



APPLYING TO THE DC OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: HOW DO PARENTS RATE THEIR CHILDREN'S CURRENT SCHOOLS AT TIME OF APPLICATION AND WHAT DO THEY WANT IN NEW SCHOOLS?

SECOND REPORT IN A SERIES FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE DC OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) was created by Congress to provide tuition vouchers to low-income parents who want their child to attend a private school. This brief describes findings using data from more than 2,000 parents who have applied since the program was reauthorized under the Scholarships for Opportunity and Result (SOAR) Act of 2011. The application form asked parents to rate elements of their child's current school at time of application with which they were satisfied or dissatisfied and to indicate which elements were important to them in looking for a new school. These ratings provide insights about school-related reasons parents may have had for applying for a voucher and what they were looking for in a new school. Key findings include:

- *The majority of parents (57 percent) gave their child's current school at time of application a grade of 'A' or 'B.' Fourteen percent of parents gave their child's school a 'D' or 'F.'*
- *Most parents chose academic quality as their top priority for a new school. School safety was the second most common choice of top priority. School facilities, racial mix, and parent involvement were least likely to be chosen as top priorities.*
- *Parents mostly were satisfied with their child's current school at time of application on elements they viewed as top priorities for a new school; 66 percent of parents were satisfied with their child's current school on the element they indicated was their top priority for choosing a new school.*

Introduction

Programs providing vouchers for public-school students to attend private schools have existed since Wisconsin enabled a voucher program in Milwaukee in 1990. Since then, voucher programs have grown and now operate in 13 states and the District of Columbia.

Congress created the District of Columbia 'Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP)' in 2004. The program has operated continuously since then, though it did not accept new applicants in spring 2009 and spring 2010. The program was reauthorized in 2011 by the 'Scholarships for Opportunity and Results' Act (SOAR) and began accepting new applications. To be eligible to apply, parents must be DC residents and have incomes below 185 percent of the poverty line. Vouchers are \$8,000 a year for students in grades K through 8, and \$12,000 a year for students in high school. The money is paid directly to private schools that elect to participate.

Congress called for an evaluation to report annually on the OSP and to measure its impacts on student academic progress, parent satisfaction, safety, and other key outcomes. The evaluation is collecting data to measure impacts and will release reports on those impacts in the future. A previous report described characteristics of applying parents and students and of schools that elect to participate and enroll students awarded vouchers. This evaluation brief, the second report from the evaluation, uses data from 2,268 student application forms completed by 1,470 parents applying to the program in

spring of 2011 through spring of 2013. On the form, parents gave their child's current school at time of application a grade, assessed their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with elements of the school their child currently attends, and indicated their priorities for selecting a new school. The information on individual parents' dissatisfaction and top priorities presented in this evaluation brief addresses key questions in which Congress expressed interest and can provide insights for future work, which will estimate effects of attending private schools on parent satisfaction. Data about dissatisfaction and priorities—which are 'baseline' in the sense they were collected before parents knew whether they received a voucher—also will be useful for grouping parents in various ways and analyzing whether effects on achievement or other outcomes vary along these dimensions.

The results of this analysis also provide insights about whether parents share the goals espoused in the SOAR act and the kinds of information school operators in DC can provide to parents. Congress, in passing the SOAR Act, noted improved student achievement and safety as two reasons to support students attending private schools.¹ The results here answer whether DC parents applying to the OSP believe student achievement or student safety are key priorities in choosing a new school. The results also indicate the degree to which parents applying to the program are dissatisfied with these and other elements of their children's schools. The report also examines relationships between grades parents give schools and priorities those parents have for new schools, to determine whether overall satisfaction expressed by parents masks dissatisfaction with elements of schools parents value the most.

The results in this report also may be useful for school operators in DC. Operators of traditional public schools, charters, or private schools can learn about parent priorities for schools and elements about which parents are satisfied or dissatisfied. Betts (2005) notes that families may have different priorities for elements of schools such as their academic quality, class size, discipline policies, or range of services for students with special needs. In theory, school choice enables parents to select schools that have specific elements they value.

Studies in the school choice literature also have analyzed parents' aspirations for their children and concerns about their children's schools. For example, Schneider, Teske and Marschall (2000, Chapter 4) report on a survey that asked parents what they thought was most important for their child's education. "Teacher quality" was by far the most common response, but the second, third, and fourth most cited responses were "high test scores" followed by safety and values. Schneider and Buckley (2002) report on a study that logged keystrokes of those visiting the website of an urban school district and found that most visitors to the website checked the racial mix of schools. The current report contributes to this literature by analyzing school priorities of DC parents applying for a voucher (a specific kind of school choice).

The analysis tabulates parent responses to three questions on the application form. The first asked parents to give their child's current school at time of application a grade from A to F. The second asked them to rate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were on 12 elements of their child's current school, such as its academic quality, location, interactions with teachers, and so on. Parents had four possible responses: very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, satisfied, or very satisfied. In the analysis below, the first two responses were combined into 'unsatisfied' and the second two were combined into 'satisfied.' (The scale did not have a 'neutral' option that allowed parents to indicate they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.) The third question asked parents to indicate their top three priorities for choosing a new school using the same 12 elements. The analysis of priorities below focuses on the top priority.

Throughout this brief, when the text notes differences between two or more groups of parents, or any other differences, the differences are statistically significant, with *p*-values of less than 0.05. Appendices to this brief provide the numbers underlying the figures as well as results of statistical tests. There are 1,339 applicants in households in which a parent submitted an application for at least one other sibling (59 percent of parents). Statistical tests ignore possible correlations of responses within families, which will lead to some overstatement of statistical significance levels. The application form asked parents to provide satisfaction ratings for current schools and priorities for new schools for each sibling if parents were applying for more than one sibling at the same time.

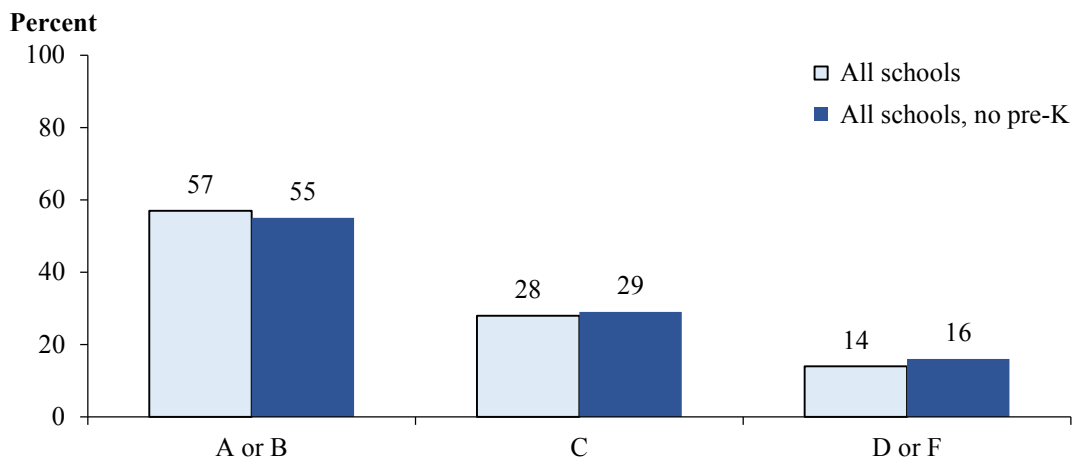
Parents’ Letter Grades for Children’s Current Schools at Time of Application

- **Most parents of OSP applicants give high grades to their child’s current school at time of application.**

The majority of applicants’ parents (57 percent) gave their child’s school a grade of ‘A’ or ‘B’ (see Figure 1). Fourteen percent of applicants’ parents gave their child’s school a grade of ‘D’ or ‘F.’

Applicants were disproportionately applying to attend elementary school. The total sample of applicants is 2,268. Of the 2,117 applicants that provided letter grade ratings, 1,320 (62 percent) were applying for elementary school, 511 (24 percent) were applying for middle school grades (6 through 8), and 286 (14 percent) were applying for high schools grades (9 through 12). In particular, a large number of parents (280) applied for their child to attend kindergarten. For these parents, the ‘current school’ is a pre-K program. In DC, most pre-K students attend publicly funded programs and a number attend pre-K programs funded by Head Start (Office of the State Superintendent, 2014).² Regardless, parents of pre-K students are giving grade to programs that may differ from regular public schools. Excluding these parents puts the focus more on grades parents give traditional public and charter schools. The lighter color bars in Figure 1 show the same percentages but excluding parents of pre-K students. There is a slight shift evident toward lower grades, but the percentages are generally within one or two points of percentages for the total sample.

