

# WHAT PARENTS WANT: EDUCATION PREFERENCES AND TRADE-OFFS

A National Survey of K-12 Parents

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Data Collection and Analysis  
by Harris Interactive

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# FOREWORD AND SUMMARY



# FOREWORD AND SUMMARY

*Chester E. Finn, Jr. and Michael J. Petrilli*

The dominant approach to public education for most of our nation’s history was for local districts to offer standard-issue schools, mainly neighborhood-based and essentially identical, that reflected some version of the community’s general preferences and values. Because those preferences and values differed somewhat from place to place, public schools differed somewhat, too. Schools might have been a bit more “traditional” in more conservative suburbs and rural communities, a tad more “progressive” in liberal urban locales. But in any given community, there was usually just one flavor for everybody. (Even the exceptions were broadly standardized. For example, there might have been a “vocational high school” in the community.) If you didn’t like it, you chose a private school or you moved—kind of like Henry Ford’s approach to car colors.

Today, however, families across much of the country can choose among multiple public-school options. These may include charter schools; magnet schools with various specialized or advanced programs; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) schools; career or college-preparatory academies; other neighborhood schools (via intra- and sometimes inter-district choice); and even virtual schools. Some cities—New Orleans and Denver may be the best examples—are pursuing “portfolio” approaches, offering a variety of school options throughout their communities. And then there’s the private-school market, which is still accessible primarily to those who can afford the tuition, but is also changing as vouchers and tax credits spread.

But what do parents really *want* from their schools? Are there patterns and categories? Is it possible to segment the parent market into identifiable groups, each with distinctive preferences? And if so, could we do a better job of creating and delivering the educational options that families most crave for their kids? Wouldn’t it be valuable to know how those groups sort out? Are they identifiable by race? Socio-economic status? Personal politics, ideology, or religion? Geography? And how large are these groups in relation to one another?

Analysts and advocates interested in the “demand” side of school choice have long focused on parents’ educational preferences. But parents are too often viewed as a monolith of similar if not identical preferences, with researchers looking to determine what the “average” or “typical” parent seeks in a school—and how that parent makes decisions among types of schools. This groundbreaking study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, conducted for Fordham by Harris Interactive, takes a different approach: It attempts to “segment” U.S. parents into distinguishable groups, each with its own set of values, priorities, and preferences regarding education.

Harris Interactive was an obvious choice to spearhead data collection and to work with our team on the questionnaire design and analysis, considering its extensive experience in the complicated world of market research. Consumer goods companies routinely employ Harris Interactive and its methods to figure out how to reach (or create) new market segments or niches, to determine whether there are groups that are poorly served, and to identify how best to communicate their offerings. We wanted to bring a similar approach to education.

The core of this study's methodology was an online survey of over 2,000 parents, nationwide, seeking information about the educational goals and school attributes that were important to them. The survey included a diverse set of parents with school-age children: African American, white, Hispanic, and Asian, urban and rural, rich and poor, liberal and conservative, those who sent their children to traditional, charter, and private schools. We asked them about their children, about themselves, and about their priorities relative to both the characteristics of a school and the education goals they deemed most important. But that was just the beginning. It was Harris Interactive's innovative survey design and analytic techniques that led to new insights about U.S. parents and how they view an "ideal" school for their children. Let's take a look at the major findings.

- **Parents' "must-haves" do not vary greatly.** We thought we might find distinct groups of parents with sharply different values and preferences about schools. Instead, we found that parents are more alike than they are different. A few key goals and school attributes rose to the top of almost all parents' lists—features such as a 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. These preferences persisted across parents of different races, household incomes, and political ideologies, and were consistently ranked highly by parents regardless of whether their student attended a traditional public, public charter, or private school.
- **Yet some revealing differences are also visible by race, income, and other demographic factors.** For example:
  - White parents are somewhat more focused on their children learning "good study habits and self-discipline" than are African American or Hispanic parents. White parents, on the other hand, are *less* concerned with their child being accepted at a top-tier college than are parents of other races.
  - African American parents put more importance on diversity (wanting their child to learn to work with people from diverse backgrounds and being part of a diverse student body) than do their white counterparts.
  - Both African American and Hispanic parents rank "preparation for taking state tests" and "has high test scores" significantly higher than white parents do. (Low-income parents also rank preparing for state tests higher than more affluent parents do.)

- The goal of developing “strong critical thinking skills” has a nearly direct relationship to increasing income—the higher the parents’ income, the higher a priority this is.
- The lowest income group (<\$35K) ranks the following two attributes more highly than do the higher income categories (\$75K+): “[Student] finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education” and “[School] offers vocational or job-related programs.”
- On the other hand, parents in the lowest income group also view “understands how important it is to go to college” as a more important educational goal than do those in higher income groups.
- Politically conservative parents place greater importance than do moderates and liberals on a school that “has a very traditional approach to learning” and “teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs.” Conservatives also place higher priority on their child’s school encouraging “a strong code of moral conduct” and “a love of country/patriotism.” (No, this was not a big surprise.)
- Liberal parents, on the hand, are more likely than moderates or conservatives to favor a school that “has a diverse student body,” and “emphasizes arts and music instruction,” and in which their child “develops an appreciation for nature” and “develops fluency in a foreign language.” (Nor was this a surprise.)
- There are few differences in the preferences and priorities of parents based on their religious service attendance, but those who attend services most frequently place the highest emphasis on their child’s school curriculum reflecting their personal beliefs.

**We identified several market “niches” worth considering by those on the “supply side” of school choice.**

While we didn’t find distinctive “segments” (parents did *not* fall into neat groups of shared values that differed substantially from other groups), we *did* identify parents who prioritized individual school attributes or student goals that most other parents viewed as less important.<sup>1</sup> From this, six market niches surfaced.<sup>2</sup>

- 1. Pragmatists** (36 percent of K-12 parents). These parents ranked highly the school attribute: “Offers vocational classes or job-related programs.” Compared to the total parent population, this niche contains a disproportionately high percentage of parents of boys and of families with lower household incomes than the total population. These parents are also less likely to have graduated from college. But they do not differ from the total parent population in terms of race/ethnicity, the region where they live, political ideology, or religious preference/service attendance.

- 2. Jeffersonians** (24 percent of K-12 parents). These parents ranked highly a school that “emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership.” Yet they themselves are no more likely than other parents to be active in their communities or schools.

Aside from being slightly more likely to be Christian, overall, this group of parents is almost identical demographically to the total population of parents. Their children are no more or less likely to be academically gifted, to enjoy school, to need special education, or to put in more effort.

- 3. Test-Score Hawks** (23 percent of K-12 parents). These parents ranked highly the school attribute: “Has high test scores.” Parents in this niche are more likely than others to have academically gifted children who put in a great deal of effort at school, so it is not too surprising that they are also likelier to favor schools with high test scores—presumably so their children can be surrounded and challenged by similar students. Achievement in general is important to this group, as they are more likely than others to say they set high expectations for their children and push them to excel. They are likelier to expect a child of theirs to receive a graduate degree. And they appear to hold high expectations for their schools (a disproportionately large percentage report that their child has changed schools because, as parents, they were dissatisfied with the school or teachers).

Parents in this niche are, on average, a bit younger and more likely to be African American and Hispanic. (It follows that they’re less likely to be white.)

- 4. Multiculturalists** (22 percent of K-12 parents). These parents ranked highly the student goal: “Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds.” They are more likely to be African American and therefore somewhat less likely than the total population to be white. It’s more likely that their child attends school in an urban area. Compared to the total parent population, these parents are also more likely to identify as politically liberal.

Parents in this niche are more apt to say that, compared to other students, their child performs “about average” in school versus above or below average, though these parents also report similar levels of effort by their child in school.

- 5. Expressionists** (15 percent of K-12 parents). These parents ranked highly: “Emphasizes arts and music instruction.” They are more likely to be parents of girls and to identify their political ideology as liberal. They’re also less likely to be Christian (in fact, they are three times more likely to be atheist). Parents in this niche are no more or less likely to send their child to a private school but, among those with children who currently attend public school, more send their child to a charter school compared to the total population.

Parents in this niche are likelier to report being extremely satisfied with the culture/atmosphere at their child’s school, but less likely to report satisfaction with communications from school to home. They’re also more apt to describe their parenting style as letting their child develop at his/her own pace and less apt to describe their style as setting high expectations for their child.

- 6. Strivers** (12 percent of K-12 parents). These parents ranked highly the student goal: “Is accepted at a top-tier college.” The parents in this niche are far more likely to be African American and Hispanic and less likely to be white. They are also more likely to be Catholic. Interestingly, the parents themselves do not differ from the total population in terms of their own educational attainment.

Not surprisingly, parents in this niche are more apt to expect that their child will earn a graduate or professional degree. They are also more likely to send their child to a charter school rather than a traditional public school. Compared to the total population, these parents are also likelier to have a child attending school in an urban area. But they are also less satisfied with their child’s current school; indeed, the proportion of those in this niche who are extremely *dissatisfied* with their child’s school is greater than in the total population. Unsurprisingly, they are also more likely to say that their child has changed schools due to dissatisfaction with the school or teachers, because their child was unhappy with the school, and/or because of safety concerns.

What does all of this mean? Examining these data, one can make a case for an education system built both on commonality and on differences. Nearly all parents want a strong curriculum in the core subject areas, a focus on critical thinking skills, and for their children to learn good study habits. This bodes well for policy initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards, which are designed to deliver much of that. Still, given how many parents assign a lower priority to schools having high test scores or preparing students to take state tests, the results also illustrate the chasm between parents and policymakers. It’s a blunt fact that many parents are less obsessed with test scores than are those who design education policies.

Yet parents are far from identical. Once their non-negotiables are satisfied—somewhat like the basic needs in Maslow’s well-known hierarchy—many start looking for something special. Some do indeed seek high test scores. Others want vocational training. Some want diversity. Others value art and music. Some want their kids going to top-tier colleges. Others are satisfied with job skills. It would be hard, outside a system of school choice, for all of these parents to get what they want.

In the end, it’s not unlike people’s view of cars. Pretty much everyone wants a vehicle that’s reliable, safe, and affordable. But once those requisites are supplied, drivers and purchasers have dramatically different preferences as to roominess, sportiness, seating capacity, gas mileage, and, of course—pace Henry Ford—color and style. The auto industry has this figured out. The education industry still has a lot to learn.

A smart foundation of common, high academic standards coupled with plenty of school choices is probably the best way to give parents what they want. That suggests plenty of work ahead for policymakers, school creators (and replicators), and educators alike, as well as doubling down by valuable information providers such as GreatSchools to ensure that parents have easy access to the particulars of the schools they are considering for their daughters and sons.

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# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

## Study Purpose

Traditionally, public education has taken a one-size-fits-all approach, providing communities with K-12 schools that cater to *general* preferences and values rather than *individual* families. Indeed, the drive toward greater school choice was fueled by the conviction that no single model of education is right for every child. But while school choice has expanded dramatically over the last twenty years, even the most entrepreneurial school leaders have spent little time studying the unique needs, characteristics, and preferences of parents. And many schools and programs of choice, be they district, private, or charter, often tout their bells-and-whistles rather than the educational nuts-and-bolts, because they believe that's what parents are looking for.

Other industries strive to understand key segments of their consumers so they can better tailor or customize their products. But what about the parent market? Does it have segments? Most attempts to study parent preferences have tended to treat them as a single undifferentiated group, or else to divide them across race or socioeconomic lines. Few provide insight into how groups of parents differ in their school preferences or are useful in showing how schools and districts could more effectively deliver the kind of education that parents most want for their children.

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute set out to explore, via proven methods of market research, what such groups of parents would look like. Specifically, we wanted to determine whether U.S. parents can readily be “segmented” into distinguishable groups that share a common set of priorities, and to examine the characteristics that parents in each group have in common. (The analogous consumer product researcher might ask whether there are groups of consumers—say sugarholics, health nuts, fast-food junkies—that preferred a certain type of food when presented with a grocery aisle full of options.) In short, what do parents prioritize? And if they can't have everything on their wish list, what trade-offs might they be willing to make?

## Previous Research

Many studies tend to treat parents as one group or divide them by income or race. They also tend to limit the universe of preferences to three: academic quality, racial diversity, and location. The results from such studies suggest that parents rate academic quality higher than the latter two and that those preferences are consistent across groups regardless of wealth or ethnicity.<sup>3</sup> Yet at least one study found that racial composition and location were as or more important than test scores to *all* parents.<sup>4</sup>

Other studies have found that low-income and minority parents care more about proximity and safety than do high-income and white parents (and are even willing to trade these characteristics for school quality), while the latter prioritize high-performing schools.<sup>5</sup> However, a study in Charlotte-Mecklenburg found that low-income parents choose higher-achieving schools when presented with basic school information, perhaps indicating that the choices are related to the adequacy of available information rather than true preferences.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, much of the school choice research provides less insight into how groups of parents differ in their preferences. One exception is a study of Detroit parents who found that parents could be grouped according to how they “shopped” for schools, including veteran, emerging, potential, and unlikely shoppers.<sup>7</sup> Some studies focus on the nuanced geographic preferences of parents<sup>8</sup>; others on the differences between parents who do and don’t actively choose their school.<sup>9</sup> Another study in New Orleans found that parental preferences were heavily influenced by peers.<sup>10</sup>

An especially popular line of research establishes that the accessibility of information (or lack thereof) enhances (or limits) parents’ decision making.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, other studies find both highly and poorly informed parents and show that the former are more adept at making schooling decisions.<sup>12</sup>

This study began with no assumptions about how parents might group together. Unlike other studies, it did not assume *a priori* divisions along the lines of wealth and ethnicity nor did it arbitrarily limit the potential priorities of parents. Its innovative survey design and analytic methods allow us to present parents with a comprehensive menu of options, examine how they prioritize some options at the expense of others, and determine whether certain sets of options consistently land at the top of some lists and the bottom of others.

## Methods

On behalf of the Fordham Institute, Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of 2,007 parents and guardians of K-12 public and private school students in the United States between August 14 and August 28, 2012.<sup>13</sup> Qualified survey respondents were U.S. adults eighteen and older who were parents or guardians of a school-age child in public or private school.<sup>14</sup> Respondents were asked general demographics and characteristics about their child (the student) and themselves,<sup>15</sup> as well as to prioritize school characteristics (thirty total) and educational goals for their child (seventeen total).<sup>16</sup> Harris Interactive worked with Fordham on survey design, analysis, and reporting on the research findings; any interpretation of the results is attributed to Fordham.

The survey was designed to understand and prioritize parents’ educational values. However, this seemingly simple task is actually quite complex. A parent can easily rank two or three items relative to each other—for example, test scores, proximity to home, and safety—as first-, second-, and third-most important to them. But schools have many other attributes, too, and asking a parent to rank a list of five, ten, or twenty (or, in this case, thirty-seven) relative to one another is a near-impossible challenge. Thus Harris Interactive used a survey technique called *maximum-difference* scaling (max-diff) that allowed analysts to ask about a number of attributes while not presenting parents with an impossibly long list to rank.

Parents were presented with a list of five random educational goals at a time (see Table 1) and asked to choose the most and least critical among the set. This task was repeated several times with different, random groups of five goals. The more times a specific goal was selected as most critical, the greater its “relative importance.” In this way, we estimated the relative importance of seventeen unique educational goals without asking parents to rank them one at a time. Parents then repeated the process for thirty school characteristics. (See full description in the Appendix.)

