parents, reputation is used as a signal of academic quality, while recent immigrant parents in Sattin-Bajaj’s study saw schools as a public good where academic quality was assumed to be more consistent, and it was up to the student to perform well.⁴⁷ This distinction is important to consider when engaging parents in school choice, and is discussed further in the “SEARCH” section of this paper.

Racial diversity is a strong preference, but preferred type of diversity varies by race

A review of research on school choice conducted by Hamilton and Guin suggests another perspective that race is a strong, and in some cases the best, predictor of school choice.⁴⁸ Research based on empirical data from school application lotteries show that while many parents express preferences for schools with higher academic quality in surveys, their actions suggest the racial composition of schools plays a bigger role. In Charlotte, researchers found that

higher-SES parents are more likely to express preferences for higher-performing schools, while low-SES parents trade-off preferences for high-performing schools against preferences for schools with same-race peers.⁴⁹

Another study found white families may also trade-off racial preferences with quality. Authors Saporito and Lareau found that white families (unlike African American families) used a two-step process, first eliminating high schools with a majority of African American students and then only applying other criteria, such as school quality and safety. The authors found that the behavior resulted in families selecting schools with lower academic quality and safety than they would have had they not eliminated the schools.⁵⁰ Self-reported preference data from Zeehandelaar and Northern also shows African American parents prioritize diversity more than white parents.⁵¹ These asymmetric preferences and selection processes make it challenging for communities to achieve many racially balanced schools of choice, and the result is that many African American students end up in racially segregated charter schools.⁵²

It may be that parents who lack information use race or income as a proxy for school quality,⁵³ suggesting that clearer indicators of academic quality may improve racial integration. A follow-up experiment in Charlotte supports this theory: Parents who received school quality information along with their school applications chose higher-performing schools than a control group.⁵⁴

Cultural compatibility is a concern for certain immigrant communities

Studies of recent Somali and Latin American immigrant parents reveal strong preferences for schools that impart aspects of their culture and values to their students. Latino parents in Detroit, for example, expressed preferences for bilingual teachers and education programs.⁵⁵ In Minneapolis, Somali mothers expressed concern about girls being allowed to wear hijab, adequate community representation at school and resources for parents, including interpreters to reduce language barriers.⁵⁶ Another study of Somali families in Minneapolis revealed that while cultural preservation is a key factor, many parents in the study did not have the information or tools to compare the academic quality of schools.⁵⁷

While both parents and students consider curriculum and school programs, some students are more likely to look for the “fun factor” in high schools

Parents express strong preferences for school curriculum and programming options, including "strong core curriculum in reading and math; an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); and the development of good study habits, strong critical thinking skills, and excellent verbal and written

communication skills." In addition, 36 percent of parents express strong preferences for schools that offer vocational or job-related programs.⁵⁸

Parent preferences for specific programs, such as after-school enrichment activities, sports and tutoring, emerge in middle and high school.⁵⁹ Around this time, students also emerge as active choosers, particularly during high school choice. Students and parents self-reported preferences differ in important ways. Valant found that 28 percent of students in his Philadelphia survey selected either the criteria of "fun," have "sports programs" or "other programs (arts, clubs, etc.)" as most important, compared to 3 percent of parents in a Philadelphia survey.⁶⁰ Families' revealed preferences in a New Orleans study reinforce the idea that extracurricular activities, in particular football and band, are important in high school choice.⁶¹

Parents are looking for the right fit

Parents in Detroit discuss an interest in finding a "good fit" school for their child, a term that ties many of the above concepts together. Wolf discovered patterns in how parents in grades K-8 cite safety and good facilities as most important, while parents in later grades look for high test scores, GPAs, college prep classes and small class sizes as indicators of fit. Furthermore, when Detroit parents had knowledge of specific school characteristics, they were more specific when talking about "fit."⁶² This finding suggests that providing parents with information may help them better articulate their preferences and find schools that match.

Gaps in the research

The following questions have not yet been adequately addressed by existing research:

- What are Native American and Hmong preferences and how are they expressed in Minneapolis?
- How are preferences expressed to school systems so that they can adequately respond to demand?
- How do college pathways data help engage and influence families to choose higher quality schools?

SEARCH

How are parents currently learning about and evaluating available options?