Figure 1. Grades parents gave their child’s current school at time of application

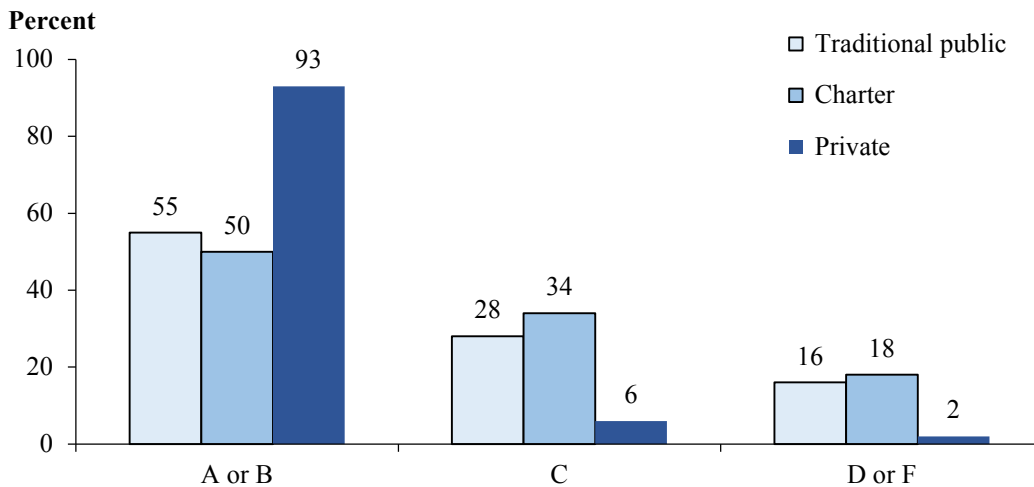


SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 151 applicants.

- **Parents of private school students gave schools the highest grades.**

More than 90 percent of parents of private-school students gave that school a grade of A or B (see Figure 2).³ In contrast, about 55 percent of parents of traditional public school students and 50 percent of parents of charter school students gave those schools an A or B, respectively. Future reports will examine parent satisfaction with schools before and after the voucher offer, which will provide clearer evidence of whether parents are more satisfied after their children move to private schools.

Figure 2. Grades parents gave their child's current school at time of application, by type of school

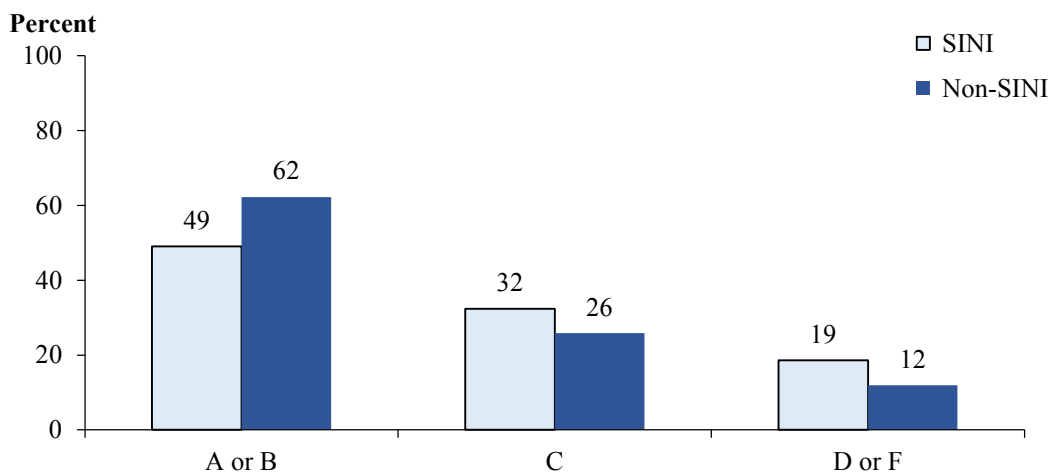


SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 151 applicants.

- **Parents gave lower grades if their children were attending schools in need of improvement at time of application.**

Congress emphasized that the OSP should give priority to students attending traditional public or charter schools ‘in need of improvement,’ which means public schools that have not met goals for adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind. These schools are labeled ‘SINI’ schools. Among parents whose child attended a SINI school at time of application, 49 percent gave their child’s school a grade of A or B compared to 62 percent of “non-SINI” parents who did. Among parents whose child attended a SINI school, 32 percent assigned their child’s school a grade of C, and 19 percent assigned their child’s school a grade of D or F (see Figure 3). (The analysis excludes parents whose children were currently attending private schools or pre-schools at time of application, which do not have a SINI status.)

Figure 3. Grades parents gave schools, by whether the school was in need of improvement



SINI = school in need of improvement.

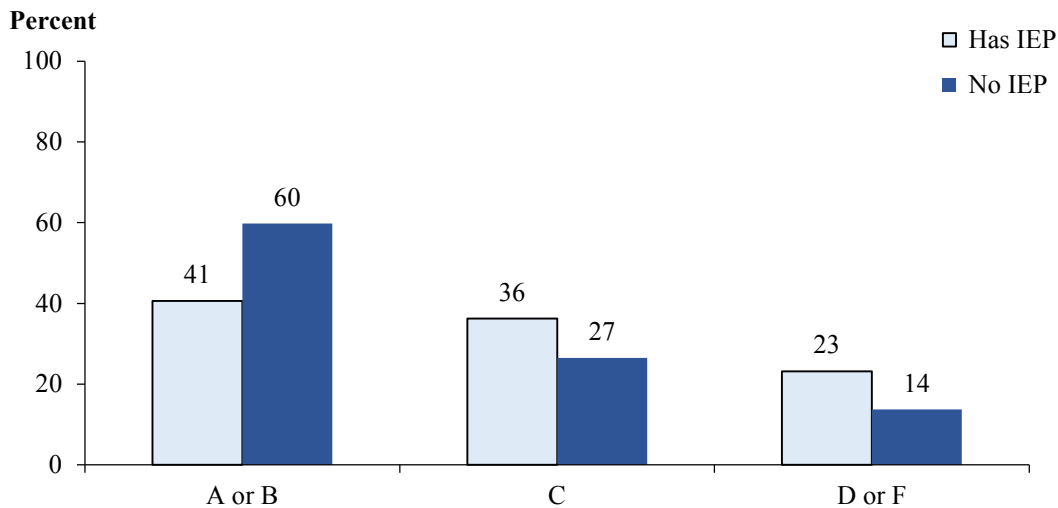
SOURCE: Application forms for 2,034 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 151 applicants. The analysis excludes parents whose children currently attend private schools or pre-schools, which do not have a SINI status.

The study looked at how grades varied based on several other parent or child characteristics. Previous research informed the choices of characteristics. The District of Columbia Public Schools found that parents of elementary school students were more likely to be satisfied with schools than parents of middle and high school students.⁴ Parents of children with special needs, parents with more education, and married parents may interact differently with schools and have different views of them than other parents.⁵

Statistical tests revealed differences for two of the four characteristics (full results are in Appendix Table A-1). A higher percentage of parents whose child had an individualized education program or IEP (those classified to receive special education services) gave their child’s current school at time of application a grade of C (36 percent) or a grade of D or F (23 percent) compared to 27 and 14 percent of other parents (Figure 4).

Married parents are more likely to give schools a grade of A or B (68 percent) compared to unmarried parents (55 percent). This difference could reflect ways in which marital status relates to household income, employment, residential location, and access to schools, none of which the study can address because of its data limitations. Over half of parents assigned grades of A or B regardless of whether their child was in elementary school (59 percent), middle school (56 percent), or high school (54 percent). Parents also gave similar grades regardless of their level of education (see appendix table A-1).

Figure 4. Grades parents gave their child's current school at time of application, by whether their child had an IEP



IEP = individualized education plan.