**Table 1: Example of Survey Ranking**

Please choose the one “MOST” critical goal	Educational Goals	Please choose the one “LEAST” critical goal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is prepared for college	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develops a love of learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develops an appreciation for nature	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is able to work collaboratively in teams	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develops strong self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/>

# FINDINGS



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## Overall Results

When forced to make tough trade-offs, how do K-12 parents as a group prioritize, in an “ideal world,” the educational goals they have for their children and the characteristics they’d like to see in their children’s schools?

Figure 1 shows how parents rank the tested student goals and school characteristics on importance.<sup>17</sup> School characteristics are shown on the left and student goals on the right. Each is plotted according to its utility score (more below), with the relatively more important factors toward the top and the less important toward the bottom. The chart allows us not only to see which goals and characteristics are rated more or less important, but also the relative distance between the ranks. *Note that the least critical goals are not unimportant; rather, they are less important compared to the other goals and characteristics.*

Utility scores are scaled so the “average” ranking is 100. An attribute with a utility of 200 is twice as likely to be considered “most critical” as an attribute with a utility of 100; an attribute with a utility of fifty is half as likely to be considered “most critical” as the average attribute. (See Appendix for all utility scores.)

### GROUPS OF PREFERENCES VERSUS THE PREFERENCES OF GROUPS

We intended to use the survey results to place parents into one of several groups, or “segments,” each with unique kinds of preferences. Perhaps there was one segment of parents who valued a more conventional approach to education (instruction in core subjects and a traditional approach to learning), another that prioritized rigorous academics (extremely high academic standards, preparation for state tests), and a third that sought behavioral education (high standards for student behavior, an emphasis on character development). By way of analogy, we presented parents with an entire grocery store of options. Was there a group that gravitated to healthy cuisine, another to sweets, and a third to fried foods? And what do the groups look like? Is the “health nut” group mostly comprised of parents with certain common characteristics? And were they different from those in the sugarholic group?

In the end, it didn’t work out that way. The data showed that parents are a more homogeneous group than we expected (e.g., all went for a considerable amount of healthy cuisine). When presented with a large menu of choices, everyone chose the same things—offers a strong curriculum in the core subject areas and in STEM fields (relative to other school characteristics), and develops study habits, critical thinking, and communication skills (relative to other educational goals). Most make similar trade-offs when it comes to ranking their preferences. And choosing one item didn’t relate to the *other* items they also chose to put in their shopping cart.

So rather than explaining *groups of preferences* that did not exist, we examine the *preferences of groups*.

Figure 1: How K-12 Parents Prioritize Attributes

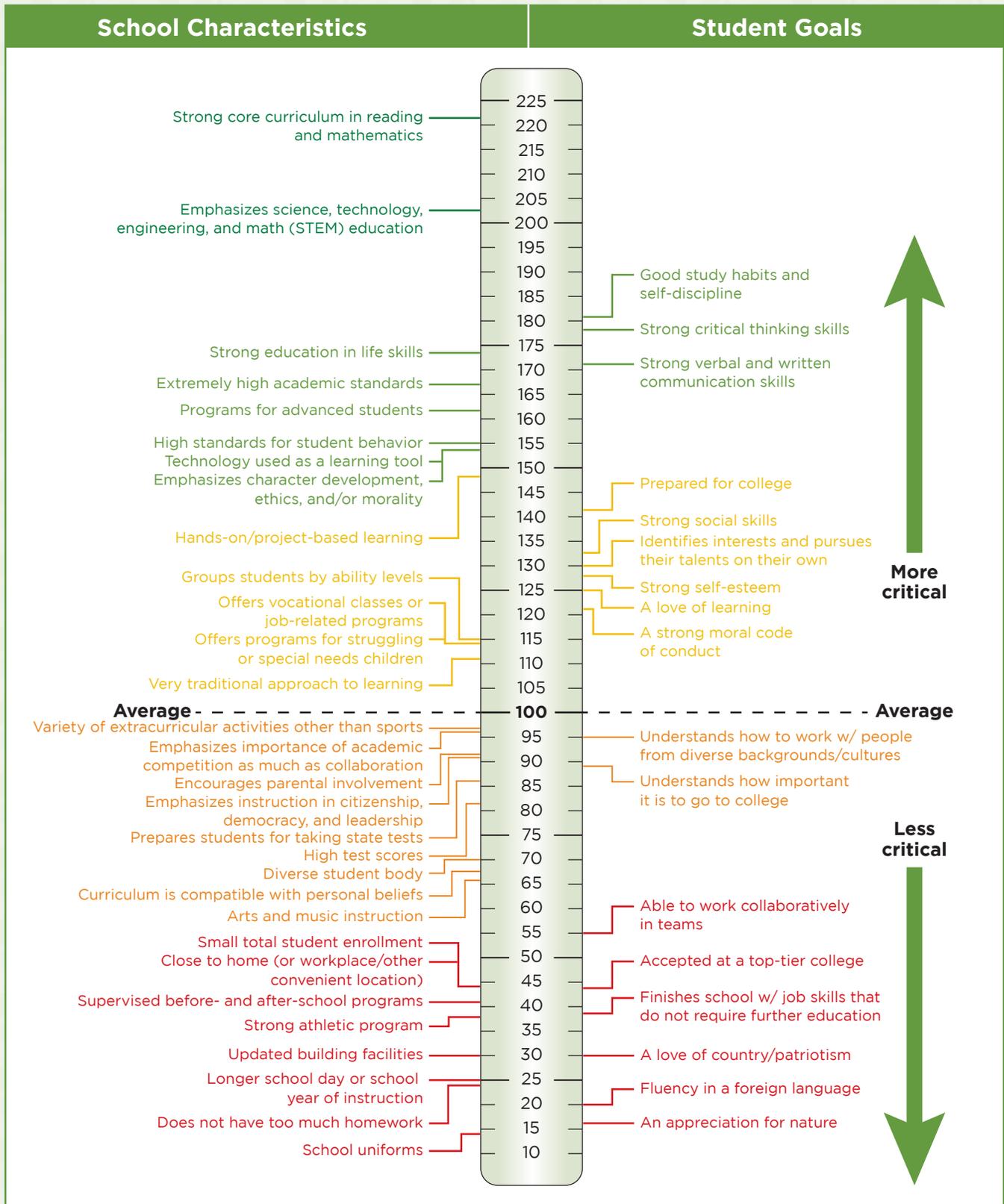


Figure 1 reveals a number of interesting results regarding parent priorities. First, K-12 parents report the most critical factors in their child's school are 1) a strong core curriculum in reading and math and 2) an emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). These are far and away the two things that parents prioritize above all else and appear to be nonnegotiable offerings (indicated in Figure 1 by dark green). In addition to the "nonnegotiables," parents seem to have a firm list of "must-haves" (green), which include learning good study habits and self-discipline and developing critical thinking, life skills, and verbal and written communication skills. Below that we see a group of "desirables" (yellow). They include project-based learning, vocational classes, and schools that prepare students for college and encourage them to develop strong social skills or a love of learning.

On the flip side, there are certain things they would be more willing to give up. While not necessarily *unimportant* to parents, these attributes appear more "expendable." They include (in red) small school enrollment, proximity to home, and updated building facilities. Parents also seem less concerned with their child's school emphasizing a love of country or fluency in a foreign language. Interestingly, diversity (both having a diverse student body and an emphasis on working with people from diverse backgrounds) is neither a "must-have" nor an "expendable." This is *not* to say that parents as a whole do not at all value school demographics, location, or any of the other choices that are not "must-haves." However, *when forced to prioritize*, parents prefer strong academics. And, as we will explore in the next section of this report, this preference *persists* across race, income, political ideology, and a number of other dimensions.

## Results by Selected Subgroups

Parents of K-12 students are fairly unified in their major school preferences, but some differences do exist by demographic subgroups.<sup>18</sup> We explore the differences in preferences by:

1. Race/ethnicity,
2. Household income,
3. School type,
4. Political ideology,
5. School location, and
6. Religious services attendance.

Before diving into the subgroup findings, let's review how the data are presented. Tables 2 through 7 show how different groups of parents (e.g., low income vs. high income, liberals vs. conservatives) rank the tested student goals and school characteristics. For each subgroup, the **average ranking** is shown for all goals and characteristics. The *lower* the average rank, the more critical/important the goal or characteristic is to the identified group of parents. Within the tables, the shaded color represents the value in the cell, with green being the most important and red the least. Superscript letters are used to denote ranks that are higher, statistically speaking, between subgroups.<sup>19</sup>

For example, Table 2a (page 19) shows the average ranking for student goals, both for the entire group of parents (the leftmost column marked "Total") and divided by race and ethnicity (columns A-D). Looking at the top row, we see that the total population of K-12 parents rates the goal "learns good study habits and self-discipline" highest, with an overall average ranking of 4.7 out of the seventeen tested goals. On average, white/other parents (column A), give this goal a statistically significant higher rating (4.4) than African American and Hispanic parents (5.3 each, columns B and C). This difference is indicated by the superscript "B,C" in column A. However, all four racial and ethnic subgroups rate this goal highly (hence the entire row is shaded green).

## Key Findings for Results by Race/Ethnicity

- ▶ Parents, regardless of race, focus on their child learning “good study habits and self-discipline.” However, compared to African American and Hispanic parents, white parents seem to place even *more* importance on this key goal (white, 4.4 vs. African American, 5.3; Hispanic, 5.3).
  - White parents, on the other hand, are *less* concerned with their child being accepted at a top-tier college. While a less important goal overall (12.9 overall rank), African American, Hispanic, and Asian parents all rank this more highly on average than white parents (African American, 11.1; Hispanic, 11.2; Asian, 11.5 vs. white, 13.7). African American and Hispanic parents also want their child’s school to stress the importance of going to college (African American, 8.3; Hispanic, 7.8 vs. white, 9.8).
- ▶ Both African American and Hispanic parents rank “preparation for taking state tests” (12.8 and 13.5, respectively vs. white, 17.7) and “has high test scores” (14.3 and 14.6, respectively vs. white, 17.0) significantly higher than white parents do (see also results by household income).
- ▶ On school characteristics, white parents are most focused on strong academics, as they rank “offers a strong curriculum in reading and mathematics” at an average of 4.7, which is greater than the rank given by African American parents (6.6), Hispanic parents (7.2), and Asian parents (6.0). Alternatively, school characteristics having less to do with core academics are less critical to white parents than to other racial/ethnic groups, such as a strong athletic program (African American, 20.5; Hispanic, 20.9; Asian, 21.6 vs. white, 22.5) and supervised before- and after-school programs (African American, 19.4; Hispanic, 19.0; Asian, 19.7 vs. white, 21.6).
- ▶ African American parents put the most importance on diversity (“Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds”: 7.4 vs. white, 8.9; Asian, 9.1; “Has a diverse student body”: 16.4 vs. white, 17.7).

While the latter two findings align with previous research, the critical difference is that nonacademic school characteristics and diversity are drastically *less important to all racial and ethnic groups* than are core and STEM subjects. In this way, our findings differ from prior work (see Previous Research, page 11)—a nuanced but important distinction we were able to make because of the analytic techniques used.

Table 2a/2b: Results by Race/Ethnicity

Table 2a: Student Goals	Total	White/ Other (A)	African American (B)	Hispanic (C)	Asian (D)
n=	2007	1250	302	305	150
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	4.7	4.4 <sup>BC</sup>	5.3	5.3	4.7
Develops strong critical thinking skills	4.8	4.4 <sup>BC</sup>	5.3	5.9	4.6
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	5.1	5.0 <sup>C</sup>	5.3	5.7	5.2
Is prepared for college	6.7	6.8	5.9	6.5	7.8
Develops strong social skills	6.9	6.7 <sup>C</sup>	7.1	7.9	6.4
Develops strong self-esteem	7.0	7.1	6.8	7.2	6.4
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	7.1	7.0	7.2	7.8	6.9
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	7.4	7.2 <sup>C</sup>	7.7	7.9	7.8
Develops a love of learning	7.4	7.1 <sup>BC</sup>	8.5	8.1	7.5
Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds	8.8	8.9	7.4 <sup>AB</sup>	8.8	9.1
Understands how important it is to go to college	9.3	9.8	8.3 <sup>A</sup>	7.8 <sup>AB</sup>	9.5
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	10.6	10.6 <sup>BC</sup>	10.9	11.0	10.2
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	12.9	13.0	13.4	11.9 <sup>A</sup>	13.6
Develops a love of country/patriotism	12.9	12.9	13.7	12.2	13.3
Is accepted at a top-tier college	12.9	13.7	11.1 <sup>A</sup>	11.2 <sup>A</sup>	11.5 <sup>A</sup>
Develops an appreciation for nature	14.2	14.1	14.7	14.1 <sup>AB</sup>	14.1
Develops fluency in a foreign language	14.2	14.3	14.3	13.6 <sup>AB</sup>	14.4

Table 2b: School Characteristics	Total	White/ Other (A)	African American (B)	Hispanic (C)	Asian (D)
n=	2007	1250	302	305	150
Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics	5.4	4.7 <sup>BCD</sup>	6.6	7.2	6.0
Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education	6.8	6.4 <sup>C</sup>	8.0	8.1	6.2
Offers a strong education in life skills	8.6	8.3	8.8	9.3	9.9
Holds students to extremely high academic standards	9.7	9.7	9.9	10.6	7.9
Has high standards for student behavior	9.9	9.3 <sup>BC</sup>	10.3	12.0	10.5
Emphasizes character development, ethics, and/or morality	10.0	9.4 <sup>C</sup>	10.0	12.2	10.7
Uses technology as a learning tool	10.1	9.6 <sup>BCD</sup>	11.7	11.0	10.9
Emphasizes hands-on/project-based learning	10.3	9.7 <sup>BCD</sup>	11.7	11.5	10.3
Offers programs for advanced students	10.4	10.6	11.0	10.3	7.6
Groups students by ability levels	13.4	13.1	14.7	14.1	12.5
Offers programs for struggling students or students with special needs	13.7	13.6 <sup>D</sup>	13.0 <sup>D</sup>	13.8 <sup>D</sup>	16.0
Has a very traditional approach to learning (teacher-led instruction)	14.0	13.9	13.8	14.2	14.9
Offers vocational classes or job-related programs	14.1	14.2	14.0	13.4 <sup>A</sup>	14.8
Emphasizes the importance of academic competition as much as collaboration	14.9	15.5	14.4	13.8	12.9 <sup>A</sup>
Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership	15.1	14.7	15.5	16.1	15.8
Offers a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports	15.1	14.6 <sup>B</sup>	17.4	16.2	13.4
Encourages parental involvement	15.2	14.7 <sup>CD</sup>	14.8 <sup>D</sup>	16.8	16.9
Has high test scores	16.3	17.0	14.3 <sup>A</sup>	14.6 <sup>A</sup>	16.2
Prepares students for taking state tests	16.5	17.7	12.8 <sup>AB</sup>	13.5 <sup>A</sup>	17.1
Has a diverse student body	17.2	17.7	16.4 <sup>A</sup>	15.9	16.0
Emphasizes arts and music instruction	17.9	17.5 <sup>B</sup>	19.8	18.4	17.6
Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs	18.2	18.4	17.2	18.2	18.5
Has a small total student enrollment	20.8	20.7	20.9	20.4	22.1
Offers supervised before- and after-school programs	20.8	21.6	19.4 <sup>A</sup>	19.0 <sup>A</sup>	19.7 <sup>A</sup>
Is close to home (or workplace/other convenient location)	21.0	20.9 <sup>B</sup>	21.8	20.6	21.3
Has a strong athletic program, offering a variety of sports w/ successful teams	22.0	22.5	20.5 <sup>A</sup>	20.9 <sup>A</sup>	21.6 <sup>A</sup>
Has updated building facilities	22.2	22.3	22.1	21.6	22.0
Offers longer school day or school year of instruction	23.6	23.9	23.2	22.4 <sup>A</sup>	24.0
Does not have too much homework	24.4	24.5	24.8	23.5 <sup>B</sup>	25.1
Requires that students wear school uniforms	27.5	28.3	26.2 <sup>A</sup>	25.3 <sup>A</sup>	26.7 <sup>A</sup>

Note: White/other parents include all **non**-Hispanic, African American and Asian parents.