Quick look

- Family, friends and other parents are important sources of information for most parents, but sophisticated shoppers will conduct additional research to validate what they hear.
- Low-SES and immigrant shoppers rely more on formal sources of school information, such as school fairs, pamphlets, and school guides.
- Schools' responses to competition may limit informed decision-making.
- Which sources (people, organizations and institutions) are highly leveraged, trusted providers of school information in Minneapolis?

Family, friends and other parents are highly influential sources for most parents, but sophisticated shoppers will conduct additional research to validate what they hear

Families knowingly and unknowingly use a wide variety of sources to find schools that meet their needs and preferences. The most commonly cited and influential sources are friends, family members and other parents. Community reviews from parents, current and former students, school teachers and other school staff are the most-frequently visited pages within school profiles on GreatSchools.org, with eight million users accessing them in 2013.⁶³ Wolf found that among experienced school shoppers in Detroit, many cite family, friends and other parents as sources of information.⁶⁴ Social sources of information, whether known or unknown, can be extremely influential on parents' perceptions of schools. In an experiment conducted with U.S. adults, reading two positive comments rather than reading two negative comments about a school led people to give schools two-thirds of a letter grade higher rating (equivalent of moving a rating from C+ to B).⁶⁵ Passing conversations and bits of information from informal sources, whether accurate or not, can significantly shape parents' assessments of different school options.

More sophisticated, higher socioeconomic-status shoppers use an approach that Sattin-Bajaj refers to as a “multiply reinforced orientation,” meaning that

shoppers will take information from many sources, such as family and friends, as starting points and conduct additional research to verify the information.⁶⁶ Lower socioeconomic families may unknowingly shortlist schools based on informal sources, but rely heavily on formal sources when available. As the quality of information families receive is correlated with socioeconomic status, this may create more barriers for disadvantaged choosers to benefit from school choice.⁶⁷

Sophisticated school choosers who live in cities with expansive school choice programs provide clues as to how parents seek out and leverage different information sources when they are provided with options. In a survey of parents across eight cities with high levels of choice, most parents across income levels used between two to three official sources of information including school websites, district websites, local parent guides and school choice fairs.⁶⁸ In-depth interviews with parents in Indianapolis, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C., show experienced shoppers seek guidance and information from multiple sources. They start by evaluating test scores and other academic performance data, then look deeper based on practical considerations (before-school and after-school care, diversity in student population, or extracurricular offerings). Parents find secondary sources of information but to make a final decision they rely on firsthand experience.⁶⁹ Half of parents surveyed in these cities with high levels of school choice reported that school visits provided the most useful information.⁷⁰ Experienced shoppers make special efforts to confirm information received from different sources firsthand before making a decision.

Low-SES and immigrant shoppers rely more on formal sources of information

Different studies show low-SES and immigrant families seek information in ways that are similar, yet distinct from higher SES families. While social sources of information remain important for many parents, they appear to be slightly less important for lower SES families. Early research from Schneider, Teske and Marschall shows that low-SES parents rely on a greater number of sources to get their information and value their personal network less and value external sources comparatively more. In particular, parents value sources that provide unique and expert perspectives on schools.⁷¹ GreatSchools has observed similar trends among low-income U.S. parents, where in a national survey 68 percent (compared to 79 percent overall) reported that they talked to other parents of students at the schools they were researching.⁷²

While studies of Latino and Somali parents cited other parents, friends and relatives as the main sources of information about schools,⁷³ immigrant school choosers may be more likely to cite school fairs and pamphlets as helpful sources of information.⁷⁴ Low-income and Latino immigrant families in New York City depended more on school-based sources of information than white or

higher-income families, and some relied only on a school directory provided by the district.⁷⁵ Low-income parents with household income less than \$25,000 annually using GreatSchools.org report visiting the site more frequently, and report that the site had more influence on their school choice process than any other income group (64 percent for low-income parents versus 50 percent overall).⁷⁶

Somali families in Minneapolis may be relying exclusively on advice from friends and family, as observed parents were not well-informed about the role they were expected to play in evaluating options and are also not informed about how to evaluate options.⁷⁷

Schools' responses to competition may limit informed decision-making

School marketing efforts may be influencing parents and students to choose schools that may not be the academically strongest options. A small number of researchers have studied how schools respond to competitive pressures through marketing programs. Lubienski's study of competitive markets in Washington, D.C., New Orleans and Detroit found that schools responded to choice through more intensive marketing efforts, emphasizing symbolic and emotional appeals, rather than improving academic quality.⁷⁸ Valant's survey of school officials in Milwaukee also showed a similar prioritization of marketing over academic improvements.⁷⁹