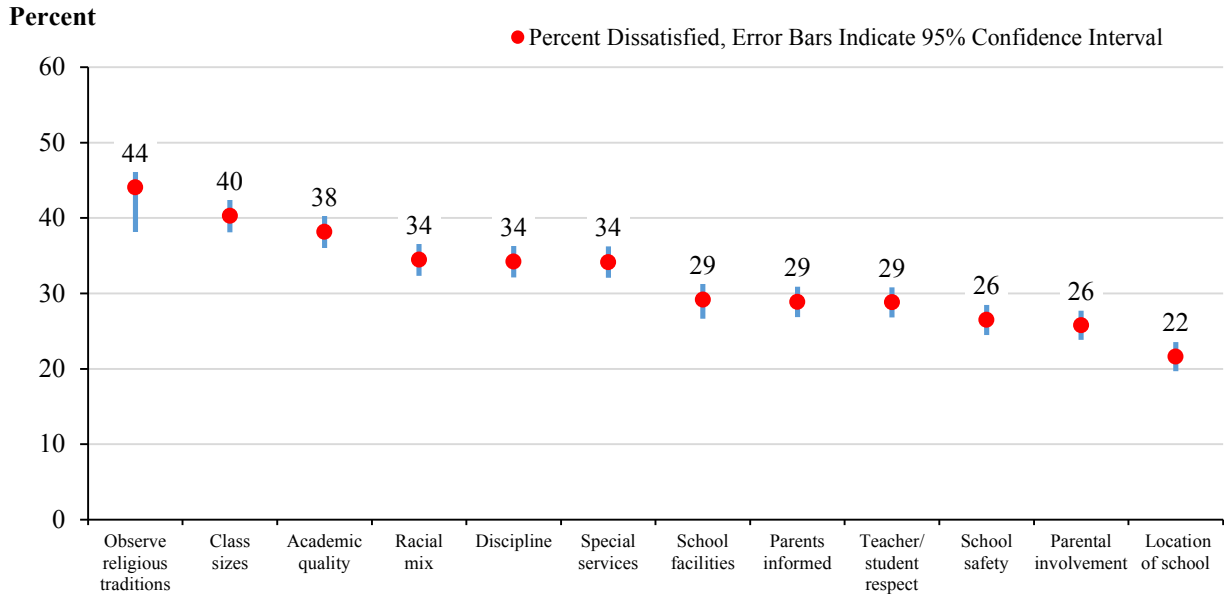
SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 163 applicants.

Parents' Dissatisfaction With Elements of Children's Current Schools at Time of Application

Examining responses to the 12-item question provides a more detailed sense of what it was about schools that satisfied parents or not. Figure 5 ranks the 12 items from highest to lowest levels of dissatisfaction, and Figure 6 presents the same breakdown depending on whether the child currently attended a traditional public school, a charter school, or a private school at time of application. Higher bars indicate greater levels of dissatisfaction.⁶ The bars show 95-percent confidence intervals, and any two estimates whose bars do not overlap are significantly different. Examining the figure, two elements next to each other generally do not differ significantly, but items on the left side of the figure differ from items on its right side.⁷

Figure 5 shows that parents were most likely to be dissatisfied with the current school at time of application for ‘how much students can observe religious traditions’ (44 percent), class sizes (40 percent), and academic quality (38 percent).⁸ They were least likely to be dissatisfied with the school’s location and its level of parental involvement.

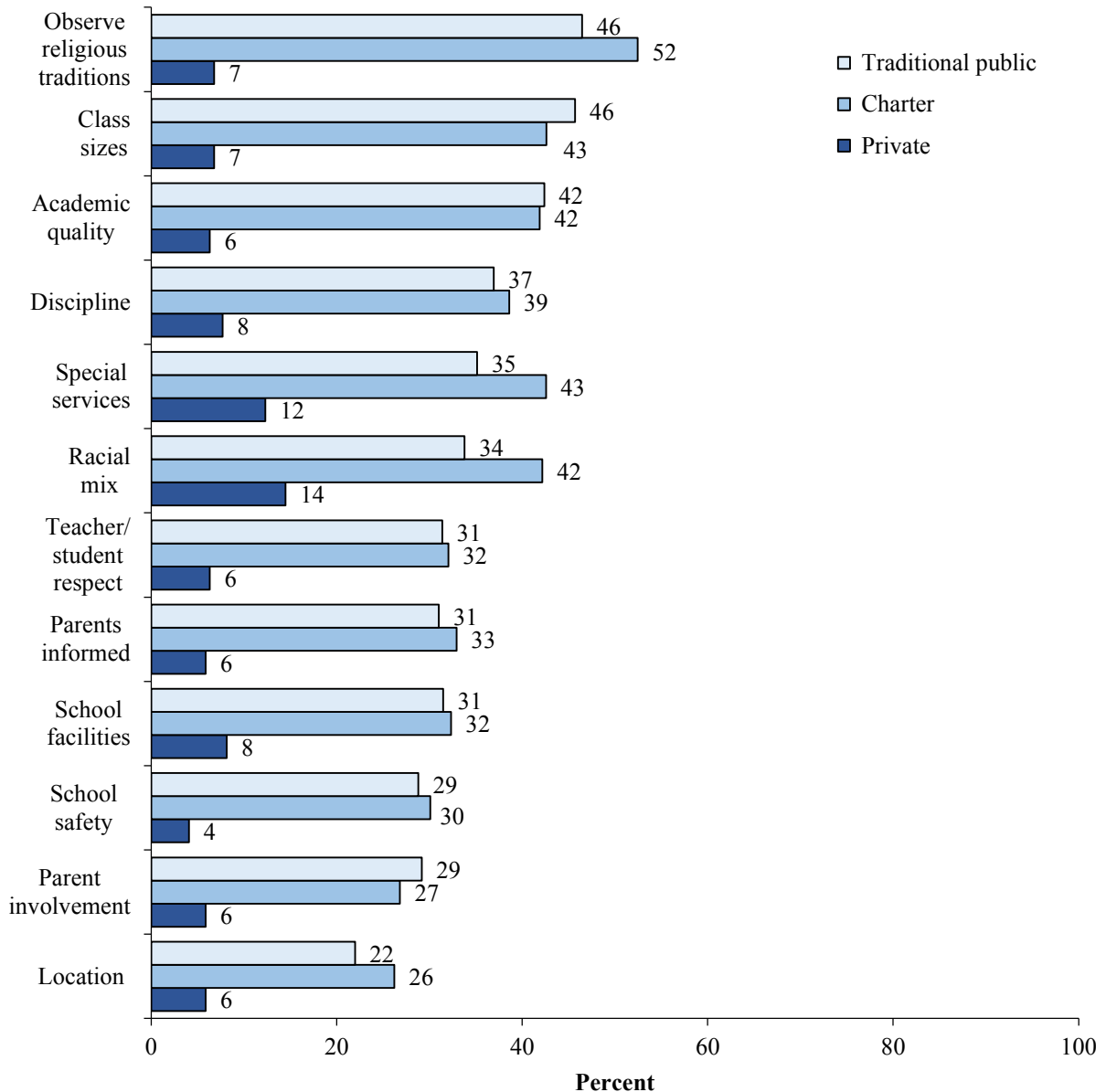
Figure 5. Parent dissatisfaction, by school element



SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 293 applicants. Points show the percentage of parents who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the aspect of the school. For all elements except special services, parents were excluded if they did not respond to any of the remaining 11 items. Of the 1,975 parents, 1,350 had valid responses to the question related to special services. “Special services” refers to parental satisfaction regarding “services for children with special needs.” These services include but are not limited to special education services for students with learning disabilities. Section 504 provides for services for students without any of the 13 disabilities listed in the IDEA, such as services for students with limited mobility.

Figure 6 shows that public- and private-school parents differ in their dissatisfaction with schools on the 12 items. On all items, public school parents were more dissatisfied than private school parents. Within public schools, parents whose children currently attended charter schools at time of application were more dissatisfied than parents whose children attended traditional public schools on four items: observing religious traditions (52 versus 46 percent), school racial mix (42 versus 34 percent), services for children with special needs (43 versus 35 percent), and location (26 versus 22 percent). Other differences between charter and traditional public schools were not statistically significant.

Figure 6. Parent dissatisfaction, by type of school

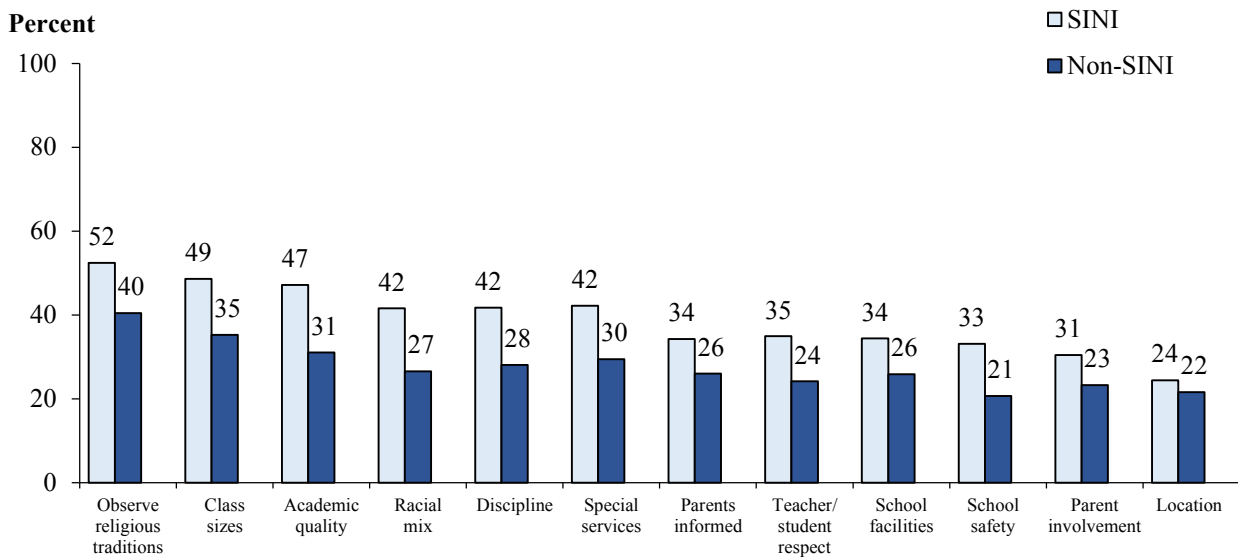


SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 293 applicants. Bars show the percentage of parents who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the aspect of the school. For all elements except special services, parents were excluded if they did not respond to any of the remaining 11 items. Of the 1,975 parents, 1,350 had valid responses to the question related to special services.