## Key Findings for Results by Household Income

- ▶ The goal of developing “strong critical thinking” is highly valued by parents across all income groups, ranking at or near the top priority for each. However, the average rank has a direct positive correlation to increasing income. In other words, parents with greater household incomes ranked it as more important, on average, than parents with lower incomes. Parents in the highest three income groups (\$35K+) also prioritize schools that emphasize STEM education and schools that hold students to extremely high academic standards.
- ▶ On the other hand, the lowest income group (<\$35K) ranks the following two key student goals higher than the top two income categories: “Understands how important it is to go to college” (<\$35K, 8.5 vs. \$75K to <\$125K, 9.7; \$125K+, 9.3) and “Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education” (<\$35K, 11.9 vs. \$75K to <\$125K, 13.3; \$125K+, 13.8). Parents in the lowest income group also prefer that schools offer vocational or job-related programs (<\$35K, 11.8 vs. \$35K to <\$75K, 12.8; \$75K to <\$125K, 14.3; \$125K+, 18.1).

This seems to indicate that lower-income parents have a more pragmatic outlook on the purpose of education (developing college and/or job skills). Higher income parents, on the other hand, may take it for granted that their children will be well-prepared for college and a career, and are thus at liberty to voice more specific academic aspirations (a focus on critical thinking, high standards, and STEM).

- ▶ Parents in households earning less than \$35K place a much greater priority on schools that offer programs for students who are struggling or have special needs (<\$35K, 10.2 vs. \$35K to <\$75K, 12.9; \$75K to <\$125K, 14.7; \$125K+, 17.2). The lowest income group (<\$35K) ranks “prepares students for taking state tests” statistically higher than the \$75K-to-less-than-\$125K group (13.5 vs. 17.6).

Table 3a/3b: Results by Household Income

Table 3a: Student Goals	Total	Less than \$34,999 (A)	\$35,000–\$74,999 (B)	\$75,000–\$124,999 (C)	\$125,000 or more (D)
<i>n=</i>	2007	435	722	504	253
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	4.7	4.9	4.6	4.5	5.2
Develops strong critical thinking skills	4.8	5.8	5.0 <sup>A</sup>	4.4 <sup>AB</sup>	4.1 <sup>AB</sup>
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	5.1	5.3	5.1	4.9	5.3
Is prepared for college	6.7	7.3	6.7	6.4	6.2
Develops strong social skills	6.9	7.0	6.6 <sup>D</sup>	6.8	7.8
Develops strong self-esteem	7.0	6.9	6.6	7.3	7.7
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	7.1	6.7	7.4	7.0	7.8
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	7.4	7.8	6.8	7.9	7.3
Develops a love of learning	7.4	8.1	7.6	7.2	6.8
Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds	8.8	8.1	8.7	9.2	8.8
Understands how important it is to go to college	9.3	8.5 <sup>CD</sup>	9.2	9.7	9.3
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	10.6	10.9	10.9	10.5	10.2
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	12.9	11.9 <sup>CD</sup>	12.5 <sup>D</sup>	13.3	13.8
Develops a love of country/patriotism	12.9	13.1	12.8	12.9	12.8
Is accepted at a top-tier college	12.9	12.5	13.7	12.7	12.2
Develops an appreciation for nature	14.2	14.1	14.2	14.2	14.1
Develops fluency in a foreign language	14.2	14.2	14.8	14.1	13.5 <sup>B</sup>

Table 3b: School Characteristics	Total	Less than \$34,999 (A)	\$35,000–\$74,999 (B)	\$75,000–\$124,999 (C)	\$125,000 or more (D)
<i>n=</i>	2007	435	722	504	253
Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics	5.4	6.1	5.5	4.8 <sup>A</sup>	5.4
Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education	6.8	7.9	6.9 <sup>A</sup>	6.1 <sup>A</sup>	6.9 <sup>A</sup>
Offers a strong education in life skills	8.6	7.9 <sup>D</sup>	8.1 <sup>D</sup>	8.7	10.0
Holds students to extremely high academic standards	9.7	12.7	9.6 <sup>A</sup>	8.2 <sup>A</sup>	9.2 <sup>A</sup>
Has high standards for student behavior	9.9	11.0	9.9	9.3 <sup>A</sup>	9.9 <sup>A</sup>
Emphasizes character development, ethics, and/or morality	10.0	9.7	9.5	10.1	11.2
Uses technology as a learning tool	10.1	11.1	9.9	9.9	10.0
Emphasizes hands-on/project-based learning	10.3	9.8	10.2	10.2	11.1
Offers programs for advanced students	10.4	12.3	10.7 <sup>A</sup>	10.1 <sup>A</sup>	8.3 <sup>A</sup>
Groups students by ability levels	13.4	14.7	13.5	13.3	12.3
Offers programs for struggling students or students with special needs	13.7	10.2 <sup>BCD</sup>	12.9 <sup>CD</sup>	14.7 <sup>D</sup>	17.2
Has a very traditional approach to learning (teacher-led instruction)	14.0	13.3 <sup>D</sup>	14.1 <sup>D</sup>	13.5	15.2
Offers vocational classes or job-related programs	14.1	11.8 <sup>BCD</sup>	12.8 <sup>D</sup>	14.3 <sup>D</sup>	18.1
Emphasizes the importance of academic competition as much as collaboration	14.9	16.7	14.5 <sup>A</sup>	14.2 <sup>A</sup>	14.6
Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership	15.1	14.9	14.7	15.2	15.5
Offers a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports	15.1	15.2	15.9	15.4	13.6
Encourages parental involvement	15.2	14.1	15.3	15.7	15.4
Has high test scores	16.3	16.4	16.7	16.4	14.8
Prepares students for taking state tests	16.5	13.5 <sup>C</sup>	16.3 <sup>C</sup>	17.6	17.6
Has a diverse student body	17.2	16.7	17.2	17.6	16.9
Emphasizes arts and music instruction	17.9	17.9	18.2	17.7	17.6
Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs	18.2	18.3	18.0	18.6	18.5
Has a small total student enrollment	20.8	21.5	20.9	20.6	20.2
Offers supervised before- and after-school programs	20.8	19.7 <sup>BC</sup>	21.2	21.2	20.5
Is close to home (or workplace/other convenient location)	21.0	20.3	21.3	21.3	20.8
Has a strong athletic program, offering a variety of sports w/ successful teams	22.0	22.2	22.9	22.3	19.6
Has updated building facilities	22.2	22.5	22.6	22.3	20.9 <sup>AB</sup>
Offers longer school day or school year of instruction	23.6	24.9	23.3	23.4	23.0 <sup>A</sup>
Does not have too much homework	24.4	24.3	24.8	24.6	23.9
Requires that students wear school uniforms	27.5	27.5	27.6	27.7	26.8

## Key Findings for Results by Type of School that Student Attends

- ▶ As befits their schools' more tailored and personal nature, both private and public charter parents rank more highly the following school traits compared to traditional (i.e., district-operated) public school parents:

- Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs (private, 15.7; charter, 16.3 vs. public, 18.9)
- Has a small student enrollment (private, 16.9; charter, 20.1 vs. public, 21.3)

However, private and public charter parents still rank these characteristics fairly low; their nonnegotiable attributes are in line with those of the total population.

- ▶ In line with many private schools' religious or faith-based orientation, private school parents rank the goal "develops a strong moral code of conduct" significantly higher than charter school parents do. They also rank it higher than public school parents, although not significantly so (private, 6.6 vs. charter, 8.1; public, 7.4).
- ▶ Compared to their public school counterparts, private school parents place less importance on offering programs for struggling students/students with special needs (16.7 vs. public, 13.3) and offering vocational classes or job-related programs (18.9 vs. public, 13.6).
- ▶ Charter school parents also place the following educational goals at a higher rank than public school parents:
  - Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education (charter, 10.9 vs. public, 13.2); and
  - Is accepted at a top-tier college (charter, 11.5 vs. public, 13.3)

Similar to lower-income parents, charter parents appear to show an aspirational leaning, tempered by pragmatism.

**Table 4a/4b: Results by Type of School Student Attends**

<b>Table 4a: Student Goals</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Public (A)</b>	<b>Private (B)</b>	<b>Public Charter (C)</b>
<i>n=</i>	2007	1616	181	210
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	4.7	4.4 <sup>C</sup>	5.4	5.7
Develops strong critical thinking skills	4.8	4.5 <sup>C</sup>	5.2	6.3
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	5.1	4.9 <sup>C</sup>	5.8	6.2
Is prepared for college	6.7	6.6	6.9	7.2
Develops strong social skills	6.9	6.7 <sup>C</sup>	7.5	8.0
Develops strong self-esteem	7.0	6.9	7.2	7.9
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	7.1	6.9 <sup>B</sup>	8.0	7.8
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	7.4	7.4 <sup>C</sup>	6.6 <sup>C</sup>	8.1
Develops a love of learning	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.9
Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds	8.8	8.8	8.6	8.5
Understands how important it is to go to college	9.3	9.4	9.8	8.3 <sup>B</sup>
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	10.6	10.6	10.6	11.0
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	12.9	13.2	12.8	10.9 <sup>AB</sup>
Develops a love of country/patriotism	12.9	13.2	12.6	11.5
Is accepted at a top-tier college	12.9	13.3	11.9	11.5 <sup>A</sup>
Develops an appreciation for nature	14.2	14.4	13.7	13.2 <sup>A</sup>
Develops fluency in a foreign language	14.2	14.5	13.1 <sup>A</sup>	13.0 <sup>A</sup>

<b>Table 4b: School Characteristics</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Public (A)</b>	<b>Private (B)</b>	<b>Public Charter (C)</b>
<i>n=</i>	2007	1616	181	210
Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics	5.4	4.9 <sup>C</sup>	5.6 <sup>C</sup>	8.3
Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education	6.8	6.2 <sup>BC</sup>	8.3	9.7
Offers a strong education in life skills	8.6	8.1 <sup>B</sup>	10.7	10.0
Holds students to extremely high academic standards	9.7	9.7	9.1	10.5
Has high standards for student behavior	9.9	9.7 <sup>C</sup>	9.2 <sup>C</sup>	12.1
Emphasizes character development, ethics, and/or morality	10.0	9.7	10.0 <sup>C</sup>	11.9
Uses technology as a learning tool	10.1	9.9	10.4	11.2
Emphasizes hands-on/project-based learning	10.3	9.7 <sup>BC</sup>	12.0	12.4
Offers programs for advanced students	10.4	10.3	10.2	11.3
Groups students by ability levels	13.4	13.2	12.9	15.0
Offers programs for struggling students or students with special needs	13.7	13.3 <sup>B</sup>	16.7	14.0
Has a very traditional approach to learning (teacher-led instruction)	14.0	13.8	14.6	14.8
Offers vocational classes or job-related programs	14.1	13.6 <sup>B</sup>	18.9	13.7 <sup>B</sup>
Emphasizes the importance of academic competition as much as collaboration	14.9	14.8	14.0	16.3
Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership	15.1	15.0	14.5	16.2
Offers a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports	15.1	15.2	15.0	14.8
Encourages parental involvement	15.2	14.8 <sup>C</sup>	15.4	17.6
Has high test scores	16.3	16.6	15.0	15.3
Prepares students for taking state tests	16.5	16.6	17.8	14.9
Has a diverse student body	17.2	17.4	16.9	16.0
Emphasizes arts and music instruction	17.9	18.0	17.8	17.1
Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs	18.2	18.9	15.7 <sup>A</sup>	16.3 <sup>A</sup>
Has a small total student enrollment	20.8	21.3	16.9 <sup>A</sup>	20.1 <sup>A</sup>
Offers supervised before- and after-school programs	20.8	21.3	19.9	18.5 <sup>A</sup>
Is close to home (or workplace/other convenient location)	21.0	21.3	20.7	19.0
Has a strong athletic program, offering a variety of sports w/ successful teams	22.0	22.5	21.4	19.3 <sup>AB</sup>
Has updated building facilities	22.2	22.3	22.6	20.7
Offers longer school day or school year of instruction	23.6	23.9	23.4	21.8 <sup>A</sup>
Does not have too much homework	24.4	24.9	23.8	21.5 <sup>AB</sup>
Requires that students wear school uniforms	27.5	28.1	25.8 <sup>A</sup>	24.7 <sup>A</sup>

## Key Findings for Results by Political Ideology

- ▶ While there is broad agreement across ideologies relative to the necessity of a school having strong core academics, high standards, and employing the latest in technology, the differences in parent priorities, when sorted by political ideology, are clear (if unsurprising).<sup>20</sup>
  - Conservatives place greater importance than do moderates and liberals on the following school attributes:
    - > Has a very traditional approach to learning (conservative, 12.1 vs. moderate, 14.4; liberal, 16.0)
    - > Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs (conservative, 15.7 vs. moderate, 19.9; liberal, 17.9)
  - Liberals, on the other hand, are more likely than moderates or conservatives to value the following school characteristics:
    - > Has a diverse student body (liberal, 15.7 vs. moderate, 16.8; conservative, 18.8)
    - > Emphasizes arts and music instruction (liberal, 16.2 vs. moderate, 17.9; conservative, 18.9)
- ▶ Conservative parents show a keener interest than either moderates or liberals regarding their child’s educational goals within these two (unsurprising) areas:
  - Develops a strong code of moral conduct (conservative, 6.8 vs. moderate, 7.3; liberal, 8.3)
  - Develops a love of country/patriotism (conservative, 12.1 vs. moderate, 13.2; liberal, 13.3)
- ▶ While ranking near the bottom of the list, liberals still gave greater importance than moderates and conservatives to the following two goals, which are predominantly tied to liberal beliefs regarding the environment and the importance of other cultures:
  - Develops an appreciation for nature (liberal, 13.4 vs. moderate, 14.3; conservative, 14.6)
  - Develops fluency in a foreign language (liberal, 13.3 vs. moderate, 14.3; conservative, 14.5)

From these findings, we might draw two simultaneous conclusions. First, at a time of intensifying political polarization across the land, there is actually striking uniformity in parents’ *top* priorities for their children’s education that seems oblivious to politics and ideology. Second, the variation in relative rankings of parents’ *lesser* priorities, when sorted by politics or ideology, are nearly identical to what one would predict. This bodes well for traditional public schools already meeting the “macro” needs of liberal and conservative families; however, meeting their lower, albeit still important competing priorities may be problematic.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 5a/5b: Results by Political Ideology**

<b>Table 5a: Student Goals</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Conservative (A)</b>	<b>Moderate (B)</b>	<b>Liberal (C)</b>
<i>n</i> =	2007	610	998	399
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	4.7	4.4 <sup>C</sup>	4.5	5.6
Develops strong critical thinking skills	4.8	4.8 <sup>B</sup>	4.8	4.6
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	5.1	4.9 <sup>B</sup>	5.2	5.3
Is prepared for college	6.7	6.3	6.7	7.4
Develops strong social skills	6.9	7.1	6.8	6.7
Develops strong self-esteem	7.0	7.3	6.7 <sup>A</sup>	7.4
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	7.1	6.9	7.2	7.4
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	7.4	6.8 <sup>BC</sup>	7.3 <sup>C</sup>	8.3
Develops a love of learning	7.4	7.5	7.5	7.0
Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds	8.8	10.1	8.5 <sup>A</sup>	7.6 <sup>A</sup>
Understands how important it is to go to college	9.3	9.2	9.2	9.6
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	10.6	10.8	10.7	10.3
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	12.9	12.4	13.0	13.1
Develops a love of country/patriotism	12.9	12.1 <sup>BC</sup>	13.2	13.3
Is accepted at a top-tier college	12.9	13.1	12.9	12.6
Develops an appreciation for nature	14.2	14.6	14.3	13.4 <sup>AB</sup>
Develops fluency in a foreign language	14.2	14.5	14.3	13.3 <sup>AB</sup>