Huriya Jabbar's 2015 study of New Orleans schools provides deeper insight into how schools respond to competition, as New Orleans is home to the broadest scale implementation of school choice policies in the United States. While almost all schools perceived competition and recognized the importance of school performance in attracting students, only one-third of schools responded to competition by adopting substantive improvements to improve student achievement.⁸⁰ However, a much larger proportion of schools used some kind of marketing strategy to promote services that the school already offered.⁸¹ Furthermore, one-third of schools used some sort of selection process despite being designated as "fully open-enrollment." Their approaches included not advertising open spaces to maintain control of their student body, or not engaging in marketing. These practices can contribute to inequities in education access.⁸² Districts and other education harbormaster organizations can play an important role in ensuring that third-party information is widely available to counter these types of practices.⁸³

Researching school options is complex and time-consuming, and parents take shortcuts

Researching schools requires sophisticated skills and is a time-consuming process. Published school information directories can contain many different types of information, including test score data, school programs and services, and extracurricular activities. Parents with finite time, resources and abilities to process and use the information they have will, at times, make “mental shortcuts” possibly triggered by vivid stories from other trusted sources.⁸⁴ To address the pitfalls of “cognitive overload,” 16 states currently assign A-F ratings to help parents quickly digest complex information and help parents make decisions based on clear measures of school quality.⁸⁵

Organizations interested in improving access and usage of information about schools should consider leveraging trusted sources to ensure that parents do not quickly dismiss the information received. Valant found in a survey of U.S. adults that non-governmental organizations may be better suited to disseminate school quality information, as U.S. adults are significantly more likely to trust school academic ratings from a nonprofit organization than from state government sources.⁸⁶

Gaps in the research

The following questions are not currently addressed by existing research:

- What are highly leveraged and trusted sources of school information in Minneapolis?
- Which families in Minneapolis are successfully engaging in school research and what are they doing?
- At what times of the year and during a student’s academic career are Minneapolis parents conducting more research about schools?

CHOOSE

Are parents actively choosing and do they feel their preferences and priorities are being met by existing options?

Quick look

- Participation in school choice is high when options are available.
- While most families engage in school choice, many are “passively engaged.”
- Higher proportions of low-SES, Latino and African-American families are not engaged in choice.
- Students play a greater role in high school choice.
- Limited options force parents to trade-off important preferences.
- Helping parents broaden their consideration set may help parents identify more suitable options and face fewer trade-offs.

Participation in school choice is high when options are available

There are indications that many parents participate in school choice when available: For example, in Denver’s voluntary choice program, between 55 to 80 percent (depending on the year and grade level) of students participated in school choice during key transition years between 2012-2014,⁸⁷ and in Detroit, more than 70 percent are actively shopping for schools.⁸⁸

Most families engage in school choice but some are “passively engaged”

While participation rates appear high, there are indications that some parents are not “actively” engaging in school choice. Furthermore, those parents who do participate may not be actively engaged or may not be leveraging the options available to them to maximize their preferences. While many participating families in Denver, for example, list multiple options, 30 percent who applied listed one option and half of those listed their neighborhood option.⁸⁹ While some of those parents may have explored many options before actively opting for their neighborhood school, it is also worth looking at the number of parents who opted out of their neighborhood option as an indicator of deeper engagement in school choice. For example, Denver has a voluntary application system, while New York City requires all students to submit an application with at least one choice listed. Among this range of markets, at least half of parents surveyed in seven major school choice markets chose a non-neighborhood-based school.⁹⁰

Higher proportions of low-SES, Latino and African-American families are not engaged in choice

A helpful dichotomy between “strategic choice,” where families exercise “instrumental and directive” involvement and “passive choice,” which is more “symbolic” and “limited” is articulated in Sattin-Bajaj’s ethnographic study of New York City students and parents. The study describes immigrant Latino families as lacking an “institutional compass,” or combination of knowledge and skills that white, upper-middle class families leverage to navigate complex school enrollment.⁹¹ Low-income families are more likely to be passive choosers or not choose at all. In Denver, white students have the highest participation rates at 85 percent, more than Latino students (71 percent) and African-American students (63 percent) – a pattern consistent across three years of the 2010-2012 study.⁹² Across eight choice cities surveyed in 2014, higher-educated parents were more likely to choose a non-neighborhood-based school.⁹³