Figure 7 looks at parent dissatisfaction on the 12 elements by whether their children attended SINI or non-SINI schools. Statistical tests confirm that on nearly all elements, parent dissatisfaction was 7 to 16 percentage points higher in SINI schools. Only the last element, location, was not statistically different. Less than a quarter of parents reported being dissatisfied with the location of their child’s school.

Additional analyses found that parents whose children had IEPs were significantly more dissatisfied than other parents for 10 of the 12 elements (dissatisfaction levels for the other two, school facilities and school safety, were not statistically significant). Unmarried parents were significantly more dissatisfied than married parents. Dissatisfaction did not vary by level of school (elementary, middle and high school), or by student gender. Appendix Tables A-2-2 through A-2-5 show these results.

Figure 7. Parent dissatisfaction, by whether their child’s current school at time of application was in need of improvement



SINI = school in need of improvement.

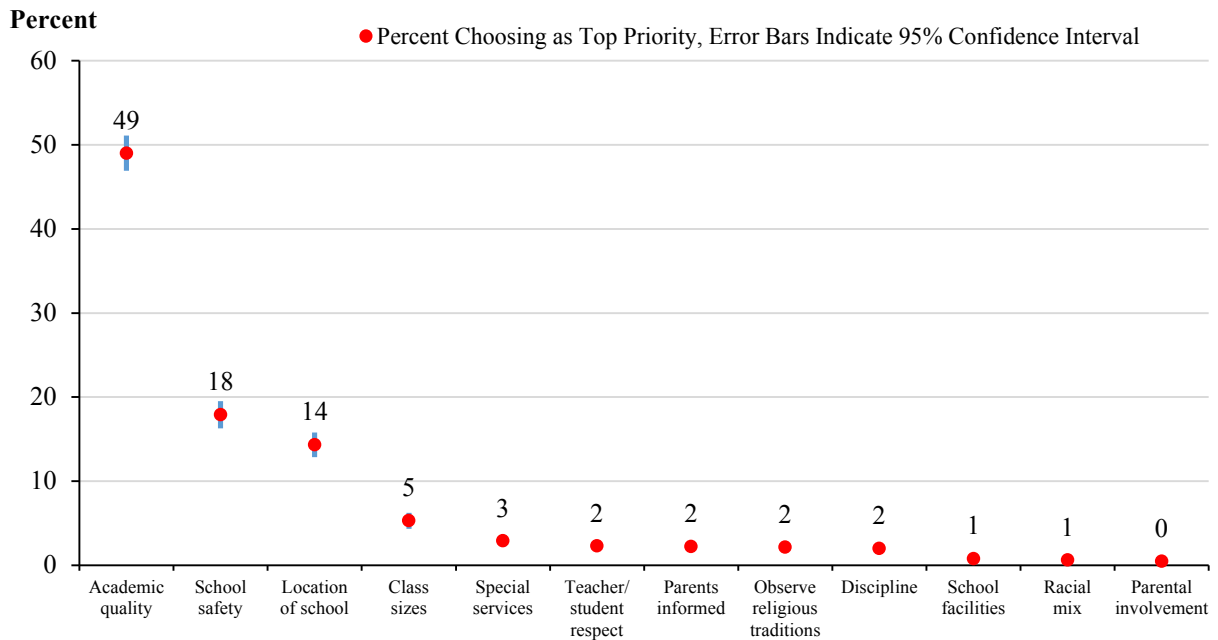
SOURCE: Application forms for 2,034 students who parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data were missing for 280 applicants. The analysis excludes private schools and pre-schools. Neither has a SINI status. Bars show the percentage of parents who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the aspect of the school when it was in need of improvement. For all elements except special services, parents were excluded if they did not respond to any of the remaining 11 items. Of the 1,754 students, 1,155 had valid responses to the question related to special services.

Top Priorities for Parents Choosing New Schools

- Academic quality, safety, and location were top priorities for parents when choosing a new school.

The application form asked parents to identify their top three priorities in choosing a private school for their child, using the same set of items that was used to rate satisfaction with their child’s current school. The top priority for nearly half of parents (49 percent) was academic quality (see Figure 8). As with dissatisfaction, the figure shows the percentage of parents along with the 95 percent confidence interval for that percentage. The lack of overlap of the confidence intervals means academic quality is more often a top priority than any of the other 11 elements. Parents chose school safety (18 percent) and location (14 percent) as the next most commonly cited top priorities (this difference is not statistically significant). Together, these two accounted for less than the proportion of parents whose top priority was academic quality (32 versus 49 percent). None of the other nine priorities was identified as a top priority by more than 5 percent of parents. Appendix 3 provides the numbers related to parents’ top priority, along with results of statistical tests of differences in the top priority for different groups of parents.

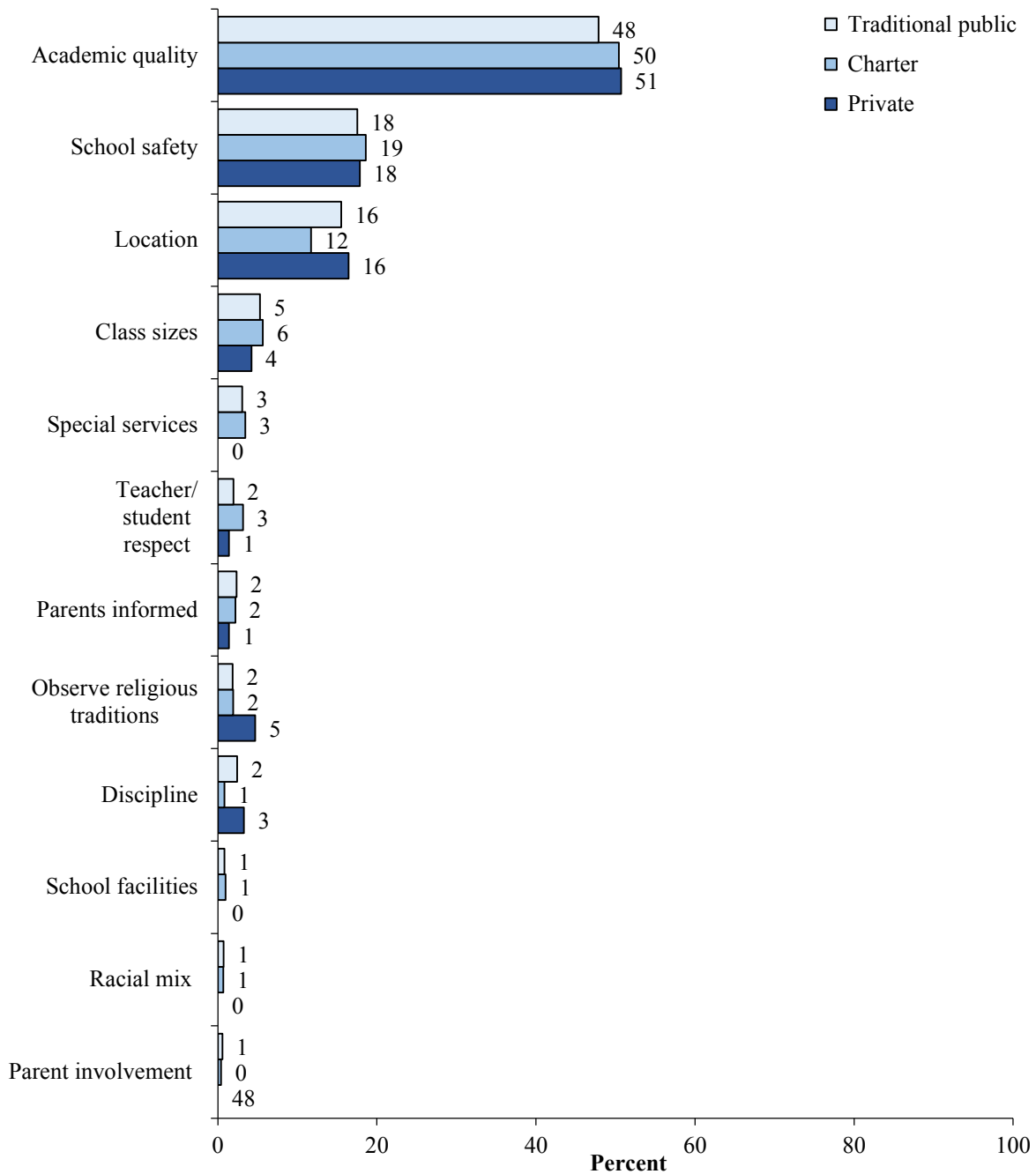
Figure 8. Top priorities for a new school cited by parents



SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011-2013. Data are missing for 97 applicants.