<b>Table 5b: School Characteristics</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Conservative (A)</b>	<b>Moderate (B)</b>	<b>Liberal (C)</b>
	2007	610	998	399
Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics	5.4	5.0 <sup>C</sup>	5.2	6.4
Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education	6.8	6.8	6.6	7.6
Offers a strong education in life skills	8.6	8.5	8.4	9.4
Holds students to extremely high academic standards	9.7	9.5	9.4	10.9
Has high standards for student behavior	9.9	9.5	10.1	10.2
Emphasizes character development, ethics, and/or morality	10.0	9.4	10.2	10.5
Uses technology as a learning tool	10.1	10.7	9.9	10.0
Emphasizes hands-on/project-based learning	10.3	10.7	10.1	10.0
Offers programs for advanced students	10.4	11.1	9.8	10.6
Groups students by ability levels	13.4	13.2	13.7	13.0
Offers programs for struggling students or students with special needs	13.7	13.7	13.7	13.8
Has a very traditional approach to learning (teacher-led instruction)	14.0	12.1 <sup>BC</sup>	14.4 <sup>C</sup>	16.0
Offers vocational classes or job-related programs	14.1	13.9	13.9	14.9
Emphasizes the importance of academic competition as much as collaboration	14.9	14.8	14.7	15.6
Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership	15.1	14.6	15.4	15.0
Offers a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports	15.1	16.2	14.8 <sup>A</sup>	14.1 <sup>A</sup>
Encourages parental involvement	15.2	15.0	15.3	15.1
Has high test scores	16.3	16.1	16.0	17.4
Prepares students for taking state tests	16.5	16.6	16.1 <sup>C</sup>	17.4
Has a diverse student body	17.2	18.8	16.8 <sup>A</sup>	15.7 <sup>AB</sup>
Emphasizes arts and music instruction	17.9	18.9	17.9	16.2 <sup>AB</sup>
Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs	18.2	15.7 <sup>BC</sup>	19.9	17.9
Has a small total student enrollment	20.8	21.1	21.0	19.5
Offers supervised before- and after-school programs	20.8	21.5	20.7 <sup>A</sup>	19.9 <sup>A</sup>
Is close to home (or workplace/other convenient location)	21.0	20.6	21.2	20.9
Has a strong athletic program, offering a variety of sports w/ successful teams	22.0	22.4	21.8	21.8
Has updated building facilities	22.2	22.5	22.1	21.8
Offers longer school day or school year of instruction	23.6	23.9	23.6	23.2
Does not have too much homework	24.4	24.5	24.8	23.4
Requires that students wear school uniforms	27.5	27.7	27.6	26.8

## Key Findings for Results by School Location

- ▶ Parents who have a child at an urban school, when compared to suburban and rural parents, place a greater emphasis on college-oriented goals:<sup>22</sup>
  - Understands how important it is to go to college (urban, 8.7 vs. suburban, 9.6; rural, 9.6)
  - Is accepted at a top-tier college (urban, 12.2 vs. suburban, 13.0; rural, 13.7)
- ▶ Compared to their counterparts, parents with children at rural schools are more likely to want the school to help their child develop a strong moral code of conduct (rural, 6.7 vs. suburban, 7.6; urban, 7.6) and to emphasize character development, ethics, and morality (rural, 8.6 vs. suburban, 10.1; urban, 10.9).
- ▶ Though academic goals and characteristics are ranked highly by parents in all locales, suburban and rural school parents do seem to place slightly more importance on them than urban school parents do:
  - Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics (suburban, 5.0; rural, 4.3 vs. urban, 6.6)
  - Emphasizes STEM education (suburban, 6.4; rural, 6.2 vs. urban, 7.9)
  - Learns good study habits and self-discipline (suburban, 4.6; rural, 4.2 vs. urban, 5.2)
  - Develops strong critical thinking skills (suburban, 4.4; rural, 4.7 vs. urban, 5.4)
  - Learns strong verbal and written communication skills (suburban, 4.7; rural, 5.1 vs. urban, 5.7)

**Table 6a/6b: Results by School Location**

<b>Table 6a: Student Goals</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Urban (A)</b>	<b>Suburban (B)</b>	<b>Rural (C)</b>
<i>n=</i>	2007	653	826	528
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	4.7	5.2	4.6 <sup>A</sup>	4.2 <sup>A</sup>
Develops strong critical thinking skills	4.8	5.4	4.4 <sup>A</sup>	4.7 <sup>A</sup>
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	5.1	5.7	4.7 <sup>A</sup>	5.1 <sup>A</sup>
Is prepared for college	6.7	7.0	6.6	6.6
Develops strong social skills	6.9	7.3	6.8	6.5
Develops strong self-esteem	7.0	7.1	7.4	6.4
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	7.1	7.5	7.0	6.8 <sup>A</sup>
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	7.4	7.6	7.6	6.7 <sup>AB</sup>
Develops a love of learning	7.4	7.6	7.1	7.7
Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds	8.8	8.3 <sup>BC</sup>	8.9	9.2
Understands how important it is to go to college	9.3	8.7 <sup>BC</sup>	9.6	9.6
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	10.6	11.0	10.3 <sup>A</sup>	10.8
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	12.9	12.3 <sup>B</sup>	13.3	13.0
Develops a love of country/patriotism	12.9	12.5	13.3	12.8
Is accepted at a top-tier college	12.9	12.2 <sup>BC</sup>	13.0	13.7
Develops an appreciation for nature	14.2	13.7 <sup>BC</sup>	14.3	14.5
Develops fluency in a foreign language	14.2	13.9 <sup>C</sup>	14.0	14.8

<b>Table 6b: School Characteristics</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Urban (A)</b>	<b>Suburban (B)</b>	<b>Rural (C)</b>
<i>n=</i>	2007	653	826	528
Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics	5.4	6.6	5.0 <sup>A</sup>	4.3 <sup>A</sup>
Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education	6.8	7.9	6.4 <sup>A</sup>	6.2 <sup>A</sup>
Offers a strong education in life skills	8.6	9.3	8.7	7.6 <sup>A</sup>
Holds students to extremely high academic standards	9.7	10.4	8.9	10.3
Has high standards for student behavior	9.9	11.0	9.7 <sup>A</sup>	8.8 <sup>A</sup>
Emphasizes character development, ethics, and/or morality	10.0	10.9	10.1	8.6 <sup>AB</sup>
Uses technology as a learning tool	10.1	11.0	9.6 <sup>A</sup>	9.9
Emphasizes hands-on/project-based learning	10.3	11.3	10.0 <sup>A</sup>	9.4 <sup>A</sup>
Offers programs for advanced students	10.4	10.2	10.3	10.8
Groups students by ability levels	13.4	13.6	12.7	14.3
Offers programs for struggling students or students with special needs	13.7	12.7 <sup>B</sup>	15.3	12.5 <sup>B</sup>
Has a very traditional approach to learning (teacher-led instruction)	14.0	14.0	14.8	12.9
Offers vocational classes or job-related programs	14.1	13.6	15.2	13.0 <sup>B</sup>
Emphasizes the importance of academic competition as much as collaboration	14.9	15.1	14.3	15.7
Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership	15.1	15.8	15.0	14.2
Offers a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports	15.1	15.3	15.0	15.0
Encourages parental involvement	15.2	16.0	15.3	13.9 <sup>A</sup>
Has high test scores	16.3	15.7	16.1	17.3
Prepares students for taking state tests	16.5	15.1 <sup>BC</sup>	17.1	17.3
Has a diverse student body	17.2	16.4 <sup>C</sup>	17.3	17.9
Emphasizes arts and music instruction	17.9	18.4	17.6	17.6 <sup>A</sup>
Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs	18.2	17.9 <sup>B</sup>	18.5	18.2
Has a small total student enrollment	20.8	21.0	20.0	21.7
Offers supervised before- and after-school programs	20.8	19.5 <sup>BC</sup>	21.2	22.0
Is close to home (or workplace/other convenient location)	21.0	21.1	20.6	21.3
Has a strong athletic program, offering a variety of sports w/ successful teams	22.0	20.9 <sup>BC</sup>	22.1	23.2
Has updated building facilities	22.2	22.0	22.0	22.7
Offers longer school day or school year of instruction	23.6	22.3 <sup>BC</sup>	24.0 <sup>C</sup>	24.7
Does not have too much homework	24.4	23.8	24.5	25.0
Requires that students wear school uniforms	27.5	26.3 <sup>BC</sup>	27.7	28.7

## Key Findings for Results by Religious Services Attendance

- ▶ We asked parents how often they attend religious services since it is obviously one gauge of religious commitment. But few differences exist in parent preferences based on this variable. Not unexpectedly, parents who attend religious services most frequently place the highest emphasis on their child's school curriculum reflecting their personal beliefs (attend every week, 16.1 vs. once a month/a few times a year, 18.7; once a year or less, 19.6).
  - Perhaps tied to this factor, parents who attend religious services at least once a week place slightly more importance on schools encouraging parental involvement (attend every week, 15.0 vs. once a year or less, 15.6).
  - We do not, however, see any significant differences by religious-service attendance relative to a parent's desire that the school emphasize character development, ethics and/or morality (attend every week, 9.7; once a month/a few times a year, 9.7; once a year or less, 10.5), implying that this goal is universal.
- ▶ Another of the few differences pertains to the goal of developing a love of country/patriotism. Parents who report attending religious services regularly rank this goal, on average, slightly higher than parents who attend religious services less often (attend every week, 12.5 vs. once a month/a few times a year, 13.1; once a year or less, 13.1). (As stated earlier, not surprisingly, "conservative" parents are also more concerned with developing patriotism than liberal parents.)

Next, we examine groups of parents who prioritized a particular school goal or characteristic higher than the average parent. We think of these parents as making up "niche markets."

Table 7a/7b: Results by Religious Services Attendance

Table 7a: Student Goals	Total	Every Week (A)	Monthly/A few times/yr (B)	Once a Year or Less (C)
<i>n</i> =	2007	588	645	708
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.8
Develops strong critical thinking skills	4.8	4.8	4.6	4.8
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.3
Is prepared for college	6.7	6.8	6.2 <sup>C</sup>	7.1
Develops strong social skills	6.9	6.9	6.7	7.1
Develops strong self-esteem	7.0	7.3	7.0	6.9
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	7.1	7.1	6.9	7.4
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.3
Develops a love of learning	7.4	7.3	7.6	7.3
Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds	8.8	9.0	9.0	8.3
Understands how important it is to go to college	9.3	9.5	9.1	9.3
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	10.6	10.4	10.8	10.7
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	12.9	12.6	13.4	12.8 <sup>B</sup>
Develops a love of country/patriotism	12.9	12.5 <sup>BC</sup>	13.1	13.1
Is accepted at a top-tier college	12.9	13.2	12.7	12.9
Develops an appreciation for nature	14.2	14.3	14.5	13.8 <sup>B</sup>
Develops fluency in a foreign language	14.2	14.2	14.3	14.1

Table 7b: School Characteristics	Total	Every Week (A)	Monthly/A few times/yr (B)	Once a Year or Less (C)
<i>n</i> =	2007	588	645	708
Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics	5.4	5.4	5.1	5.6
Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education	6.8	6.7	6.9	6.8
Offers a strong education in life skills	8.6	8.5	9.0	8.5
Holds students to extremely high academic standards	9.7	10.1	9.1 <sup>C</sup>	10.1
Has high standards for student behavior	9.9	9.8	9.6	10.2
Emphasizes character development, ethics, and/or morality	10.0	9.7	9.7	10.5
Uses technology as a learning tool	10.1	10.6	9.6	10.1
Emphasizes hands-on/project-based learning	10.3	10.4	10.5	9.9 <sup>A</sup>
Offers programs for advanced students	10.4	10.9	9.9	10.5
Groups students by ability levels	13.4	13.9	13.0	13.2
Offers programs for struggling students or students with special needs	13.7	13.3	14.6	13.3 <sup>B</sup>
Has a very traditional approach to learning (teacher-led instruction)	14.0	13.6	14.4	14.4
Offers vocational classes or job-related programs	14.1	13.7	15.4	13.3
Emphasizes the importance of academic competition as much as collaboration	14.9	15.1	14.6	15.2
Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership	15.1	14.6	14.7 <sup>C</sup>	15.5
Offers a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports	15.1	15.3	14.8	15.1
Encourages parental involvement	15.2	15.0 <sup>C</sup>	14.8	15.6
Has high test scores	16.3	16.5	15.7	16.6
Prepares students for taking state tests	16.5	16.0	16.8	17.0
Has a diverse student body	17.2	17.6	17.4	16.7 <sup>AB</sup>
Emphasizes arts and music instruction	17.9	18.6	17.7	17.3
Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs	18.2	16.1 <sup>BC</sup>	18.7 <sup>C</sup>	19.6
Has a small total student enrollment	20.8	21.4	20.6	20.3
Offers supervised before- and after-school programs	20.8	21.1	21.1	20.5
Is close to home (or workplace/other convenient location)	21.0	21.2	21.1	20.6
Has a strong athletic program, offering a variety of sports w/ successful teams	22.0	21.8	21.6	22.3
Has updated building facilities	22.2	22.1	22.5	22.0
Offers longer school day or school year of instruction	23.6	24.0	24.2	22.9
Does not have too much homework	24.4	24.5	24.8	24.1
Requires that students wear school uniforms	27.5	27.5	27.3	27.5

## Profiles of Selected Niche Markets

While some student goals and school characteristics are considered essential to almost all parents, others are only important to smaller populations. In the six niche market profiles that follow, we selected certain characteristics and goals a significant number of parents ranked highly, but the majority did not.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, parents in the “niche” ranked that particular factor in the top third of their list, whereas the parents outside the “niche” did not. Who are the parents in these niche markets, and how do they differ from the population of K-12 parents as a whole?<sup>24</sup>

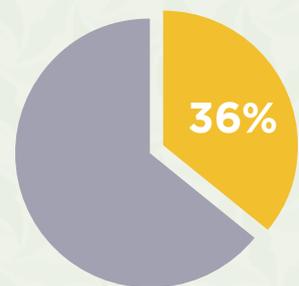
Because we did not find true segments (see *Groups of Preferences Versus the Preferences of Groups*, page 14), the niches described below are based on a single preference (rather than a group of preferences as is the case in a typical segmentation).<sup>25</sup> In other words, parents in each niche market did not need to have anything in common with one another with respect to their other preferences. By design, Pragmatists ranked “offers vocational classes,” a single school characteristic, higher than most other parents.

In the following pages, we present profiles of the six niches and tease out how they differ in demographics and preferences from the total population. We also show the overlap between the niches. (A full list of attributes and the way parents in each niche ranked them appears in Appendix A, Table A-1.)