Students play a greater role in high school choice

Students may play more of a role in high school choice than in middle and elementary school choice.⁹⁴ Their greater role and expressed preferences for schools that appear more “fun” may explain why when families have access to more school information, they choose lower-rated high schools than families without the additional school information.⁹⁵

Concurrently, students from recent immigrant families may play a particularly greater role in choosing schools. A study of families in New York City revealed that low-income Latin American immigrant parents believe “schools are interchangeable and their child’s ultimate placement was of little consequence as long as s/he was a conscientious student.”⁹⁶ Ultimately, by high school, the choice of school is primarily the student’s decision.⁹⁷ White, upper-middle class parents in the same study took a different approach to “clear the path so that their children could select among the few high school options they deemed acceptable.”⁹⁸ These differences in perceived roles among parents may partially explain why low-SES families choose schools with lower academic ratings than their higher-SES counterparts.

Limited options force parents to trade-off important preferences

Despite high levels of participation in school choice, many families express dissatisfaction with the available options. Among parents surveyed in school choice cities, 36 to 45 percent of parents express that “available schools weren’t a good fit for my child.”⁹⁹ In Detroit, parents of children in grades K-8 expressed that popular schools have long waiting lists and one should start researching schools when children are as young as two years old.¹⁰⁰

Researchers have also observed that families must trade-off important preferences, further indication that the supply of preferred options is inadequate. Hamilton and Guin hypothesize that constraints like location and need for child care may lead parents to trade-off preferences for academically strong schools and lead parents to choose academically inferior schools. Harris' recent study of revealed school preferences in a school choice lottery in New Orleans affirms this theory. Even though low-income and upper-income parents self-report preferences for academically strong schools, these preferences do not line up with their prioritized options when they choose (academically weaker schools with extracurricular programs and/or child care, and located closer to home particularly in elementary grades). Harris offers explanations that it is more cost-prohibitive for a low-income family to choose a higher-performing school without child care or transportation. Furthermore, low-income families are less likely to own cars, which would make it more costly to send their child to a farther school. Similarly, he found that parents give high rankings to schools attended by one or more siblings, as it would be costlier to send children to multiple schools. Harris quantified the trade-off between academic quality and distance, with one letter grade on the School Performance Score equivalent to a three-quarter mile driving distance.¹⁰¹ In other words, the average parent would be willing to travel an extra three miles to send their child to an "A"-rated school instead of an "F"-rated school. Similar patterns have been observed in Denver, where whether a family prefers a school with a high academic rating reflects whether there are such schools nearby.¹⁰²

Extended care or after-care are consistently important to elementary families and families may make trade-off decisions between schools that meet their preferences and schools that provide these types of services. Low-income parents may rely on free child care or extended programs provided by schools, and may not consider schools with stronger academic quality unless they provide those services.¹⁰³

Broadening the consideration set may help parents identify suitable options and face fewer trade-offs

There are indications that broad information programs can help more families find school matches. Efforts to distribute information about school quality and programs have resulted in families selecting schools with higher measured academic quality.¹⁰⁴ School choice is complex and parents have a range of preferences and constraints to consider, making information gathering and navigating the system a uniquely challenging task. It would be helpful to formally study GreatSchools' and other organizations' efforts to help families simplify this process by exposing them to the broadest possible set of feasible options based on their preferences and constraints.

Gaps in the research

Empirical data about choice patterns and participation may yield some insights, but it is also important to understand whether families are actively engaging in the process of thinking about their preferences and choosing schools based on those preferences.

- Are families in Minneapolis aware of the range of feasible options?
- Are there many misconceptions about school choice in Minneapolis?
What are they?

ENROLL

What is the current process for enrolling (district, independent, charter)? How would parents like to enroll their children in school? What strategies are effective in attracting/retaining school enrollment?

Quick look

- Feedback on common enrollment systems is limited and inconclusive.
- Further research is needed to understand family preferences and satisfaction with common enrollment systems, and their effectiveness at facilitating active participation in school choice.