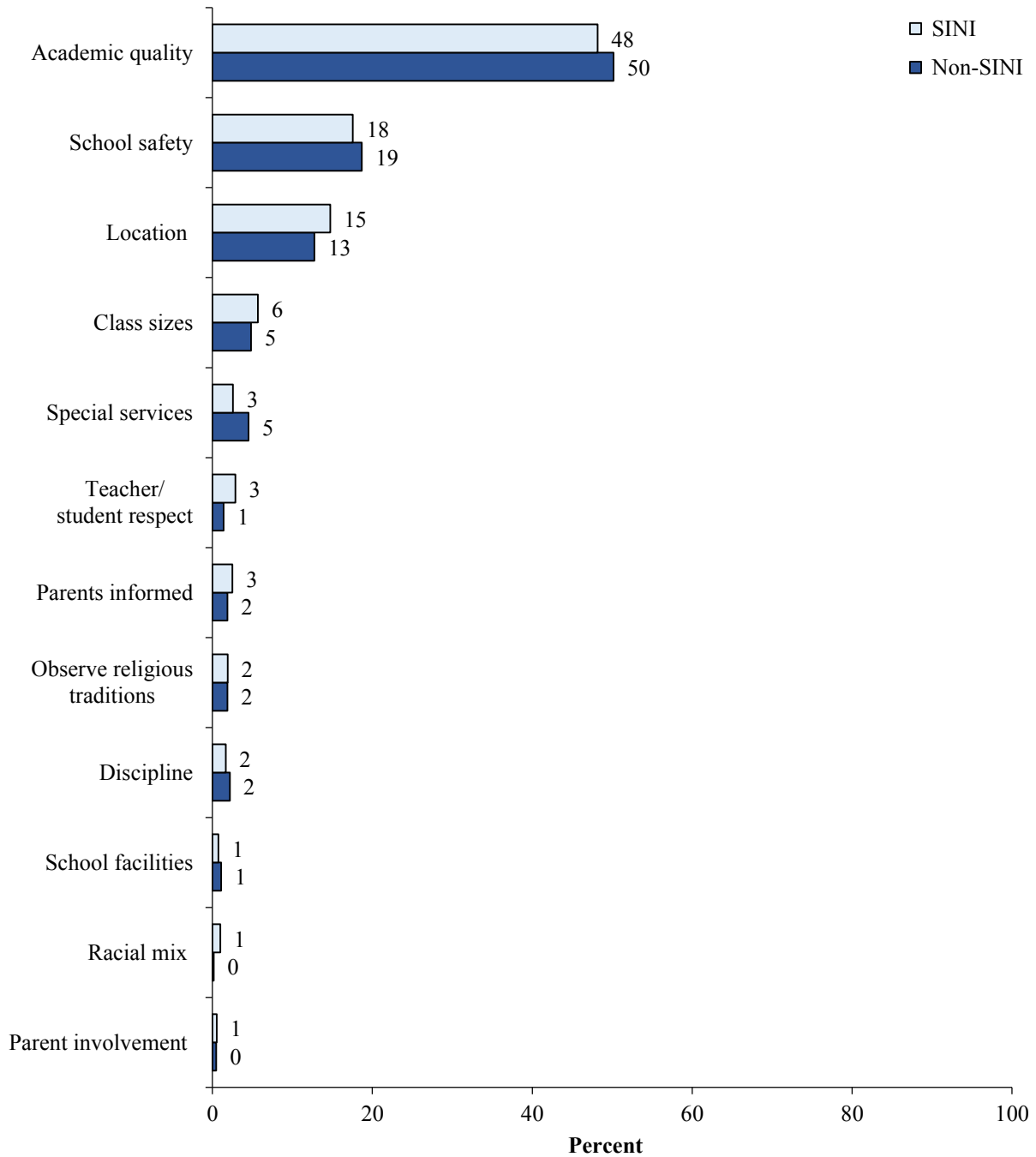
The type of school a child attended was not associated with parent priorities for a new school (see Figure 9). Academic quality, safety, and location were the three most common top priorities regardless of school type, and the other nine items were priorities for 5 percent of parents or less. Priorities were unrelated to a school's SINI status (see Figure 10).

Figure 9. Top priorities for a new school cited by parents, by type of school currently attended at time of application



SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 97 applicants.

Figure 10. Top priorities for a new school cited by parents, by whether their child's current school at time of application was in need of improvement



SINI = school in need of improvement.

SOURCE: Application forms for 2,034 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 76 applicants. The analysis excludes private schools and pre-schools. Neither has a SINI status.

Parent Priorities for a New School and Their Sources of Dissatisfaction with Their Child's Current School at Time of Application

The low levels of parental dissatisfaction with schools overall leads to a question. If parents mostly are satisfied with their child's current school, why do they apply for a private school voucher to move their child to a different school? One possibility is that the high levels of overall satisfaction are masking high levels of dissatisfaction with elements that a parent views as his or her top priority for a school. For example, a parent may view academic quality as a top priority and may be dissatisfied with the academic quality of his/her child's current school, but that parent might be quite satisfied with items that were not top priorities, leading to high overall levels of satisfaction as shown in Figure 1. If this hypothesis were true, the data would show that priorities and dissatisfaction are positively related.

An alternative hypothesis is that parents may be satisfied with the academic quality of their child's current school, yet also view it as a priority for a new school. Under this hypothesis, the data would show satisfaction and priorities to be positively related. The analysis explored this relationship by looking at how often an element was both a top priority for a parent and one with which he/she was dissatisfied.

- **Most parents were satisfied with the aspect of their current school at time of application that was their top priority for a new school.**

Most parents (66 percent) were satisfied with the elements of their child's school they viewed as top priorities for a new school. Table 1 shows parents' dissatisfaction with their children's current school at time of application on their top priority for a new school. For each of the 12 elements, the table reports the percent of parents who indicated that an element was their top priority, and in the right column, the percent of those parents who reported they were very dissatisfied with that element. With 3 exceptions, less than a quarter of the parents who indicated an item as top priority for a new school were also very dissatisfied with that aspect of their current school. For example, 49 percent of parents indicated that academic quality was their top priority, but only 13 percent of those parents said they were very dissatisfied with the academic quality of their child's current school.

The three exceptions noted above were in the areas of services for students with special needs, the observance of religious traditions, and the racial mix of the school. The table shows that small percentages of parents viewed elements such as services for students with special needs, observing religious traditions, and racial mix as top priorities. These parents were more often very dissatisfied with these elements of their child's current school at time of application than were parents who selected other elements as their top priority for a new school.⁹ For example, only 2.2 percent of parents viewed observing religious traditions as their top priority for a new school, and 43 percent of those parents were very dissatisfied with their child's current school for observing religious traditions.

Combining the two findings, most parents were satisfied with aspects of their current school at time of application that were their top priorities for a new school. A small group of parents viewed special services, racial mix, and observing religious traditions as sources of dissatisfaction with the current school and as top priorities for a new school. These results show little support for the hypothesis that parents applying to the OSP program were highly dissatisfied with their child's current school on elements they indicated were their top priorities in choosing a new school.

Table 1. Parent top priority and dissatisfaction, by element

Aspect	Number choosing feature as top priority	Percent choosing feature as top priority	Percent choosing feature as top priority who were very dissatisfied with that feature
Location	311	14.3	15.2
School safety	389	17.9	14.4
Class sizes	115	5.3	22.3
School facilities	17	0.8	6.3
Teacher/student respect	50	2.3	17.4
Parents informed	48	2.2	17.8
Observe religious traditions	47	2.2	43.0
Parental involvement	10	0.5	20.0
Discipline	43	2.0	23.1
Academic quality	1,064	49.0	13.3
Racial mix	14	0.6	38.5
Special services	63	2.9	40.7

SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011–13. Data are missing for 97 applicants.