### Pragmatists

**School characteristic ranked in top third: Offers vocational classes or job-related programs, e.g., information technology, medical technology, automotive, etc.**

A little over a third of K-12 parents ranked as a high priority that schools offer vocational classes or job-related programs. The children of Pragmatists are not as strong academically as their peers and face some learning challenges. Pragmatists are less likely than others to expect their child to go beyond high school in their education, so it follows that they find it critical that schools help their child prepare for the work world. Parents in this niche are a bit less satisfied with their child’s current school than K-12 parents as a whole (perhaps because their children have greater needs, or because few schools offer the specialized vocational programs they value); this indicates that Pragmatists are an underserved niche.



#### Demographics of parents in this niche:

- Compared to the total parent population, this niche has a disproportionately high percentage of parents of boys (57 vs. 50 percent total).<sup>26</sup>
- This is the only niche where there is a significant difference in household income. Pragmatists have a significantly lower annual average household income than the total population (\$71.6K/year vs. \$86.2K/year total). In line with this, they are more likely to say their child qualifies for their school's free or reduced-price lunch program (48 vs. 37 percent total).
- The parents in this niche are less likely than the total population to have graduated from college or attended graduate school (23 vs. 40 percent total).
- Compared to the total parent population, Pragmatists are no different in regard to the region of the country where they live, political ideology, or religious preference/service attendance.

In addition to economics, Pragmatists are distinct from parents as a total group because their children face learning challenges. Likely related, they are less satisfied with their children's school.

- Parents in this niche are more likely to have a child with a learning disability (12 vs. 8 percent total). In fact, of parents whose child has a learning disability, 55 percent fall into this niche. Pragmatists are also more likely to say their child has had a special education plan (an IEP or 504) (23 vs. 18 percent total).
- Pragmatists report that their children are not as academically strong as their peers. They are more likely to say their child performs "about average" (35 vs. 26 percent total) or "below average" (10 vs. 5 percent total) compared to other students and that they do not enjoy school (16 vs. 11 percent total).
- Compared to the total population of parents, Pragmatists are more likely to expect that their child's highest level of education will be to graduate from high school or earn a GED (19 vs. 12 percent total) or receive a two-year college degree (15 vs. 11 percent total).
- Pragmatists are less likely to be extremely satisfied with their child's school overall (33 vs. 40 percent total) and relative to: safety (42 vs. 49 percent total), quality of the teachers (38 vs. 43 percent total), culture/atmosphere (35 vs. 40 percent total), academic performance/test scores (30 vs. 38 percent total), and class size (28 vs. 34 percent total).
- Parents in this niche are more likely than the total population to say that they let their children develop at their own pace (57 vs. 51 percent total) and less likely to say they set high expectations for them and push them to excel (43 vs. 49 percent total).

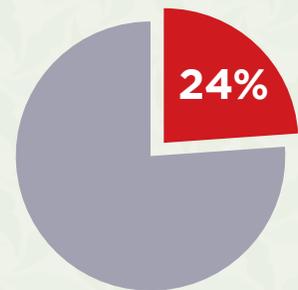
In terms of their preferences, Pragmatists do not differ much from the total parent population.

- They place slightly less importance on their child being prepared for college (average rank 7.7 vs. 6.7 total) and on schools that hold students to extremely high academic standards (12.4 vs. 9.7 total).
- They place a slightly higher premium than most on schools that offer programs for struggling students or students with special needs (average rank 10.5 vs. 13.7 total).

### Jeffersonians

**School characteristic ranked in top third: Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership**

There is very little that stands out about this group compared to the total parent population. Even though they want schools to emphasize instruction in citizenship and leadership, the parents themselves are no more likely than other parents to be active in their communities or schools. Furthermore, there are certain aspects of their child's school that they are less likely to be extremely satisfied with, yet they are no more likely to participate in the PTA.



Demographics of Jeffersonians differ little from K-12 parents as a whole:

- Aside from being slightly more likely to be Christian (74 vs. 68 percent total), overall, Jeffersonians are almost identical demographically to the total population of parents.

There is also little that distinguishes Jeffersonians' parenting style, satisfaction with their children's current schools, and community involvement from the rest of the parents.

- Similar to the lack of differences by parent demographics, the children of Jeffersonians are no more or less likely to be academically gifted, enjoy school, or put in more effort. Nor are they any more likely to have a learning disability or a special education plan.
- Though their overall level of satisfaction with their child's school is in line with the total population, Jeffersonians are less satisfied with particular aspects of their child's school. They are less likely to report being extremely satisfied with the location of the school (49 vs. 56 percent total), the facilities/school building (37 vs. 43 percent total), the technology and equipment (33 vs. 40 percent total), extracurricular opportunities (28 vs. 36 percent total), and foreign language programs (19 vs. 24 percent total).

- One might assume that Jeffersonians are more involved in their community. But aside from being slightly more likely to have written an article for a newspaper or magazine in the past year (13 vs. 8 percent total), these parents are no different than the total population of parents when it comes to community involvement. They are equally as likely to have participated or volunteered with a local organization, attended public meetings, and written/called a politician.
- Similarly, there are no differences between parents in this niche and the total population when it comes to involvement in their child's school or education (e.g., volunteering in the school/district, chaperoning events/field trips, fundraising, participating in the PTA or other parent organizations, etc.). Perhaps Jeffersonian parents think it is the school's job—and not theirs—to teach the importance of citizenship and leadership.
- Still, Jeffersonians are more likely to turn to their religious communities as a source of information about K-12 schools (18 vs. 11 percent total).

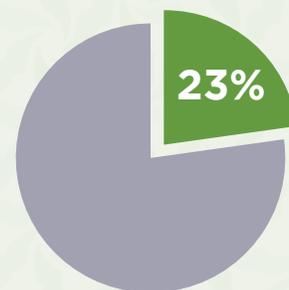
Jeffersonians do not differ all that much in their preferences from the total population, though there are differences in character-related attributes.

- Compared to the total group, these parents prefer schools that emphasize character development, ethics, and/or morality (average rank 7.2 vs. 10.0 total) and that teach a curriculum that is compatible with their personal beliefs (average rank 15.8 vs. 18.2 total). Jeffersonians also prioritize that their child develops a strong moral code of conduct (average rank 6.2 versus 7.4 total).
- In contrast, Jeffersonians find it less critical than the population that schools take a traditional approach to learning (average rank 15.7 vs. 14.0 total) and prepare students for taking state tests (average rank 18.4 vs. 16.5 total).

## Test-Score Hawks

### School characteristic ranked in top third: Has high test scores

Test-Score Hawks are more likely than other parents to have academically gifted children who put in more effort at school than average, so it is not surprising that these parents are also more likely to be looking for schools with high test scores so that their children might be surrounded by similar students. Achievement seems to be important to this group, as they are more likely than other parents to say they set high expectations for their child and push them to excel. They are also more likely to expect their child to receive a graduate degree. Hawks have high expectations for their schools, as a disproportionately large percentage say they enrolled their child in a different school because they were dissatisfied with the school or teachers.



There are several demographic differences between Hawks and parents as a group:

- This is the only niche where parents differ from the total population in age. Hawks are, on average, younger than the parents in total (40.6 vs. 42.5 years old total).
- Hawks are more likely to be African American (16 vs. 9 percent total) and Hispanic (25 vs. 17 percent total) and less likely to be white (50 vs. 65 percent total). Perhaps the minority parents are using high test scores as a proxy measure for academic success; they could be relying on test-score rankings because they do not have extensive personal networks to supply them with “insider” information.<sup>27</sup> It’s also possible that white parents may get more hung up on what appear sometimes to be test score trade-offs, such as de-emphasis on art and music, or may have access to information about a school’s quality that go beyond its test scores.
- Compared to the total population, parents in this niche are more likely to say their child qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch (43 vs. 37 percent total), although there is no significant difference in average household income.
- Compared to the total parent population, Hawks are no different in their level of educational attainment, political ideology, religious preference/service attendance, or employment status.

Hawks are the parents of high-achieving, gifted students, and have high expectations for them, and the school system.

- These parents are more likely to report that their child performs above average compared to other students (75 vs. 68 percent total) and is identified as gifted or exceptionally talented in academics (44 vs. 36 percent total). They are also more likely to report that their child puts a great deal of effort into school (57 vs. 48 percent total), but not more apt to say that their child enjoys school.
- Hawks are more likely to expect that their child will receive a graduate or professional degree (38 vs. 32 percent total).
- One in five parents in this niche says that their child has changed schools because they were dissatisfied with their child’s school or teachers, significantly more than the total parent population (20 vs. 14 percent total).
- Hawks are more likely to describe their parenting style as setting high expectations and pushing their child to excel (60 vs. 49 percent total) versus letting their child develop at his/her own pace (40 vs. 51 percent total).

Not surprisingly, Test-Score Hawks vary significantly in their preferences from the total population on other attributes relative to future success and rigorous academics.

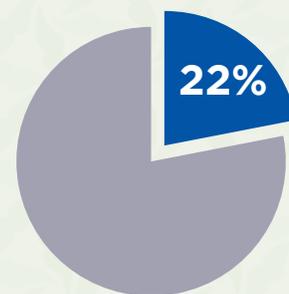
- Parents in the niche place higher import on their child being prepared for college (average rank 4.8 vs. 6.7 total), understanding how important it is to go to college (average rank 7.4 vs. 9.3 total), and being accepted to a top-tier college (average rank 10.5 vs. 12.9 total).
- Test-Score Hawks prefer that schools hold students to extremely high academic standards (average rank 6.6 vs. 9.7 total), offer programs for advanced students (average rank 8.7 vs. 10.4 total), and prepare students for taking state tests (average rank 11.5 vs. 16.5 total).
- Compared to the total population, Test-Score Hawks put less priority on their child developing strong social skills (average rank 8.5 vs. 6.9 total), strong self-esteem (average rank 8.0 vs. 7.0 total), and identifying/pursuing talents on their own (average rank 8.1 vs. 7.1 total).
- Parents in the niche also did not put a high priority on schools that emphasize character development (average rank 13.5 vs. 10.0 total), offer programs for struggling students (average rank 16.6 vs. 13.7 total), offer vocational classes or job-related programs (average rank 16.6 vs. 14.1 total), or offer a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports (average rank 17.9 vs. 15.1 total).

## Multiculturalists

**Student goal ranked in top third: Learns how to work with people from diverse racial, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds or cultures**

About one in five parents is a Multiculturalist. This group of parents is disproportionately African American and liberal and more likely to live in urban areas. Demographically:

- Multiculturalists are more likely to be African American than the total population of parents (15 vs. 9 percent total) and less likely to be white (58 vs. 65 percent total). They are no more or less likely to be Hispanic (19 percent vs. 17 percent total).
- The children of Multiculturalists are more likely to attend school in an urban area (42 percent vs. 34 percent total).
- Compared to all parents, more of the parents in this niche are politically liberal (25 vs. 20 percent total) and fewer are conservative (22 vs. 30 percent total).
- They are no different than the entire group of parents in their age, region of the country they live in, average household income, religious preference/service attendance, or the type of school their child attends.



There are also some differences in parenting style and student performance in this niche:

- Multiculturalists are more likely to say that, compared to other students, their child performs “about average” in school (35 vs. 26 percent total) rather than above or below average. (However, parents in this group report that their child puts similar levels of effort into school and enjoys school just as much as children of parents in total.)
- Multiculturalists are no more or less satisfied with their child’s school than is the total population of parents.
- Perhaps in line with their child’s “about average” performance in school, Multiculturalists are more likely than the total group of parents to say that they let their child develop at his/her own pace (59 vs. 51 percent total) versus setting high expectations for their child and pushing him/her to excel (41 vs. 49 percent total).
- Still, there is no difference in parenting style compared to the total population when it comes to rules. (Parents were asked which best described them: you give your child direction but encourage him/her to ask lots of questions OR you set firm rules for your child and expect him/her to follow them).

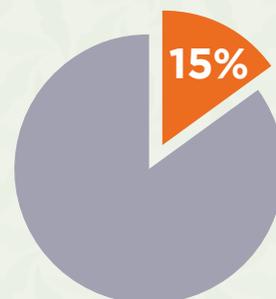
Compared to the total population, Multiculturalists appear less concerned about college preparation and more about job skills.

- Parents in the niche put less priority on their child being prepared for college (average rank 8.5 vs. 6.7 total), developing a love of learning (average rank 8.9 vs. 7.4 total), and learning good study habits and self-discipline (average rank 6.3 vs. 4.7 total).
- Compared to the K-12 parent population, they put less of a priority on schools holding students to extremely high academic standards (average rank 11.0 vs. 9.7 total) but greater priority on schools offering vocational classes or job-related programs (average rank 12.5 vs. 14.1 total).

## Expressionists

### School characteristic ranked in top third: Emphasizes arts and music instruction

Fifteen percent of parents rank “emphasizes arts and music instruction” in the top third of all school characteristics. The parents in this niche are more likely to be parents of girls, to be politically liberal, and to live in the Western part of the United States. This group has a disproportionately high percentage of charter school parents. Perhaps expectedly, Expressionists are more likely to say that they let their child develop at his/her own pace (vs. setting high expectations) and that they encourage their child to ask questions instead of setting firm rules.



Demographics of parents in this niche:

- Compared to the total parent population, this niche is disproportionately parents of girls (61 vs. 50 percent total).
- Expressionists are more likely to identify their political ideology as liberal (32 vs. 20 percent total).
- Though there is no difference in religious service attendance, parents in this niche are less likely to be Christian (58 vs. 68 percent total) and three times as likely to be atheist (12 vs. 4 percent total) than the total group.
- They are far more likely to live in the western United States (40 vs. 25 percent total) and less likely to live in the South (25 vs. 33 percent total). There are no significant differences between parents living in the East or Midwest compared with the total population. Nor are there any differences by the location of their child’s school (urban vs. suburban vs. rural).
- Compared to the total parent population, Expressionists are no different in their age, average household income, race/ethnicity, educational level, or employment status.

While there are some predictable differences in parenting style, Expressionists also differ from the overall parent population in one unexpected way: They have higher expectations for their children’s college attainment. Specifically:

- While Expressionists report that their children have similar levels of academic performance as the total group, they are more likely to expect their child to receive a four-year college degree (54 vs. 45 percent total).
- Parents in this niche are no more or less likely to send their child to a private school. But among those with children who currently attend public school, children of Expressionists are more likely to be enrolled in a charter school compared to the total population (22 vs. 14 percent total).

- Expressionists are no more or less satisfied than all parents with their child's school overall, but there are some specific areas where satisfaction levels vary. For example, they are *more likely* to report being extremely satisfied with the culture/atmosphere at their child's school (49 vs. 40 percent total), but *less likely* to report being extremely/somewhat satisfied with communications from school to home (76 vs. 83 percent total). Parents in this niche are more likely to describe their parenting style as letting their child develop at his/her own pace (61 vs. 51 percent total) and less likely to describe their style as setting high expectations for their child (39 vs. 49 percent total).
- Related, they are also more likely than the total population to say that their parenting style is to give their child direction, but also to encourage their child to ask questions (79 vs. 71 percent total) and less likely to say that they set firm rules for their child (21 vs. 29 percent total).

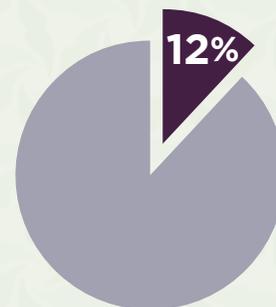
Beyond their preference for arts education, Expressionists do not differ much from the population of K-12 parents (and they rank academics relatively high as well).

- Expressionists do not differ significantly from the population in the high import they place on their children learning good study habits, critical thinking, and communication skills. They also rank preparation for college just as highly as the total population.
- While parents in the niche prefer that schools offer a variety of extracurricular activities beyond sports (average rank 9.1 vs. 15.1 total) and find academic competition less critical than the overall population (average rank 18.7 vs. 14.9 total), after arts and music, their top priorities are a strong curriculum in reading and math and an emphasis on STEM education.