Feedback on common enrollment systems is limited and inconclusive

While there is ample literature on parent preferences and school choice, there is limited study of how families enroll children in school across the country. Denver and New Orleans have implemented common enrollment systems that allow parents to fill out a single application, with a list of preferences, across public district and charter sectors. Common enrollment systems may be helping to reduce barriers to parents participating in school choice, as studies have cited broad participation in these programs.¹⁰⁵ However, feedback on common enrollment systems are mixed, with fewer parents expressing problems with enrollment in Denver, but 5 to 7 percent more parents in New Orleans reporting greater problems after the common enrollment system was implemented.¹⁰⁶ Jabbar's study of how schools respond to competition briefly discusses how the single application system in New Orleans may be helping reduce inequities in school access by ensuring fair access to all schools and simplifying the application process.¹⁰⁷ More research is needed to understand family preferences about the enrollment process itself and how different systems meet those preferences.

Gaps in the research

There are few studies about school marketing and how schools use marketing techniques to attract and retain enrollment (discussed briefly in the "SEARCH" section). A forthcoming study of school marketing in New Orleans, a highly competitive school environment, should reveal important insights about how schools attract and retain families.

EVALUATE

How satisfied are parents with their choices? Why would a parent choose to leave a school?

Quick look

- Parents express satisfaction with their schools, and the act of choosing may influence their level of satisfaction.
- Higher mobility rates may indicate lower levels of satisfaction among low-income students and students of color.
- Satisfaction levels with schools may not be primarily driven by measures academic quality.
- Additional research is needed to understand drivers of satisfaction and student mobility in Minneapolis and other cities.

Parents express satisfaction with their schools, and the act of choosing itself may influence their level of satisfaction

There is an interesting paradox among Americans, where consistently only half are satisfied with the quality of K-12 education overall, yet 75 percent of parents are satisfied with the quality of education that their child is receiving.¹⁰⁸ In choice cities, parents also report high levels of satisfaction with their child's current school and report that their school is responsive to their concerns.¹⁰⁹ This paradox is important to consider when helping parents evaluate their options. Furthermore, simply the act of choosing may influence satisfaction levels.¹¹⁰ Botti and Iyengar studied nuances in this theory and found that choosers in a controlled experiment are more satisfied only when they are selecting among preferred alternatives, while non-choosers are more satisfied when selecting among less preferred alternatives.¹¹¹ More research is needed to understand how choosing influences school satisfaction when families engage in school choice.

Higher mobility rates may indicate lower levels of satisfaction among low-income students and students of color

In Minneapolis, there are indications that satisfaction with charter schools is relatively much lower than with district schools. Charter school student mobility¹¹² in Minneapolis is relatively high, with 13 percent mobility compared to 1 percent in district schools, however, this may be because charter schools serve disproportionately more lower-income students than traditional district

schools.¹¹³ Nationally, low-income parents are nearly twice as likely to report that they are researching schools because they are switching schools.¹¹⁴

The drivers of student mobility may be as complex as parent preferences, and school performance may not necessarily be the primary driver of student mobility. Somali students are enrolled in some of the lowest-performing schools in Minneapolis, but parents in a small study expressed high satisfaction with schools for their community focus, small schools and classrooms, and accommodations for Somali Muslim culture.¹¹⁵ Families surveyed in the “Near North” area of Minneapolis¹¹⁶ perceived that a school that received less than 5 percent rating on the Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR) in Minnesota was the quality equivalent of a school that received an MMR score seven times higher.¹¹⁷ These perceptions are consistent with the findings above that parents assess school quality using multiple factors other than test scores, and providing clear signals of academic quality can help parents easily evaluate and compare options.¹¹⁸

Gaps in the research

Further study is needed to understand satisfaction with choices and why parents and students choose to leave schools. As noted in the “Barriers” section above, there are many complex factors that prevent parents from understanding their options and engaging in school choice that, when addressed, may help parents evaluate schools after their children enroll.

CONCLUSION

Parents in a growing number of U.S. cities have access to alternative school options. In order for parents to maximally benefit from school choice policies, several barriers that parents face throughout the choice process must be addressed. While many parents are participating in school choice, some may be doing so “passively” without fully exploring or exercising their options, while other parents are not participating at all because they do not perceive stark differences in school quality. As parents consider their preferences and priorities when researching options, lack of time, resources and misconceptions may limit their consideration set. Direct guidance and clear, accurate information from trusted sources are needed to help families overcome these obstacles to effective engagement.