Limitations

Looking at parent responses on the OSP application form is useful for understanding sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction and priorities for a new school. It needs to be emphasized that these parents may differ from an average parent whose child attends a traditional public school, a charter school, or a private school in DC. In particular, with nearly a hundred charter schools enrolling *more than 40 percent* of public school students, DC parents now have many options for exercising choice. Parents who want their child to attend a private school rather than a traditional public school or charter school may represent a narrow and shrinking segment of parents. Nonetheless, knowing more about elements of schools these parents are dissatisfied with and what they are looking for in a new school provides useful information. When combined with what will be learned in future reports about effects of vouchers on a variety of outcomes, a fuller picture will emerge about the potential for vouchers to improve education for low-income students in the District of Columbia.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Section 3 of the SOAR act states that vouchers should be provided to DC students until “the public schools in the District of Columbia have adequately addressed shortfalls in health, safety, and security, and the students in the District of Columbia are testing in mathematics and reading at or above the national average.”

² OSSE reports that 86 percent of three and four year olds in the district, 12,426 children, were enrolled in pre-K programs (Office of the State Superintendent, 2014). About a quarter of that enrollment, 3,106 children, was funded by Head Start, whose largest grantee in the district is the District of Columbia Public Schools (Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2014).

³ In 2011, the OSP accepted applications from 235 private school students. In later years, the program did not accept applications from private school students. Of those 235 students, 12 had previously received vouchers.

⁴ See KPMG (no date).

⁵ Because private schools may deliver special education services differently than public schools, we also conducted the analysis in Figure 4 excluding parents whose child was in a private school at the time of application. Results were very similar. A parent was considered to be married if the parent indicated on the program application form that he or she was married. Adults living in the same household are not considered married.

⁶ Appendix 2 provides tables for parental dissatisfaction, results of statistical tests of differences between groups of parents, and results of tests that dissatisfaction levels differed between the 12 elements.

⁷ To facilitate comparisons, this analysis used the sample of parents who answered all 12 questions about level of dissatisfaction. The same differences between subgroups are evident if the analysis uses the sample of parents who answered any of the 12 questions. See Table A-2-2 in Appendix 2.

⁸ The wording of some elements creates ambiguity about how parents interpreted them. For example, the survey asks parents to express how satisfied they are with the school's ‘discipline,’ but the question does not ask whether the parent believed discipline was too strict or too lax. Not all elements were ambiguous. For example, it seems likely that parents were dissatisfied because class sizes were too large rather than too small. Similarly, it seems likely that parents were dissatisfied with religious observation being too infrequent, because most parents seeking OSP vouchers had children currently attending public schools in which observing religious traditions is likely to be infrequent.

⁹ The analyses were also run looking at parents who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with a feature. The same pattern is evident—parents whose top priority for a new school were observing religious traditions, serving special needs, and wanting racial mix were the most dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Appendix 1: Parent Grades For Current Schools at Time of Application

The table below shows the letter grades given by parents overall and by subgroups. See the table footnotes for an explanation of the codes indicating results of statistical tests

Table A-1. Grades parents gave to their child's current school at time of application, by school, student, and parent characteristics

	Percentage of parents who gave school grade			Number of observations ^d
	A or B	C	D or F	
All	57.4 ^c	27.7	14.9	2,117
Type of school				
Traditional public ^b	55.2 ^c	28.3	16.5	1,158
Charter ^a	49.7	33.8	16.6	725
Private	92.3 ^c	6.0	1.7	234
In need of improvement ^a	49.1	32.4	18.5	1,311
Not in need of improvement	62.2 ^c	25.8	11.9	572
Student characteristics				
Male	57.0 ^c	28.1	14.9	1,079
Female	57.8 ^c	27.4	14.8	1,038
Entering grade level				
K ^{a,b,c}	70.7 ^c	21.8	7.5	280
1-5 ^b	55.8 ^c	29.7	14.5	1,040
6-8	55.6 ^c	28.2	16.2	511
9-12	53.5	25.5	21.0	286
Has an IEP ^a	40.7 ^c	36.4	22.9	275
Does not have an IEP	59.8 ^c	26.5	13.7	1,830
Parent characteristics				
Married ^a	67.9 ^c	18.4	13.7	424
Not married	54.8 ^c	30.1	15.2	1,690
Attended any college	55.5 ^c	29.6	14.9	1,270
Not attended any college	60.0 ^c	25.0	15.0	835

IEP = individualized education plan.

^aDistribution of grades between this row and the next row (reading downward) is significantly different ($p < .05$), based on a chi-squared test for the groups of grades shown in the table.

^bDistribution of grades between the first and third row is significantly different ($p < .05$), based on a chi-squared test for the three groups of grades shown in the table.

^cProportion of 'A-B' grades and 'C-D-F' grades is significantly different ($p < .05$), based on a t test.

^dThe sample excludes cases with missing data on grades assigned with missing rate between 0.43% and 15.38% across rows as well as cases with missing data on the characteristic variables.

Appendix 2: Parent Dissatisfaction With Current Schools at Time of Application

Parents responded at high rates to questions about their level of dissatisfaction to 11 of the 12 elements. The exception was “special services,” which many parents did not respond to. In some cases, parents wrote “not applicable” to the item. This differential response rate created some challenges for reporting results. To the extent possible, the goal was to compare dissatisfaction across school elements for the same sample of parents. The procedure that was adopted is as follows.

Data from 2,268 parents were collected from the application form. After excluding 293 cases (13 percent) with missing data for satisfaction with at least one of the school aspects except for services for students with special needs, the sample was 1,975 parents, including parents of 1,083 traditional public, 671 charter, and 221 private school students. Percentages and chi-squared tests of satisfaction level versus the characteristic variables for 12 items were computed based on the 1,975 cases. Of these 1,975 cases, a subset of 1,350 parents who had valid response to the question about services for students with special needs was used for the analysis for that item as well. This same subsample was used for overall *F* tests of the hypothesis that parents were equally dissatisfied with all 12 elements of their child’s current school.

Table A-2-1. Dissatisfaction with elements of child’s current school at time of application, by type of school

Aspect	Percent very dissatisfied or dissatisfied			
	Overall	Traditional public ^{a,b}	Charter	Private
Observe religious traditions	44.1	46.5 ^{d,e}	52.5 ^f	6.8
Class sizes	40.3	45.7 ^e	42.6 ^f	6.8
Academic quality	38.2	42.4 ^e	41.9 ^f	6.3
Racial mix	34.5	33.8 ^{d,e}	42.2 ^f	14.5
Discipline	34.2	36.9 ^e	38.6 ^f	7.7
Special services ^g	34.2	35.1 ^{d,e}	42.6 ^f	12.3
Parents informed	29.2	31.0 ^e	32.9 ^f	5.9
Teacher/student respect	28.9	31.4 ^e	32.0 ^f	6.3
School facilities	29.2	31.5 ^e	32.3 ^f	8.1
School safety	26.5	28.8 ^e	30.1 ^f	4.1
Parental involvement	25.8	29.2 ^e	26.8 ^f	5.9
Location	21.6	22.0 ^{d,e}	26.2 ^f	5.9
Total number	1,975	1,083	671	221

^a The overall set is statistically different for traditional public and charter schools ($p < .05$).

^b The overall set is statistically different for traditional public and private schools ($p < .05$).

^c The overall set is statistically different for charter and private schools ($p < .05$).

^d The percentage for traditional public schools is statistically different from the percentage for charter schools ($p < .05$).

^e The percentage for traditional public schools is statistically different from the percentage for private schools ($p < .05$).

^f The percentage for charter schools is statistically different from the percentage for private schools ($p < .05$).

^g The sample is parents of 737 traditional public, 418 charter, and 195 private school students.

NOTE: Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are six types of tests. Three are *F* tests of overall differences in dissatisfaction across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and three are chi-squared tests for differences across pairs of parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their level of dissatisfaction for each of the school elements apart from special services. See footnote g for the sample size after dropping parents who did not respond to the special services question.

As a sensitivity check, Table A-2-2 below repeats the above calculations but this time uses the maximum sample available for each question. Patterns of significance are unchanged.