## Strivers

### Student goal ranked in top third: Is accepted at a top-tier college

Although this is one of the goals with the lowest average rating, 12 percent of parents still put it in their top third.<sup>28</sup> The parents in this niche are more likely to be African American or Hispanic, but few other demographic characteristics distinguish them. Strivers are more likely to say that their children are naturally gifted and enjoy school, yet their children are no more likely than others to put a great deal of effort into school. These parents are more likely than other parents *not* to help their children with homework (though it is unclear why; perhaps their children do not need help).



With regard to demographics, we see some interesting differences (and some surprising uniformity) between Strivers and the overall parent group.

- Strivers are far more likely to be African American (18 vs. 9 percent total) and Hispanic (31 vs. 17 percent total) and less likely to be white (40 vs. 65 percent total).<sup>29</sup>
- Parents in this niche are also more likely to be Catholic (34 vs. 23 percent total).
- Though there is no difference in average household income compared to parents overall, Strivers are more likely to say that their child qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch (48 vs. 37 percent total).
- Interestingly, Strivers' *own* educational attainment does not differ when compared to parents as a group: they are no more or less likely to have completed college or to possess advanced degrees.

Parents in this niche have high expectations for their children, and report that their children enjoy school. Yet they are *not* as satisfied with their children's education. Specifically:

- Strivers are more likely than parents in total to expect that their child will attain a graduate or professional degree (44 vs. 32 percent total).
- Parents in this niche are no more or less likely than all parents to say that their child puts a great deal of effort into school; however, they are more likely to say that their child performs "well above" average compared with other students (51 vs. 33 percent total) and that their child has been identified as gifted or exceptionally talented in academics (59 vs. 36 percent total). They are also more likely to report that their child enjoys school a great deal (59 vs. 44 percent total).

- Strivers are attracted to charter schools. Among parents whose child attends a public school, Strivers are more likely than others to be sending their child to a charter school (28 vs. 14 percent total). Compared to the total population, parents in the niche are also more likely to have a child attending school in an urban area (44 vs. 34 percent total).
- Though a small percent, the proportion of Strivers who are extremely dissatisfied with their child's school is greater than the total parent population (10 vs. 5 percent total). These parents are also more likely to say their child has changed schools due to parental dissatisfaction with the school or teachers (23 vs. 14 percent total), because their child was unhappy with the school (18 vs. 9 percent total), and because of safety concerns (15 vs. 8 percent total).
- Survey results indicate that helping with/checking homework is by far the number one way that parents are involved in their child's education. However, Strivers are less likely to say they do this (64 vs. 78 percent total).
- Parents in this niche are no different than others when it comes to how much they push their child to excel. Again, this might be because their children are self-motivating or have little trouble excelling, even when attending schools that hold them to high academic standards (see below).

Strivers' goals for their children differ from the population in slight, and predictable, ways.

- Strivers prioritize more highly that their child understands how important it is to go to college (average rank 6.3 vs. 9.3 total) and is prepared for college (average rank 4.9 vs. 6.7 total).
- Parents in this niche find non-college-related goals less critical: social skills (average rank 10.0 vs. 6.9 total), self-esteem (average rank 9.4 vs. 7.0 total), and a strong moral code of conduct (average rank 9.7 vs. 7.4 total).
- Strivers prefer that schools have high test scores (average rank 11.8 vs. 16.3 total).
- Interestingly, Strivers appear more focused on outcomes rather than process. Compared to the total population, they find the following less important: schools that offer a strong core curriculum in reading and math (average rank 7.5 vs. 5.4 total) and emphasize STEM subjects (average rank 8.6 vs. 6.8 total).

## Overlap of Niche Markets

Table 8 presents the niche-by-niche overlap. Most of the overlap (or lack thereof) makes sense conceptually. For example, 44 percent of Strivers are also Test-Score Hawks, meaning they prioritize both “accepted at a top-tier college” and “has high test scores” in their top-third preferences. Significant overlap also occurs between Pragmatists, who value job-related programs, and Multiculturalists, who value collaboration across diverse cultures.

Little overlap (just 8 percent) exists between Pragmatists and Strivers, who value vocational education and acceptance in highly ranked institutions, respectively. Similar dissonance appears between Pragmatists and Expressionists (just 9 percent overlap), the latter valuing arts and music.

**Table 8: Overlap of Niche Markets**

	TOTAL	Strivers	Expression-ists	Multicultur-alists	Test-Score Hawks	Jeffersonians	Pragmatists
Strivers	12%	100%	14%	11%	24%	10%	8%
Expression-ists	15%	17%	100%	15%	10%	12%	9%
Multicultur-alists	22%	19%	21%	100%	17%	27%	26%
Test-Score Hawks	23%	44%	14%	17%	100%	14%	15%
Jeffersonians	24%	19%	20%	29%	15%	100%	22%
Pragmatists	36%	25%	22%	43%	24%	33%	100%

# CONCLUSION



## CONCLUSION

What is this report's primary message to policymakers and school leaders? When forced to prioritize among an extensive menu of educational programs, services, and outcomes, American parents give top billing to the basics. They want schools to offer high-quality instruction in core subjects and STEM fields and to teach students good study habits and self-discipline. They also want their kids to know how to think critically and possess excellent written and verbal communication skills. We see in these results a hierarchy of educational needs, a hierarchy within which parents view the aforementioned attributes as fundamental to their child's educational and economic survival, just as Maslow's physiological needs are to human survival.

But there is a second message, perhaps as important as the first. Though parents value many of the same things, some place a much higher priority on *one* particular facet of education than the rest. A Jeffersonian, for example, might value a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics as most parents do, but also prioritize instruction in citizenship, leadership, and democracy. Multiculturalists, like others, might want schools to teach their children good study habits and self-discipline but, unlike most, they also see as critical that their kids learn to work with individuals from different backgrounds. The Expressionists like schools that emphasize arts and music instruction. That might be less important to Test-Score Hawks, who value achievement and push their kids to excel. Meanwhile, Pragmatists have the workplace in mind, placing high value on vocational education and job training.

These are needs higher up the educational hierarchy—though some would argue critical to students reaching their full potential. So, while parents' basic needs are similar, their higher-order preferences often reflect who they are and what is available to them. Disadvantaged parents may have less access to schools with high test scores and will therefore see that as more critical than high-income parents who, by virtue of their address, are located near higher-performing schools. White, middle- and high-income parents who already live in areas where high test scores are a given next turn to the arts, attention to diversity, or other “luxury goods” that may go beyond their experience at a traditional (but ordinary) “good school.”

How can society meet all of these differing preferences? There's pressure to “serve all kids well,” but that doesn't mean that all schools need to be all things to all families, even if they could afford to do so in an era where limited resources force education leaders to prioritize: marching band or football, a reading specialist or art teacher, 500 laptops or a high-tech machine lab?

Instead, school districts, policymakers, and charter schools and their authorizers need to develop and put in place enhanced school choices that serve families with different interests. By offering a “portfolio of options” that are strong in the fundamentals but vary in the details, school systems can better attend to parent preferences—and avoid diluting resources that, when spread too thin, might lead to one-size-fits-all schools that end up serving no one very well. School leaders need to reflect on how curricula and courses should be differentiated or customized, where such schools should be located, and which parent and student “niches” they could most benefit. Another advantage: Diversity of school design might well be the basis of a sustainable competitive advantage for American education as compared with the more rigid systems in other parts of the world.

To date, there’s not enough customizing. School operators of all stripes pay less attention to these subtleties than they should. As Kim Smith and Julie Petersen of the NewSchools Venture Fund have lamented, “There has been too little acknowledgment of diversity among and across stakeholders in public education; too much reluctance to address that diversity by investigating characteristics, needs, and preferences; and not enough of the cultural shift we need to adjust the way we deliver education to more dynamically optimize productivity, effectiveness, and satisfaction for both educators and students.”<sup>30</sup>

They are right, of course. We need ambitious and entrepreneurial educators with the imagination, talents, guts and stamina to attend to slices of the parent and pupil market that have, to date, been weakly explored and even more weakly served. We need to be savvier in addressing parental preferences and to do so across all three K-12 sectors (district, charter and private schools alike). In sum, American education needs a major supply-side shift that will better accord with the demand-side preferences revealed by these remarkable data: keep the basics for all, and keep them strong, but vary the rest—and do that well, too.

# APPENDIX A



# APPENDIX A

## Methodology and Survey Design

This survey of parents was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute between August 14 and August 28, 2012. Precisely 2,007 parents and guardians of K-12 public and private school students responded. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region, household income, and child's gender/grade in school were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In the online survey, parents were asked a variety of questions about their child's school, for example: whether it was urban, suburban, or rural, whether it was public (traditional, charter, or magnet) or private (religious/faith-based or secular), and how satisfied they were with it in general and with respect to a number of specific attributes.<sup>31</sup> They also responded to a number of questions about their child: how he or she performed in school, how much effort he/she put into school, whether he/she had been identified as gifted and/or special education, and the parent's expectation of educational attainment for their child. The survey included questions about parental involvement, parenting style, religious affiliation and attendance, political ideology, and employment as well.

As noted in the introduction, the survey was designed, primarily, to understand and prioritize parents' educational values. As such, a key component of the survey was a Maximum-Difference Scaling (max-diff) exercise. Max-diff offers a means of estimating relative importance for each of several issues by using psychometric theory as well as multivariate statistical techniques. The survey measured parent preference, using max-diff, on forty-seven attributes.<sup>32</sup> The attributes were divided into two separate exercises: goals for students (seventeen attributes, e.g., is prepared for college) and school characteristics (thirty attributes, e.g., has a small total student enrollment).

### A NOTE ON "ERROR"

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the parents/guardians of K-12 public and private school student population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive survey, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100 percent response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

The results of the max-diff exercise were used to estimate the likelihood that each attribute was selected as “most critical,” “least critical,” or neither most or least critical, through a multivariate statistical technique called multinomial logit. The analysis creates a preference index (or utility score) by scaling the probability that an attribute was the most critical. The average probability was set at 100. An attribute with a utility of 200 is twice as likely to be “most critical” as an attribute with a utility of 100; an attribute with a utility of fifty is half as likely to be considered “most critical” as the average attribute. The utility score is more than a rank: it indicates which attribute is “first,” which is “second,” and so on, but it also estimates the distance between the attributes (i.e., is the first item a clear winner or is it neck and neck with the second item?). In some cases, both the order and distance can be important to consider. In other situations, just using the estimated rank produces clearer insights (the estimated rank is just assigning “1” to the first item, “2” to the second and so on—what we would estimate the respondent would have told us if they sorted the full list, with equal distance between each rank). When considering how an attribute fares with a subgroup, one can then just average the estimated ranks together. For example, if one respondent puts an item first, one puts it second, and one puts it third, the item’s average rank is 2  $((1 + 2 + 3) / 3)$ . Within this report, we’ve utilized both utility scores and average ranks.

#### **Note on Response Rates in Market Research**

A metric that is sometimes reported in survey research is response rate. In online panel research, response rates vary based on a number of factors, including survey topic, respondent age and gender, length of time in field, type and amount of incentive offered, and survey length. With online panel research, the focus is generally on reaching a representative sample in a reasonable amount of time (vs. achieving a high response rate). If response rates are a primary concern (not the case in this study), sending smaller batches of sample and leaving the survey open for a longer time, giving respondents more opportunity to complete, will increase response rates.<sup>33</sup>

Sometimes response rates are used as an indicator of sample representativeness. However, for online research, both low and high response rates can produce a representative sample. To ensure representativeness, Harris Interactive employs a two-stage approach. In Stage 1, the outgoing sample is balanced demographically (based on factors such as age, sex, income, race, and education) and monitored to assess sample targets while in field. In Stage 2, Harris Interactive weights the resulting data collected (see above). This two-pronged sampling and weighting approach ensures that the resulting survey data are representative of the population of interest.

**Table A-1a/A-1b: Niche Rankings**

Table A-1a: Students Goals	Total	Pragmatists	Jeffersonians	Test-Score Hawks	Multiculturalists	Expressionists	Strivers
n=	2007	673	472	451	444	292	225
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	4.7	4.6	5.0	5.0	6.3	4.9	6.3
Develops strong critical thinking skills	4.8	5.4	5.0	5.2	6.0	4.7	6.4
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	5.1	5.1	5.4	5.5	5.8	5.2	6.7
Is prepared for college	6.7	7.7	7.4	4.8	8.5	7.0	4.9
Develops strong social skills (e.g., respect, conflict resolution, ability to make friends)	6.9	6.5	6.6	8.5	5.6	6.8	10.0
Develops strong self-esteem	7.0	6.6	6.7	8.0	6.6	7.1	9.4
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	7.1	6.6	7.4	8.1	7.6	6.8	8.4
Develops a love of learning	7.4	8.2	7.7	7.6	8.9	6.9	8.5
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	7.4	7.5	6.2	8.0	8.0	8.0	9.7
Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds	8.8	8.5	8.4	9.6	3.0	8.5	9.7
Understands how important it is to go to college	9.3	9.4	9.7	7.4	10.0	9.7	6.3
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	10.6	10.6	10.7	10.9	10.4	10.7	11.6
Is accepted at a top-tier college	12.9	13.8	13.6	10.5	13.5	12.8	2.4
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	12.9	11.6	12.8	13.3	12.1	13.1	12.6
Develops a love of country/patriotism	12.9	12.5	12.0	12.4	13.4	13.6	13.2
Develops an appreciation for nature	14.2	14.1	13.9	14.5	13.6	13.5	13.7
Develops fluency in a foreign language	14.2	14.6	14.4	13.7	13.7	13.7	13.3

Table A-1b: School Characteristics	Total	Pragmatists	Jeffersonians	Test-Score Hawks	Multiculturalists	Expressionists	Strivers
Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics	5.4	6.2	5.9	5.6	6.7	6.9	7.5
Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education	6.8	6.9	7.2	7.7	8.0	8.6	8.6
Offers a strong education in life skills (e.g., money management, nutrition, etc.)	8.6	6.4	8.3	11.7	8.0	10.7	9.9
Holds students to extremely high academic standards	9.7	12.4	10.8	6.6	11.0	12.4	8.0
Has high standards for student behavior	9.9	11.8	9.7	9.9	10.9	11.0	10.8
Emphasizes character development, ethics, and/or morality	10.0	10.2	7.2	13.5	10.0	10.8	12.4
Uses technology as a learning tool	10.1	10.3	10.7	10.7	10.8	10.6	10.8
Emphasizes hands-on/project-based learning	10.3	9.5	11.3	12.8	10.6	10.6	13.2
Offers programs for advanced students	10.4	12.2	11.6	8.7	10.5	10.3	8.8
Groups students by ability levels (versus grouping all students of all abilities together)	13.4	13.9	15.0	13.5	13.4	13.9	14.2
Offers programs for struggling students or students with special needs	13.7	10.5	13.7	16.6	12.5	14.0	17.1
Has a very traditional approach to learning	14.0	13.5	15.7	13.9	14.3	16.6	14.0
Offers vocational classes or job-related programs	14.1	4.8	14.1	16.6	12.5	17.0	16.5
Emphasizes the importance of academic competition as much as academic collaboration	14.9	15.8	15.1	14.1	14.5	18.7	13.3
Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership	15.1	15.2	7.2	17.1	14.4	15.6	16.6
Offers a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports	15.1	15.1	15.6	17.9	14.3	9.1	16.1
Encourages parental involvement	15.2	16.9	15.4	17.2	15.7	14.4	17.2
Has high test scores	16.3	18.0	18.2	6.5	17.7	18.2	11.8
Prepares students for taking state tests	16.5	15.5	18.4	11.5	16.5	21.1	12.7
Has a diverse student body	17.2	17.7	16.2	18.7	15.3	16.0	17.4
Emphasizes arts and music instruction	17.9	18.9	17.7	19.7	18.0	6.6	19.1
Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs	18.2	18.7	15.8	19.5	17.9	18.5	17.6
Has a small total student enrollment	20.8	22.2	20.9	19.9	20.9	18.4	20.5
Offers supervised before- and after-school programs	20.8	19.8	21.1	20.8	20.2	20.9	19.4
Is close to home (or workplace/other convenient location)	21.0	21.3	21.9	20.5	21.6	19.6	20.8
Has a strong athletic program, offering a variety of sports with successful teams	22.0	22.0	21.4	21.0	20.7	21.5	19.2
Has updated building facilities	22.2	23.3	22.8	20.0	22.6	20.9	19.5
Offers longer school day or school year of instruction	23.6	23.9	23.9	22.6	23.5	23.5	22.3
Does not have too much homework	24.4	23.9	25.0	23.8	25.2	22.1	24.4
Requires that students wear school uniforms	27.5	28.1	27.2	26.4	27.0	26.5	25.4

# APPENDIX B



*Average Parents*

# APPENDIX B

## Questionnaire with Topline Results

### Notes on reading the results:

The percentage of respondents has been included for each item. A dash represents a value of zero. An asterisk represents a value greater than zero but less than one. Percentages may not always add up to 100 percent because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple answers from respondents answering that question.