Promising strategies are being modeled and tested by GreatSchools and several local organizations to address these barriers. An accompanying appendix will list these strategies along with recommendations from the research community.

Appendix: Recommended strategies for improving parental engagement in school choice

“The success of K–12 school choice policies largely depends on the behaviors of school choosers, yet school choosers have limited information about their options, limited resources to commit to conducting a school search, and limited capacities for processing information and making informed decisions.”

- Jon Valant, American Enterprise Institute, ‘Better data, better decisions: Informing school choosers to improve education markets,’ November 2014.

Researchers have provided a nuanced understanding of the complexity of parental engagement in school choice. It is not enough to simply provide information to parents – effective strategies must also address a variety of barriers that extend beyond information access.

This appendix lists strategies recommended by school choice researchers to improve parent engagement in ways that contribute to the effectiveness of school choice policies.

Recommendations to motivate parental engagement

Sattin-Bajaj, who studies school choice at the middle to high school transition, recommends more explicit discussion with parents and families about what is and what is not expected of parents in the school choice process, and a thorough discussion of the potential consequences to children when parents do not meet expectations. To this end, she makes the following specific suggestions in her book ‘Unaccompanied Minors’ (2013):

- Publishing translated print school guides for parents.
- Creating a standalone “school choice advisory” entity to support parents.
- Providing school choice training for community-based organizations.
- Providing adequate training and accountability for any school-based enrollment activities.
- Within schools, prioritizing counseling around school choice, and promoting a culture focused on thoughtful engagement in school choice.
- Helping students develop an “institutional compass” to navigate the high school choice process, from searching for information, understanding admission requirements and improving chances for eligibility at selective schools.
- Ensuring schools and families are sending consistent messages to students about which schools to select, at least both agreeing on a “minimum criteria.”

- Leveraging opportunities to connect high school choice to college choice, recognizing that the process of selecting a quality high school has parallels to the college selection process.

To help inspire and motivate families to participate in school choice, Patrick Wolf and Thomas Stewart, in their 2012 report 'Understanding School Shoppers in Detroit,' recommend:

- Showcasing “veteran school shoppers,” and enlisting them as coaches to model researching and developing an awareness of quality schools.
- Encouraging parents to involve their middle and high school students in the selection process.
- Providing specific support for Latino parents, such as workshops and support for parent engagement at home.
- Ensuring a safe environment in all schools, as safety is an important concern for families.

Recommendations to improve information gathering

Parent preferences are complex and diverse, as studied by Dara Zeehandelaar and Amber Northern’s online survey of 2,000 parents in the United States published in their 2013 report ‘What Parents Want: Education Preferences and Trade-Offs.’ They recommend a “doubling down” by information providers like GreatSchools to provide information about school particulars to inform diverse preferences.

Laura Hamilton and Stacey S. Guin’s ‘How Families Choose Schools’ chapter in the 2005 book ‘Getting Choice Right’ also suggest making information systems widely available, accessible and understandable, leveraging the Internet as its use becomes more widespread.

Simply publishing information is not enough. Wolf and Stewart recommend the following strategies to address barriers to information gathering, the authors recommend:

- “Enlisting” family and friends to provide support to single women heads of household and other parents with severe resource constraints so that these parents can attend open houses, school visits and research schools.
- Creating or funding an independent entity to collect and disseminate information about schools.

Valant, in his 2014 report ‘Better data, better decisions’ described Detroit’s “The Best Classroom Project,” a grassroots effort to share information about schools and classrooms from community observations, which can help provide important community perspectives but in a formal way designed to fill in the gaps for parents.

Recommendations for reformers and new school operators

Reformers interested in improving the overall quality of school options can greatly leverage insights about how parents research and choose schools when designing policies and systems. Hamilton and Guin recommend the following:

- Improving the number of quality options available to parents and families, so that quality is not a constraint and parents have “real” options.
- Creating feedback loops so that schools can learn more about local parent preferences. For example, providing schools with information about how parents make decisions may be helpful feedback to improve the “supply-side.”