Table A-2-2. Dissatisfaction with elements of child’s current school at time of application, by type of school (using total nonmissing sample for each element)

Aspect	Non-missing N	Overall	Traditional public ^{a,b}	Charter ^c	Private
Observe religious traditions ...	2,087	44.1	46.8 ^{d,e}	51.8 ^f	6.6
Class sizes	2,126	41.2	46.3 ^e	43.8 ^f	7.3
Academic quality	2,116	38.3	42.0 ^e	42.2 ^f	7.3
Racial mix	2,119	34.8	33.9 ^{d,e}	42.6 ^f	14.7
Discipline	2,119	34.5	37.5 ^e	38.2 ^f	7.9
Special services ^g	1,445	34.3	35.3 ^{d,e}	42.5 ^f	11.9
Parents informed	2,125	29.7	31.5 ^e	34.3 ^f	6.5
Teacher/student respect	2,126	29.2	31.8 ^e	32.1 ^f	6.9
School facilities	2,120	29.2	31.2 ^e	32.4 ^f	9.1
School safety	2,128	26.7	29.3 ^e	29.8 ^f	4.3
Parental involvement	2,122	26.4	29.2 ^e	28.2 ^f	6.5
Location	2,133	21.9	21.9 ^{d,e}	26.7 ^f	6.5
Maximum total (including missing)		2,268	1,279	754	235

^a The overall set is statistically different for traditional public and charter schools ($p < 0.05$).

^b The overall set is statistically different for traditional public and private schools ($p < 0.05$).

^c The overall set is statistically different for charter and private schools ($p < 0.05$).

^d The percentage for traditional public schools is statistically different from the percentage for charter schools ($p < 0.05$).

^e The percentage for traditional public schools is statistically different from the percentage for private schools ($p < 0.05$).

^f The percentage for charter schools is statistically different from the percentage for private schools ($p < 0.05$).

NOTE: This table uses all nonmissing data for each element. The previous table excluded parents who did not respond to any of the 12 elements. Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are six types of tests. Three are *F* tests of overall differences in dissatisfaction across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and three are chi-squared tests for differences across pairs of parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their level of dissatisfaction for each of the school elements apart from special services.

Table A-2-3. Dissatisfaction with elements of child's current school at time of application, by SINI status (public K–12 schools only)

Aspect	Percent very dissatisfied or dissatisfied	
	SINI ^a	Non-SINI
Observe religious traditions	52.4 ^b	40.5
Class sizes	48.6 ^b	35.3
Academic quality	47.2 ^b	31.1
Racial mix	41.6 ^b	26.6
Discipline	41.8 ^b	28.1
Special services ^c	42.3 ^b	29.5
Parents informed	34.3 ^b	26.1
Teacher/student respect	35.0 ^b	24.2
School facilities	34.5 ^b	25.9
School safety	33.1 ^b	20.7
Parental involvement	30.5 ^b	23.3
Location	24.5	21.6
Total number	1,213	541

SINI = school in need of improvement.

^a The overall set is statistically different for SINI and non-SINI schools ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for SINI schools is statistically different from the percentage for non-SINI schools ($p < .05$).

^c The sample is parents of 755 SINI school students and 400 non-SINI school students.

NOTE: Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an F test of overall differences in dissatisfaction across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and the other is a chi-squared test for differences across parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their level of dissatisfaction for each of the school elements apart from special services. See footnote c for the sample size after further reducing this sample by dropping parents who did not respond to the special services question.

Table A-2-4. Dissatisfaction with elements of child's current school at time of application, by student gender

Aspect	Percent very dissatisfied or dissatisfied	
	Male ^a	Female
Observe religious traditions	43.5	44.6
Class sizes	40.5	40.2
Academic quality	38.0	38.4
Racial mix	32.2 ^b	36.9
Discipline	34.1	34.3
Special services ^c	33.0	35.4
Parents informed	28.0	29.8
Teacher/student respect	28.3	29.4
School facilities	29.5	28.9
School safety	26.4	26.6
Parental involvement	25.6	25.9
Location	21.4	21.9
Total number	1,011	964

^a The overall set is statistically different for male and female students ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for male students is statistically different from the percentage for female students ($p < .05$).

^c The sample is parents of 689 male students and 661 female students.

NOTE: Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an F test of overall differences in dissatisfaction across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and the other is a chi-squared test for differences across parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their level of dissatisfaction for each of the school elements apart from special services. See footnote c for the sample size after further reducing this sample by dropping parents who did not respond to the special services question.

Table A-2-5. Dissatisfaction with elements of child’s current school at time of application, by entering grade level

Aspect	Percent very dissatisfied or dissatisfied		
	K-5 ^{a,b}	6-8 ^c	9-12
Observe religious traditions	43.8	43.6	46.3
Class sizes	40.7	39.6	39.7
Academic quality	37.9	38.8	38.1
Racial mix	32.8 ^c	36.1	39.7
Discipline	32.5 ^c	35.7	39.7
Special services ^g	32.4	35.8	39.1
Parents informed	26.5 ^c	30.5	37.4
Teacher/student respect	26.0 ^{d,e}	33.4	33.9
School facilities	26.9 ^c	29.9 ^f	38.5
School safety	25.6	26.4	31.1
Parental involvement	24.6	27.4	28.4
Location	19.6 ^c	22.6 ^f	29.6
Total number	1,236	482	257

^a The overall set is statistically different for grades K-5 and grades 6-8 ($p < .05$).

^b The overall set is statistically different for grades K-5 and grades 9-12 ($p < .05$).

^c The overall set is statistically different for grades 6-8 and grades 9-12 ($p < .05$).

^d The percentage for grades K-5 is statistically different from the percentage for grades 6-8 ($p < .05$).

^e The percentage for grades K-5 is statistically different from the percentage for grades 9-12 ($p < .05$).

^f The percentage for grades 6-8 is statistically different from the percentage for grades 9-12 ($p < .05$).

^g The sample is parents of 834 students in grades K-5, 332 students in grades 6-8, and 184 students in grades 9-12.

NOTE: Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are six types of tests. Three are *F* tests of overall differences in dissatisfaction across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and three are chi-squared tests for differences across pairs of parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their level of dissatisfaction for each of the school elements apart from special services. See footnote g for the sample size after further reducing this sample by dropping parents who did not respond to the special services question.

Table A-2-6. Dissatisfaction with elements of child's current school at time of application, by student IEP status

Aspect	Percent very dissatisfied or dissatisfied	
	IEP ^a	Non-IEP
Observe religious traditions	54.0 ^b	42.7
Class sizes	50.4 ^b	38.9
Academic quality	50.8 ^b	36.4
Racial mix	43.2 ^b	33.2
Discipline	44.4 ^b	32.8
Special services ^c	53.3 ^b	30.0
Parents informed	38.0 ^b	27.4
Teacher/student respect	39.2 ^b	27.4
School facilities	34.4	28.4
School safety	31.6	25.7
Parental involvement	31.6 ^b	24.9
Location	29.6 ^b	20.4
Total number	250	1,713

^a The overall set is statistically different for IEP and students without disabilities ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for IEP students is statistically different from the percentage for students without disabilities ($p < .05$).

^c The sample is parents of 244 IEP students and 1,095 non-IEP students.

NOTE: Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an *F* test of overall differences in dissatisfaction across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and the other is a chi-squared test for differences across parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their level of dissatisfaction for each of the school elements apart from special services. See footnote c for the sample size after further reducing this sample by dropping parents who did not respond to the special services question.

Table A-2-7. Dissatisfaction with elements of child's current school at time of application, by parent's marital status

Aspect	Percent very dissatisfied or dissatisfied	
	Married ^a	Unmarried
Observe religious traditions	44.1	44.1
Class sizes	32.2 ^b	42.4
Academic quality	34.7	39.1
Racial mix	29.9 ^b	35.4
Discipline	32.2	34.8
Special services ^c	25.4 ^b	36.2
Parents informed	22.2 ^b	30.6
Teacher/student respect	25.4 ^b	29.7
School facilities	28.4	29.4
School safety	21.5 ^b	27.8
Parental involvement	23.9	26.9
Location	15.5 ^b	23.2
Total number	401	1,571

^a The overall set is statistically different for married and unmarried parents ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for married parents is statistically different from the percentage for unmarried parents ($p < .05$).

^c The sample is 256 married parents and 1,092 unmarried parents.

NOTE: Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an *F* test of overall differences in dissatisfaction across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and the other is a chi-squared test for differences across parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their level of dissatisfaction for each of the school elements apart from special services. See footnote c for the sample size after further reducing this sample by dropping parents who did not respond to the special services question.

Table A-2-8. Dissatisfaction with elements of child’s current school at time of application, by parent’s education status

Aspect	Percent very dissatisfied or dissatisfied	
	Attended college ^a	Did not attend college
Observe religious traditions	45.0	42.9
Class sizes	41.0	39.5
Academic quality	40.4 ^b	35.1
Racial mix	39.2 ^b	27.4
Discipline	34.9	33.5
Special services ^c	37.2 ^b	29.8
Parents informed	28.3	30.0
Teacher/student respect	29.6	27.8
School facilities	29.7	28.6
School safety	24.9 ^b	29.1
Parental involvement	27.0	24.0
Location	19.5 ^b	24.7
Total number	1,193	770

^a The overall set is statistically different for parents who attended college and parents who didn’t ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for parents who attended college is statistically different from the percentage for parents who didn’t ($p < .05$).