Due to survey programming requirements and background logic, special question numbering was applied. The question numbers shown below were not displayed to respondents and are strictly used for programming purposes.

### SECTION 600: SCREENING QUESTIONS

#### BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS

**Q1650** How many children under the age of 19, for whom you are the parent or guardian, live in your household?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
0	-
1	42%
2	36%
3	15%
4	5%
5	1%
6	1%
7+	*
MEAN	1.9

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q1655** Next, we would like to find out the age and gender of each child between the ages of 4 and 18 in your household for whom you are the parent or guardian. For each child, please enter his/her age, his/her gender, and in what grade he/she will be during the 2012-13 school year.

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>SON (NET)</b>	<b>50%</b>
Son in kindergarten	4%
Son in 1st grade	4%
Son in 2nd grade	3%
Son in 3rd grade	3%
Son in 4th grade	4%
Son in 5th grade	4%
Son in 6th grade	5%
Son in 7th grade	5%
Son in 8th grade	4%
Son in 9th grade	4%
Son in 10th grade	3%
Son in 11th grade	4%
Son in 12th grade	4%
<b>DAUGHTER (NET)</b>	<b>50%</b>
Daughter in kindergarten	3%
Daughter in 1st grade	4%
Daughter in 2nd grade	4%
Daughter in 3rd grade	4%
Daughter in 4th grade	4%
Daughter in 5th grade	3%
Daughter in 6th grade	4%
Daughter in 7th grade	4%
Daughter in 8th grade	4%
Daughter in 9th grade	4%
Daughter in 10th grade	4%
Daughter in 11th grade	4%
Daughter in 12th grade	4%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q1660** For the rest of the survey, we want you to think about you and your [son/daughter in X grade] during the 2012-13 school year.

Will your [son/daughter in X grade] qualify for [his/her] school’s free or reduced-price lunch program during the 2012-13 school year?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Yes	37%
No	50%
Don’t know	12%
Not applicable	1%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q1665** For the 2012-13 school year, will your [son/daughter in X grade] attend....?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
A public school, including a public charter school	91%
A private school	9%
My child is homeschooled [TERMINATE]	-

**BASE: PARENT OF A CHILD WHO ATTENDS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Q1670** For the 2012-13 school year, which type of public school will your [son/daughter in X grade] attend?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1826</b>
A public charter school	14%
A public magnet school	5%
A traditional public school	81%
Other	*

**BASE: PARENT OF A CHILD WHO ATTENDS PRIVATE SCHOOL**

**Q1675** For the 2012-13 school year, is the private school that your [son/daughter in X grade] will attend a religious or faith-based school?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>181</b>
Yes	70%
No	30%

**BASE: PARENT OF A CHILD IN GRADE K-12 WHO ATTENDS PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOL**

**Q1680** Where is the school that your [son/daughter in X grade] will attend during the 2012-13 school year located?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
In an urban or city area	34%
In a suburban area next to a city	41%
In a small town or rural area	25%

**SECTION 600: ABOUT THE STUDENT**

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q600** Now, we'd like to ask you a few questions about your [son/daughter in X grade] and [his/her] experience in school.

**BASE: PARENT OF CHILD IN GRADES 1-12**

**Q601** Compared to other students, how does your [son/daughter] perform in school?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>ABOVE AVERAGE (NET)</b>	<b>68%</b>
Well above average	33%
Somewhat above average	35%
About average	26%
<b>BELOW AVERAGE (NET)</b>	<b>5%</b>
Somewhat below average	4%
Well below average	1%

**BASE: PARENT OF CHILD IN GRADES 1-12**

**Q605** How much effort does your [son/daughter in X grade] put into school?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>A GREAT DEAL/SOME (NET)</b>	<b>90%</b>
A great deal	48%
Some	43%
<b>NOT MUCH/NONE (NET)</b>	<b>10%</b>
Not much	9%
None	1%

**BASE: PARENT OF CHILD IN GRADES 1-12****Q610** How much does [he/she] enjoy school?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>ENJOYS SCHOOL (NET)</b>	<b>89%</b>
Enjoys school a great deal	44%
Enjoys school somewhat	45%
<b>DOES NOT ENJOY SCHOOL (NET)</b>	<b>11%</b>
Does not enjoy school much	8%
Does not enjoy school at all	2%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS****Q615** How far do you expect your [son/daughter in X grade] to go in [his/her] education?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Receive less than a high school diploma	1%
Graduate from high school or earn a GED	12%
Receive a 2-year college degree	11%
Receive a 4-year college degree	45%
Receive a graduate or professional school degree (such as MA, MBA, MD, PhD)	32%

**BASE: PARENT OF CHILD IN GRADES 1-12**

**Q620** Has your [son/daughter] ever had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan at school?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
Yes	18%
No	60%
Not sure	22%
Decline to answer	1%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q625** Has a doctor or mental health professional ever told you that your [son/daughter] has any of the following? Please select **ALL** that apply.

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	9%
A learning disability	8%
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)	6%
None of these	82%
Decline to answer	*

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q630** Has your child in [X grade] ever been identified as gifted or exceptionally talented in academics?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Yes	36%
No	64%

**BASE: PARENT OF CHILD IN GRADES 1-12****Q635** Has your [son/daughter in X grade] grade ever changed schools because...?

1 You were dissatisfied with the school or teachers

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
Yes	14%
No	86%

2 You were concerned about [his/her] safety

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
Yes	8%
No	92%

3 [He/She] was expelled or asked to leave

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
Yes	4%
No	96%

4 [He/She] was unhappy at the school

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
Yes	9%
No	91%

SECTION 700: ABOUT THE SCHOOL

**BASE: CHILD ATTENDS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Q700** Thinking about where you currently live, did you choose the neighborhood or area because of its schools?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1826</b>
Yes, it was a major factor in deciding where to live	38%
Yes, but it was only a minor factor in deciding where to live	22%
No, the schools did not play a role in my decision	40%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q710** What source(s) of information do you use to learn about the various K-12 schools available for your child? Please select **ALL** that apply.

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Friends or neighbors	49%
In-person visit(s) to the school	46%
Internet/Websites	43%
Other parents of children in the school(s)	39%
State report cards on schools	35%
Family	32%
Teachers or guidance counselors	30%
Newspapers	13%
Realtors	12%
Church, synagogue, mosque or other religious community	11%
Other	3%
I do not look for this information	15%

## SECTION 800: SCHOOL GOALS: MAX-DIFF EXERCISE

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q810** The next few questions will ask you to consider educational goals that you may have for your child. Regardless of whether or not your child's current school supports your child in reaching these goals, we'd like you to consider, in an ideal world, which educational goals would be the most critical for your child to attain in school and which would be the least critical. We understand that many of these goals are important ones, and deciding among them may be difficult; but we'd like you to prioritize and make those tough decisions.

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q815** From the list below, which educational goal is the most critical and which is the least critical for your [son/daughter in X grade] to attain in school? Remember to think about schooling in an ideal world. Please read the whole list of five items first to compare them. Then, out of the five goals, select ONE that is most critical and ONE that is least critical, for a total of two responses per set. Note that you'll see some of the items repeated in different combinations on subsequent screens.

	Total	
<i>Base:</i>	2007	
	Avg. Rank	Utility
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	4.7	181
Develops strong critical thinking skills	4.8	178
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	5.1	172
Is prepared for college	6.7	142
Develops strong social skills (e.g., respect, conflict resolution, ability to make friends)	6.9	132
Develops strong self-esteem	7.0	128
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	7.1	130
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	7.4	122
Develops a love of learning	7.4	125
Learns how to work with people from diverse racial, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds or cultures	8.8	95
Understands how important it is to go to college	9.3	89
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	10.6	55
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	12.9	39
Develops a love of country/patriotism	12.9	30
Is accepted at a top tier college	12.9	44
Develops an appreciation for nature	14.2	17
Develops fluency in a foreign language	14.2	20

*Table Notes: Average Ranking: lowest=most critical; highest=least critical. Utility: highest=most critical; 100=average. See methodology section for more detail on average ranking vs. utility.*

### SECTION 900: SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS: MAX-DIFF EXERCISE

#### **BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q910** Now, we'd like you to consider a variety of school characteristics. Regardless of whether or not your child's current school offers these things, we'd again like you to consider, in an ideal world, which of these characteristics would be the most critical for your child's school to have and which would be the least critical. We understand that many of these characteristics are important ones, and deciding among them may be difficult; but we'd like you to prioritize and make those tough decisions.

#### **BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q915** From the list below, which school characteristic is the most critical and which is the least critical to you? Remember to think about schooling in an ideal world. Please read the whole list of five items first to compare them. Then, out of the five characteristics, select ONE that is most critical and ONE that is least critical, for a total of two responses per set. Note that you'll see some of the items repeated in different combinations on subsequent screens.

<b>Base:</b>	<b>Total</b>	
	<b>2007</b>	
	<b>Avg. Rank</b>	<b>Utility</b>
Offers a strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics	5.4	222
Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education	6.8	203
Offers a strong education in life skills (e.g., money management, nutrition, etc.)	8.6	173
Holds students to extremely high academic standards	9.7	167
Has high standards for student behavior	9.9	155
Emphasizes character development, ethics, and/or morality	10.0	154
Uses technology as a learning tool	10.1	154
Emphasizes hands-on/project-based learning	10.3	148
Offers programs for advanced students, such as gifted and talented classes/programs at the elementary level or Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) at the secondary level	10.4	162
Groups students by ability levels (versus grouping all students of all abilities together)	13.4	115
Offers programs for struggling students or students with special needs	13.7	114
Has a very traditional approach to learning, with most of the day dedicated to teacher-led instruction	14.0	111
Offers vocational classes or job-related programs (e.g., information technology, medical technology, automotive, etc.)	14.1	114
Emphasizes the importance of academic competition as much as academic collaboration	14.9	96
Emphasizes instruction in citizenship, democracy, and leadership	15.1	91
Offers a variety of extracurricular activities other than sports (e.g., drama, debate, band, yearbook, other clubs, etc.)	15.1	97
Encourages parental involvement	15.2	92
Has high test scores	16.3	82
Prepares students for taking state tests	16.5	86
Has a diverse student body (i.e., a school that reflects more than my child's own background)	17.2	70
Emphasizes arts and music instruction	17.9	66
Teaches a curriculum that is compatible with my personal beliefs (e.g., relative to religion, evolution, human sexuality)	18.2	68
Has a small total student enrollment	20.8	44
Offers supervised before and after-school programs	20.8	41
Is close to home (or workplace/other convenient location)	21.0	44
Has a strong athletic program, offering a variety of sports with successful teams	22.0	38
Has updated building facilities	22.2	30
Offers longer school day or school year of instruction	23.6	25
Does not have too much homework	24.4	24
Requires that students wear school uniforms	27.5	14

Table Notes: Average Ranking: lowest=most critical; highest=least critical. Utility: highest=most critical; 100=average  
See methodology section for more detail on average ranking vs. utility.

SECTION 1000: SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT SCHOOL

**BASE: PARENT OF CHILD IN GRADES 1-12**

**Q1005** Now, rather than looking ahead to the upcoming school year, we would like for you to answer a few questions thinking about this past school year (2011-12) and the school that your [son/daughter] attended.

How satisfied were you with each of the following at your [son/daughter]'s school in 2011-2012?

1 Quality of the teachers

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>87%</b>
Extremely satisfied	43%
Somewhat satisfied	44%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>13%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	10%
Extremely dissatisfied	3%

2 The principal/administration

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>86%</b>
Extremely satisfied	44%
Somewhat satisfied	42%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>14%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	9%
Extremely dissatisfied	5%

## 3 The core curriculum (reading, math, science, social studies)

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>90%</b>
Extremely satisfied	42%
Somewhat satisfied	48%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>10%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	7%
Extremely dissatisfied	2%

## 4 Art and music programs

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>83%</b>
Extremely satisfied	35%
Somewhat satisfied	48%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>17%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	13%
Extremely dissatisfied	4%

## 5 Foreign language programs

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>72%</b>
Extremely satisfied	24%
Somewhat satisfied	48%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>28%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	19%
Extremely dissatisfied	9%

6 Extracurricular opportunities, including athletics

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>83%</b>
Extremely satisfied	36%
Somewhat satisfied	47%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>17%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	11%
Extremely dissatisfied	6%

7 Technology and equipment

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>87%</b>
Extremely satisfied	40%
Somewhat satisfied	48%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>13%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	10%
Extremely dissatisfied	3%

8 The facilities/school building

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>89%</b>
Extremely satisfied	43%
Somewhat satisfied	46%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>11%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	8%
Extremely dissatisfied	3%

## 9 Communication from school to home

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>83%</b>
Extremely satisfied	44%
Somewhat satisfied	39%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>17%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	13%
Extremely dissatisfied	4%

## 10 Opportunities for parent involvement

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>89%</b>
Extremely satisfied	46%
Somewhat satisfied	43%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>11%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	10%
Extremely dissatisfied	2%

## 11 Safety at the school

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>89%</b>
Extremely satisfied	49%
Somewhat satisfied	40%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>11%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	9%
Extremely dissatisfied	2%

12 Location of the school

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>92%</b>
Extremely satisfied	56%
Somewhat satisfied	36%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>8%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	6%
Extremely dissatisfied	2%

13 Available transportation to and from school

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>83%</b>
Extremely satisfied	46%
Somewhat satisfied	37%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>17%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	11%
Extremely dissatisfied	6%

14 School size

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>89%</b>
Extremely satisfied	38%
Somewhat satisfied	51%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>11%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	8%
Extremely dissatisfied	3%

## 15 Class size

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>83%</b>
Extremely satisfied	34%
Somewhat satisfied	49%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>17%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	12%
Extremely dissatisfied	4%

## 16 Academic performance/test scores at the school

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>88%</b>
Extremely satisfied	38%
Somewhat satisfied	50%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>12%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	9%
Extremely dissatisfied	3%

## 17 Culture/school atmosphere

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>86%</b>
Extremely satisfied	40%
Somewhat satisfied	46%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>14%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	10%
Extremely dissatisfied	4%

**BASE: PARENT OF CHILD IN GRADES 1-12**

**Q1010** Thinking about this past school year (2011-12), how satisfied were you overall with your [son/daughter]'s school?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>SATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>85%</b>
Extremely satisfied	40%
Somewhat satisfied	45%
<b>DISSATISFIED (NET)</b>	<b>15%</b>
Somewhat dissatisfied	10%
Extremely dissatisfied	5%

## SECTION 1200: DEMOGRAPHICS

## BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS

## Q268 Gender

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Male (Fathers)	46%
Female (Mothers)	54%

## BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS

## Q280 Age

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
18 - 24	1%
25 - 29	6%
30 - 34	15%
35 - 39	17%
40 - 44	18%
45 - 49	23%
50 - 54	13%
55 - 59	5%
60 - 64	2%
65 and over	1%
MEAN	42.5

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q485** Race/Ethnicity

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
White	65%
Hispanic	17%
Black or African-American	9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	6%
Native American or Alaskan native	*
Other race	1%
Decline to Answer	1%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q1200** Please tell us a little bit more about you. In which of the following ways are you involved in your child’s education?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Helping with/checking homework	78%
Volunteering in school/district	42%
Chaperoning events/field trips	42%
Fundraising	39%
Participating in the PTA or other parent organization	33%
Tutoring	21%
Coaching in or outside of the school	16%
Other	4%
None of the above	7%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS****Q1202** In the past year, have you...? Please select all that apply.