New schools opening to respond to increased demand for quality options should also consider how parents engage in school choice. Wolf and Stewart recommend the following strategies to engage non-participants or “non-shoppers” in Detroit in choosing newly available options:

- Since reputation matters, marketing schools in a way that signals a commitment to high performance.
- Addressing complex admissions by standardizing admissions process.
- Creating a central database of families and their preferences to facilitate school-family matches.
- Share resources between new schools, such as bilingual translators to help with school applications and enrollment.
- Direct and aggressive marketing to students, including home visits to build rapport and trust.
- Providing “before and after care” supports for working parents concerned about child safety.

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- ⁷⁴ Wolf and Stewart 40.

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- ⁷⁵ Sattin-Bajaj 117,132.
- ⁷⁶ GreatSchools Customer Satisfaction Survey 2014. An estimated 2 million parents with HHI less than \$25,000 use GreatSchools.org each year.
- ⁷⁷ Hussein 159-60.
- ⁷⁸ Christopher A. Lubienski, "Marketing Schools: Consumer Goods and Competitive Incentives for Consumer Information," *Education and Urban Society* 40 (November 2007): 118-141.
- ⁷⁹ Susanna Loeb, Jon Valant, and Matt Kasman, "Increasing Choice in the Market for Schools: Recent Reforms and Their Effects on Student Achievement," *National Tax Journal* 64 (March 2011): 158.
- ⁸⁰ Huriya Jabbar, "How Do School Leaders Respond to Competition?" Education Research Alliance: For New Orleans (March 26, 2015): 4.
- ⁸¹ Jabbar 19.
- ⁸² Jabbar 21.
- ⁸³ Jabbar 32.
- ⁸⁴ Valant 2.
- ⁸⁵ Valant 7.
- ⁸⁶ Valant 6.
- ⁸⁷ Gross and Denice 1.
- ⁸⁸ Wolf and Stewart 23.
- ⁸⁹ Gross and Denice 5. Race and region seem to have an effect on the number of options families list. Gross found that families of black students and students identifying with "other" racial groups list more options than families of white students, while Hispanic families list about the same or fewer options.
- ⁹⁰ Jochim, et al. 10.
- ⁹¹ Sattin-Bajaj 110-111.
- ⁹² Gross and Denice 2.
- ⁹³ Jochim, et al. 11.
- ⁹⁴ Valant 9-10, Wolf 23.
- ⁹⁵ Valant 14.
- ⁹⁶ Sattin-Bajaj 131.
- ⁹⁷ Sattin-Bajaj 137.
- ⁹⁸ Sattin-Bajaj 130.
- ⁹⁹ Jochim, et al. 11.
- ¹⁰⁰ Wolf and Stewart 39.
- ¹⁰¹ Harris 18-31.
- ¹⁰² Gross and Denice 12.
- ¹⁰³ Harris 20.
- ¹⁰⁴ Valant 10, Harris 6
- ¹⁰⁵ Gross and Denice 12, and Sattin-Bajaj 24.
- ¹⁰⁶ Jochim, et al. 27.
- ¹⁰⁷ Jabbar 31.
- ¹⁰⁸ Rebecca Rifkin, "Americans' Satisfaction With Education System Increases," *Gallup*, 28 August 2014, 23 January 2015, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/175517/americans-satisfaction-education-system-increases.aspx>>.

¹⁰⁹ Jochim, et al. 11.

¹¹⁰ Richard deCharms, *Personal Causation* (New York: Academic Press, 1968): 173.

¹¹¹ Simona Botti and Sheena Iyengar, "The Psychological Pleasure and Pain of Choosing: When People Prefer Choosing at the Cost of Subsequent Outcome Satisfaction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87.3 (2004): 312-326.

¹¹² Student mobility refers to when students change schools for reasons other than grade promotion.

¹¹³ Hussein 154.

¹¹⁴ GreatSchools, Annual Brand Survey 2013.

¹¹⁵ Hussein 158.

¹¹⁶ Empower Survey. The authors of the survey did not include additional demographic information about survey respondents, other than noting that the survey was conducted in the "Near North" neighborhood of Minneapolis, a section with high concentrations of families living in poverty described in MinnPost:

<http://www.minnpost.com/data/2011/11/minneapolis-residents-living-below-poverty-line>. The authors of the survey did not give a specific geographic definition of the "Near North" neighborhood.

¹¹⁷ Empower, "Information Gap Survey Report," Minneapolis, 2013.

¹¹⁸ Valant 12.