^c The sample is 793 parents who attended college and 547 parents who did not attend college.

NOTE: Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an *F* test of overall differences in dissatisfaction across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and the other is a chi-squared test for differences across parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their level of dissatisfaction for each of the school elements apart from special services. See footnote c for the sample size after further reducing this sample by dropping parents who did not respond to the special services question.

Appendix 3: Data on Parents' Top Priorities in Choosing a New School

Table A-3-1. Top priority in choosing a school, by type of school

Aspect	Percent of parents who cited factor as top priority			
	Overall	Traditional public ^{a,b}	Charter ^c	Private
Academic quality	49.0	47.9	50.4	50.7
School safety	17.9	17.5	18.6	17.8
Location	14.3	15.5 ^d	11.7	16.4
Class sizes	5.3	5.3	5.7	4.2
Special services	2.9	3.1 ^e	3.4 ^f	0.0
Discipline	2.3	2.4 ^d	0.8 ^f	0.0
Parents informed	2.2	2.4	2.2	1.4
Teacher/student respect	2.2	2.0	3.2	1.4
Observe religious traditions	2.0	1.9 ^e	1.9 ^f	4.7
School facilities	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.0
Racial mix	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.0
Parental involvement	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.0
Total number		1,232	726	213

^a The overall set is statistically different for traditional public and charter schools ($p < .05$).

^b The overall set is statistically different for traditional public and private schools ($p < .05$).

^c The overall set is statistically different for charter and private schools ($p < .05$).

^d The percentage for traditional public schools is statistically different from the percentage for charter schools ($p < .05$).

^e The percentage for traditional public schools is statistically different from the percentage for private schools ($p < .05$).

^f The percentage for charter schools is statistically different from the percentage for private schools ($p < .05$).

NOTE: School elements are ranked by % top priority in descending order for first column. Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are six types of tests. Three are F tests of overall differences in top priority across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and three are chi-squared tests for differences across pairs of parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their top priority for each of the school elements.

Table A-3-2. Top priority in choosing a school, by school’s SINI status

Aspect	Percent of parents who cited factor as top priority	
	SINI ^a	Non-SINI
Academic quality	48.2	50.2
School safety	17.6	18.7
Location	14.7	12.8
Class sizes	5.7	4.8
Teacher/student respect	2.9 ^b	1.4
Special services	2.6 ^b	4.5
Parents informed	2.5	1.9
Observe religious traditions	1.9	1.9
Discipline	1.7	2.2
Racial mix	1.0 ^b	0.2
School facilities	0.8	1.1
Parental involvement	0.5	0.5
Total number	1,316	642

SINI = school in need of improvement.

^a The overall set is statistically different for SINI and non-SINI schools ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for SINI schools is statistically different from the percentage for non-SINI schools ($p < .05$).

NOTE: School elements are ranked by % top priority in descending order for first column. Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an *F* test of overall differences in top priority across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and one is a chi-squared tests for differences across parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their top priority for each of the school elements.

Table A-3-3. Top priority in choosing a school, by student gender

Aspect	Percent of parents who cited factor as top priority	
	Male ^a	Female
Academic quality	49.2	48.8
School safety	17.5	18.3
Location	14.2	14.5
Class sizes	5.3	5.3
Special services	3.3	2.5
Teacher/student respect	2.4	2.3
Discipline	2.3	1.7
Parents informed	2.3	2.2
Observe religious traditions	2.2	2.2
School facilities	0.9	0.7
Racial mix	0.3 ^b	1.0
Parental involvement	0.3	0.7
Total number	1,106	1,065

^a The overall set is statistically different for male and female students ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for male students is statistically different from the percentage for female students ($p < .05$).

NOTE: School elements are ranked by % top priority in descending order for first column. Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an *F* test of overall differences in top priority across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and one is a chi-squared tests for differences across pairs of parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their top priority for each of the school elements.

Table A-3-4. Top priority in choosing a school, by entering grade level

Aspect	Percent of parents who cited factor as top priority		
	K-5 ^a	6-8	9-12
Academic quality	49.8	46.0	50.6
School safety	18.4	18.5	14.3
Location	13.7	16.1	14.3
Class sizes	4.9	6.8	4.8
Discipline	2.4	1.2	1.5
Teacher/student respect	2.4	1.6	3.3
Special services	2.3 ^b	3.4	5.1
Parents informed	2.3	1.8	2.6
Observe religious traditions	2.2	2.2	1.8
Racial mix	0.7	0.8	0.0
School facilities	0.6	1.0	1.5
Parental involvement	0.4	0.6	0.4
Total number	1,396	502	273

^a The overall set is statistically different for grades K-5 and grades 9-12 ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for grades K-5 is statistically different from the percentage for grades 9-12 ($p < .05$).

NOTE: School elements are ranked by % top priority in descending order for first column. Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are six types of tests. Three are *F* tests of overall differences in top priority across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and three are chi-squared tests for differences across pairs of parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their top priority for each of the school elements.

Table A-3-5. Top priority in choosing a school, by student IEP status

Aspect	Percent of parents who cited factor as top priority	
	IEP ^a	No IEP
Academic quality	33.3 ^b	51.4
Special services	19.5 ^b	0.6
School safety	16.5	18.0
Location	14.6	14.2
Class sizes	7.5	5.0
Teacher-student respect	2.6	2.2
Observe religious traditions	2.3	2.2
Parents informed	2.3	2.2
Discipline	1.1	2.1
Racial mix	0.4	0.7
School facilities	0.0	0.9
Parental involvement	0.0	0.5
Total number	267	1,892

IEP = individualized education plan.

^a The overall set is statistically different for IEP and students without disabilities ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for IEP students is statistically different from the percentage for students without disabilities ($p < .05$).

NOTE: School elements are ranked by % top priority in descending order for first column. Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an *F* test of overall differences in top priority across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and one is a chi-squared tests for differences across parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their top priority for each of the school elements.

Table A-3-6. Top priority in choosing a school, by parent’s marital status

Aspect	Percent of parents who cited factor as top priority	
	Married ^a	Unmarried
Academic quality	48.0	49.4
Location	16.1	13.8
School safety	15.9	18.4
Discipline	3.7 ^b	1.5
Observe religious traditions	3.5 ^b	1.8
Teacher/student respect	3.5	2.0
Class sizes	2.6 ^b	6.0
Parents informed	2.2	2.2
School facilities	1.5 ^b	0.6
Special services	1.1 ^b	3.3
Parental involvement	1.1 ^b	0.3
Racial mix	0.9	0.6
Total number	460	1,708

^a The overall set is statistically different for married and unmarried parents ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for married parents is statistically different from the percentage for unmarried parents ($p < .05$).

NOTE: School elements are ranked by % top priority in descending order for first column. Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an *F* test of overall differences in top priority across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and one is a chi-squared tests for differences across parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their top priority for each of the school elements.

Table A-3-7. Top priority in choosing a school, by parent’s education

Aspect	Percent of parents who cited factor as top priority	
	Attended college ^a	Did not attend college
Academic quality	53.0 ^b	43.2
School safety	16.7	19.7
Location	12.1 ^b	17.6
Class sizes	6.0	4.3
Special services	3.0	2.7
Observe religious traditions	2.5	1.6
Parents informed	2.4	2.0
Teacher/student respect	1.8 ^b	3.1
Discipline	1.2 ^b	3.1
Racial mix	0.5	0.9
Parental involvement	0.5	0.5
School facilities	0.4 ^b	1.4
Total number	1,296	864

^a The overall set is statistically different for parents who attended college and parents who didn’t ($p < .05$).

^b The percentage for parents who attended college is statistically different from the percentage for parents who didn’t ($p < .05$).

NOTE: School elements are ranked by % top priority in descending order for first column. Results of statistical tests are shown from left to right, with significant differences between any pair of columns indicated in the leftmost of the two columns. There are two types of tests. One is an *F* test of overall differences in top priority across the 12 elements for parents from a given group, and one is a chi-squared tests for differences across pairs of parent groups (shown in columns) for a given school element. Total refers to the sample size for parents listing their top priority for each of the school elements.

Appendix 4: Parent Dissatisfaction With Current Schools at Time of Application and Top Priority in Choosing a New School

Table A-4-1. Percent of parents satisfied with the aspect of their current school at time of application that was their top priority for a new school

Satisfaction level	Percent rating satisfaction with aspect of current school
Very satisfied	24.0
Satisfied	42.0
Dissatisfied	20.0
Very dissatisfied	14.0
Total	2,171

SOURCE: Application forms for 2,268 students whose parents applied to the OSP in 2011-13. Data are missing for 97 applicants.



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