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Participated or volunteered in a local club, organization, or religious community	36%
Attended a public meeting on town or school affairs	28%
Written or called any politician at the state, local, or national level	21%
Coached/Moderated youth activities (Girl/Boy Scouts, basketball league, etc.)	18%
Attended a political rally, speech, or organized protest of any kind	11%
Written an article for a magazine or newspaper	8%
Worked for a political party	4%
Held or run for a public office	3%
None of the above	39%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS****Q1205** Which of the following statements best describes you?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
I let my child develop at his/her own pace	51%
I set high expectations for my child and push him/her to excel	49%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS****Q1207** Which of the following statements best describes you?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
I give my child direction, but I encourage him/her to ask lots of questions	71%
I set firm rules for my child and expect him/her to follow them	29%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q1230** How would you describe your own political philosophy?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Conservative	30%
Moderate	50%
Liberal	20%

**BASE: CONSERVATIVE**

**Q1235** Would you call yourself very conservative or just somewhat conservative?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>610</b>
Very conservative	42%
Somewhat conservative	58%

**BASE: LIBERAL**

**Q1240** Would you call yourself very liberal or just somewhat liberal?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>399</b>
Very liberal	44%
Somewhat liberal	56%

**BASE: MODERATE****Q1245** Would you say you lean more toward conservative or liberal?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>998</b>
Lean conservative	32%
Lean liberal	30%
Do not lean either way	39%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS****Q1250** These days many people have a religious preference and others are not part of any organized religion. What is your current religious preference?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>CHRISTIAN (NET)</b>	<b>68%</b>
Catholic	23%
Baptist	11%
Methodist	4%
Lutheran	4%
Mormon	2%
Presbyterian	2%
Episcopalian	1%
Jehovah's Witness	1%
Eastern/Greek Orthodox	*
(Other) Protestant	3%
(Other) Christian	17%
Agnostic	5%
Atheist	4%
Jewish	2%
Buddhist	1%
Hindu	1%
Muslim/Islam	*
Other	4%
None	11%
Decline to answer	3%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q1255** How often do you attend religious services?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>A FEW TIMES A YEAR OR MORE (NET)</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>ONCE A MONTH OR MORE (SUB-NET)</b>	<b>42%</b>
Every week or more often	29%
Once or twice a month	14%
A few times a year	16%
<b>ONCE A YEAR OR LESS (NET)</b>	<b>38%</b>
Once a year	5%
Less often than once a year	16%
Never	18%
Decline to answer	3%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q320** U.S. Region

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
East	20%
Midwest	22%
South	33%
West	25%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS****Q410** Which one of the following best describes your employment status?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Employed full time	55%
Employed part time	10%
Self-employed	8%
Not employed, but looking for work	6%
Not employed and not looking for work	1%
Retired	2%
Not employed, unable to work due to a disability or illness	4%
Student	1%
Stay-at-home spouse or partner	13%

**BASE: EMPLOYED****Q1258** In what industry is your primary job?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1426</b>
Professional services (law, medicine, etc.)	13%
Education	13%
Business/Commerce	12%
Sales	9%
Construction	7%
Government	7%
Labor/Production	5%
Transportation	4%
Nonprofit	2%
Farming/Fishing/Forestry	*
Other	27%

**BASE: NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN EDUCATION INDUSTRY**

**Q1260** Have you ever been employed in the grade K-12 education field (e.g., as a teacher, administrator, or in student services)?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>1173</b>
Yes	11%
No	89%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q1434** What is the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

	Total
<b>Base:</b>	<b>2007</b>
Less than high school	1%
Completed some high school	2%
High school diploma	24%
A GED credential	5%
Some college, but no degree	17%
Associate degree	12%
College (such as B.A., B.S.)	24%
Some graduate school, but no degree	3%
Graduate degree (such as MBA, MS, M.D., Ph.D.)	12%

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q462** Which of the following income categories best describes your total 2011 household income before taxes?

	Total
<i>Base:</i>	<b>2007</b>
Less than \$15,000	4%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	15%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	13%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	8%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	3%
\$250,000 or more	3%
Decline to answer	4%
MEAN	\$86,249.10
MEDIAN	\$62,500

**BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS**

**Q364** What is your marital status?

	Total
<i>Base:</i>	<b>2007</b>
Never married	7%
Married	77%
Civil union	1%
Divorced	7%
Separated	1%
Widow/Widower	1%
Living with partner	6%

# ENDNOTES

## ENDNOTES

1. Each niche is based on a single preference (rather than a group of preferences, as a traditional segment would be).
2. Some overlap exists among the niches; see page 41.
3. Bruce Fuller, Richard F. Elmore, with Gary Orfield, eds., *Who Chooses? Who Loses?: Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996); Edward B. Fiske and Helen F. Ladd, *When Schools Compete: A Cautionary Tale* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2000); Mark Schneider, Paul Teske, and Melissa Marschall, *Choosing Schools: Consumer Choice and the Quality of American Schools* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Kent L. Tedin and Gregory R. Weiher, "Racial/Ethnic Diversity and Academic Quality as Components of Choice," *The Journal of Politics* 66, no. 4 (2004): 1109-33.
4. Mark Schneider and Jack Buckley, "What do Parents Want from Schools? Evidence from the Internet," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 24, no. 2 (2002), pp. 133-144.
5. Bretten Kleitz, Gregory Weiher, Kent Tedin, and Richard Matland, "Choice, Charter Schools, and Household Preferences," *Social Science Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (2000); Justine S. Hastings, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger, "Heterogeneous Preferences and the Efficacy of Public School Choice," NBER Working Paper, May 2009; Paul Teske, Jody Fitzpatrick, and Tracey O'Brien, "Drivers of Choice: Parents, Transportation, and School Choice," Center on Reinventing Public Education Denver, July 2009.
6. Justine S. Hastings, Richard Van Weelden, and Jeffrey M. Weinstein, "Preferences, Information, and Parental Choice Behavior in Public School Choice," NBER Working Paper No. 12995, 2007.
7. Thomas Stewart and Patrick J. Wolf, "The Evolution of Parental School Choice," in *Customized Schooling: Beyond Whole-School Reform*, ed. Frederick M. Hess and Bruno V. Manno, 91-106 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2011). Interestingly, Wolf and Stewart found that "regardless of shopper type, Detroit parents want quality schools that adequately prepare their children for life after high school, and they seek a variety of features in a school with the primary emphasis on academics" (pg. 6). This finding echoes the parental preferences revealed in this national study, though some K-12 parents prioritized preparation for college while others sought broad life-skills for their children.
8. Courtney A. Bell, "Space and Place: Urban Parents' Geographical Preferences for Schools," *The Urban Review* 39, no. 4, November 2007; Teske et al, 2009.
9. Lynn Bosetti, "Determinants of School Choice: Understanding how Parents Choose Elementary Schools in Alberta," *Journal of Education Policy* 19, no. 4 (2004), 387-405.
10. "Spotlight on Choice: Parent Opinions on School Selection in New Orleans," Cowen Institute at Tulane University, January 2013.
11. Thomas Stewart and Patrick J. Wolf, "The Evolution of Parental School Choice," in *Customized Schooling: Beyond Whole-School Reform*, ed. Frederick M. Hess and Bruno V. Manno, 91-106 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2011); Justine S. Hastings and Jeffrey M. Weinstein, "Information, School Choice, and Academic Achievement: Evidence from Two Experiments," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123, no. 4 (2008): 1373-1414; Justine S. Hastings, Thomas J. Kane, Douglas O. Staiger, and Jeffrey M. Weinstein, "The Effect of Randomized School Admissions on Voter Participation," *Journal of Public Economics* 91, no. 5-6 (2007): 915-37; Brian Kisida and Patrick J. Wolf, "School Governance and Information: Does Choice Lead to Better-Informed Parents," *American Politics Research* 38, no. 783 (2010).
12. Jack Buckley and Mark Schneider, "Shopping for Schools: How Do Marginal Consumers Gather Information About Schools?" *Policy Studies Journal* 31, no. 2 (2003): 121-47.
13. Harris Interactive administered the survey during the summer of 2012. As such, parents were asked questions related to the upcoming school year. Throughout this report, we phrase all questions in the present tense. For example, parents were asked "Where is the school that your [child] will attend during the 2012-13 school year located?" (emphasis added). To account for the lag between the survey and the report, we phrase findings by parents whose children attend schools in a particular location.

14. The study team considered including parents of home-schooled and preschool students, but ultimately decided that the survey questions would not apply to either of those groups, since they likely do not have experience with K-12 schools.
15. Questions included age, gender, and gifted and/or special education status of the student, what type of school he/she attended, and the parent's race/ethnicity, income level, general location, political ideology, educational attainment, and satisfaction with their child's current school. In instances where a respondent had two or more school-age children in their household, one child was randomly selected and parents were asked to focus their survey responses on the selected child. Note that since the study was conducted over the summer (in August 2012), parents were asked to report the grade of their child(ren) for the 2012-13 school year; therefore, the sample includes parents of "rising Kindergarteners."
16. The final list of tested goals and characteristics was informed by the results of two online focus groups of parents (December 2011)—also conducted by Harris Interactive for the Fordham Institute—whose participants discussed these attributes and others. Since the study was designed to glean trade-offs and preferences, attributes thought to be universally important (e.g., has caring teachers) were excluded from the online survey. A full list of survey items is in the Appendix.
17. Parents were asked which attribute "would be the most critical...and which would be the least critical" in an "ideal world." We use "critical" and "important" interchangeably throughout this report for readability purposes.
18. Results in this report are presented for K-12 parents, without differentiating them by their child's grade level. The survey and sample plan did allow for separate elementary and secondary analyses; however, we observed no major differences by students' grade levels. We compared the output for every possible way of dividing parents (e.g., Kindergarten versus grades 1 to 12, Kindergarten and first grade versus grades 2 to 12, etc.), and while there was a small difference for Kindergarten through sixth versus seventh through twelfth grades, it was not significant.
19. Significant results are presented with 99 percent confidence, meaning that there is a 99 percent probability that the observed difference is present in the parent population rather than simply the effect of random chance. Note that low variability in responses makes some seemingly small differences in rankings significant. Also, when comparing all pairs of categories (or others) to determine which subgroups are statistically different (multiple pair-wise comparisons), one must adjust for the fact that all of the pair-wise tests are not independent. (In this case, an ANOVA was applied with a Duncan's Multiple Range Test.)
20. For the most part, the differences in political ideology tended to be smaller than the differences in other subgroups in this section.
21. That said, research by Bill Bishop and others indicates that politically heterogeneous neighborhoods are on their way to extinction. See Bill Bishop's *The Big Sort* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), or Samuel J. Abrams and Morris P. Fiorina's "The Myth of the 'Big Sort,'" *Hoover Digest*, 2012, no. 3, <http://www.hoover.org/publications/hoover-digest/article/124861>, for nongeographic party sorting.
22. Note that differences in rankings between school locations does not necessarily imply that location *causes* the difference. Other factors (such as education, income, and race) are likely to be correlated with location and may be the cause of any observed differences.
23. We had many factors to choose from, but limited ourselves to two general categories: information that was readily available to parents, and characteristics that schools could control (and/or ones that they might advertise). In other words, we stuck to observable or quantifiable factors such as schools that emphasize arts and music, and student acceptance into a top-tier college, rather than "intangibles," such as "students being able to work collaboratively in teams" or "schools that emphasize academic competition as much as collaboration."
24. Percentages for the sum of the niche markets are greater than 100 percent because parents may have prioritized more than one of the selected attributes in their top third (i.e., they fall into more than one niche). See Appendix A for the overlap between niches.
25. While niche parents differed demographically from the population in a few key ways, their preferences for attributes other than the particular factor that defined them generally did not differ. We note the key, statistically significant exceptions in the text.

26. In instances where a respondent had two or more school-age children in their household, one child was randomly selected and parents were asked to focus their survey responses on the selected child.
27. Thomas Stewart and Patrick J. Wolf, “The Evolution of Parental School Choice,” in *Customized Schooling: Beyond Whole-School Reform*, ed. Frederick M. Hess and Bruno V. Manno, 91-106 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2011). Further speculation: African American parents might have concerns that their children will not be successful unless they can *prove* success through test scores. On the other hand, white parents might believe that there are other ways to measure success and other methods by which their children can demonstrate achievement.
28. Interestingly, we also asked parents to rank as a goal that their child “is prepared for college” (without specifying the quality of the institution). The average rank of “acceptance to a top-tier college” was only 12.9 (the third-lowest overall), whereas preparation for college ranked 6.7 (and fourth-highest overall). Thus the defining characteristic of the Striver is more accurately the *ranking* of the institution, whereas the parent population as a whole finds it critical that their child is prepared for college writ large.
29. This is particularly interesting given that the majority of low-income, high-achieving students do not apply to selective postsecondary institutions (even if they are likely to be admitted, to be offered financial aid, and to graduate). Caroline M. Hoxby and Christopher Avery, “The Missing ‘One-Offs’: The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low Income Students,” Spring 2013 Brookings Panel on Economic Activity, March 21, 2013.
30. Kim Smith and Julie Petersen, “Creating Responsive Supply in Public Education,” in *Customized Schooling: Beyond Whole-School Reform*, ed. Frederick M. Hess and Bruno V. Manno, 1-26 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2011).
31. In instances where a respondent had two or more school-age children in their household, one child was randomly selected and parents were asked to focus their survey responses on the selected child.
32. For the model to be most effective, it is best to limit the number of attributes. As the study was designed to glean trade-offs and preferences, attributes that were thought to be universally important (e.g., has caring teachers) were excluded from the online survey. The final list was informed by previously completed qualitative research and consultation with experts.
33. The response rate calculations employed by Internet surveys, telephone surveys using Random Digit Dialing (RDD), and other data collection methods are not equivalent. For example, telephone RDD response rates typically appear higher than online panel response rates. In calculating response rates, RDD surveys *exclude* those who have not picked up the phone; however, in online surveys, it is impossible to determine who has received and acted upon the e-mail invitation, so online surveys *do not* exclude those who have not “picked up” their e-mail. In fact, for this very reason, online response rates are often called participation rates.

