THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

June 2021

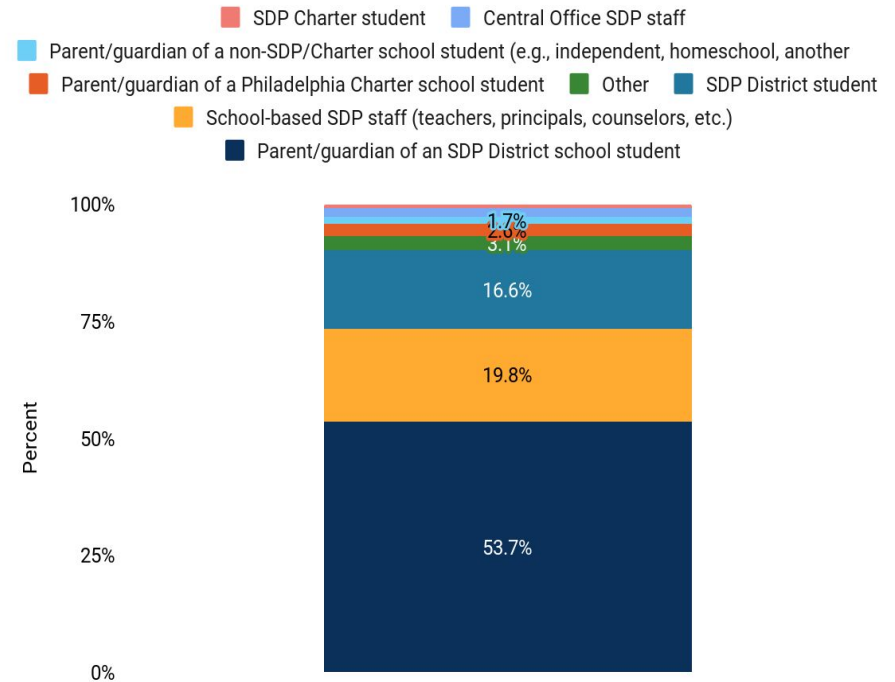# School Selection Process: Survey Results

# Survey Background and Overview

- The survey opened on May 17, 2021 and closed on June 11, 2021.

- It was advertised on the District's website as well as SDP listservs (e.g., principals, counselors)

- It was available in nine languages in addition to English: Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, French, Khmer, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

- The survey asked respondents for feedback on what components should be prioritized in the School Selection Process (SSP) and what changes would improve the application and acceptance process.

- Respondents chose very important, somewhat important, or not important for a list of possible components of the SSP student application.

- Respondents chose would improve, no impact, or would not improve for a list of changes to the SSP student application and acceptance process.

# Who responded to the survey?

# Of the 5,849 survey responses…

- Over half (54%) were from **parents/guardians of SDP District students**, and **school-based SDP staff** made up the second largest group (20%).

- The rest of the respondents were **SDP District students** (17%), **Other** (3%), **parents/guardians of Charter students** (3%), **parents/guardians of non-SDP/Charter students** (2%), **Central Office staff** (2%), and **charter students** (1%).

Note: These were self-reported categories.

Legend:
- SDP Charter student
- Central Office SDP staff
- Parent/guardian of a non-SDP/Charter school student (e.g., independent, homeschool, another
- Parent/guardian of a Philadelphia Charter school student
- Other
- SDP District student
- School-based SDP staff (teachers, principals, counselors, etc.)
- Parent/guardian of an SDP District school student

Stacked bar chart values (bottom to top):
- 53.7%
- 19.8%
- 16.6%
- 3.1%
- 2.0%
- 1.7%

Y-axis: Percent (0% to 100%)

Which of the following best describes you?

# Of the 5,849 survey responses…

Grade was **not applicable** for about a quarter of the respondents, and the highest category of respondents was **seventh grade** (13%).



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kindergarten | First | Second | Third | Fourth | Fifth | Sixth | Seventh | Eighth | Ninth | Tenth | Eleventh | Twelfth | Blank |
| 4.5% | 4.3% | 3.8% | 5.1% | 5.0% | 5.5% | 7.8% | 13.3% | 8.9% | 6.5% | 4.8% | 3.1% | 2.8% | 24.7% |

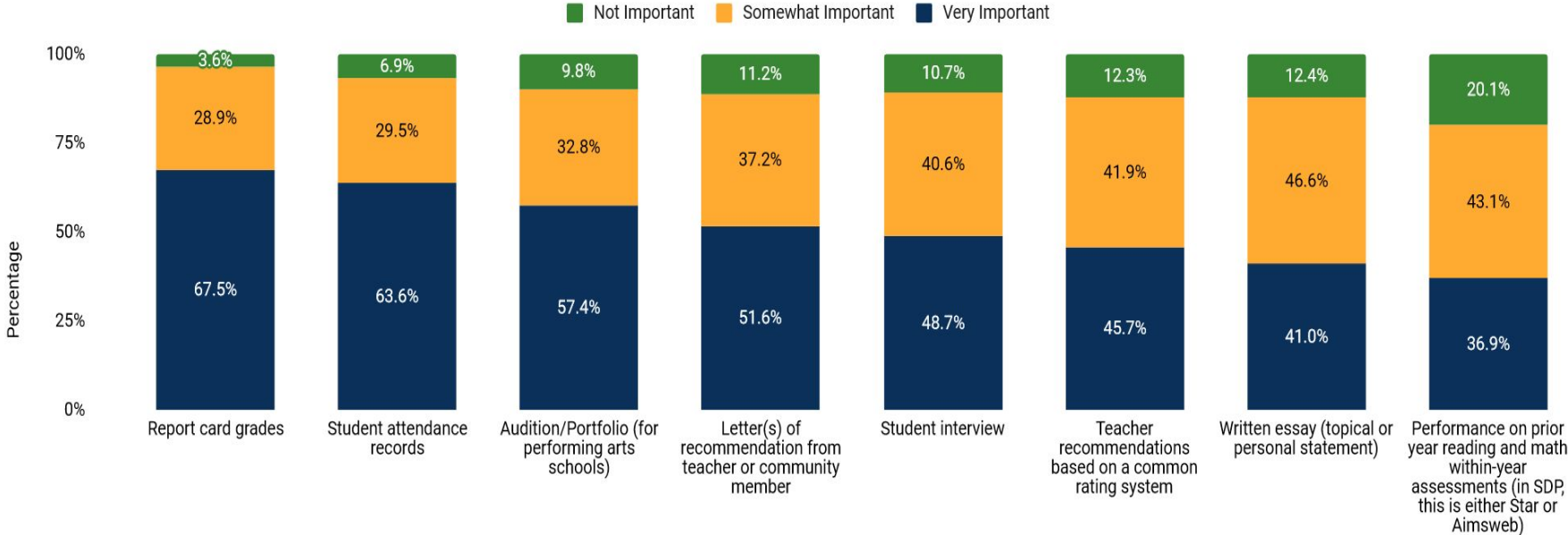Select your, or your child's, grade for the 2020-21 school year
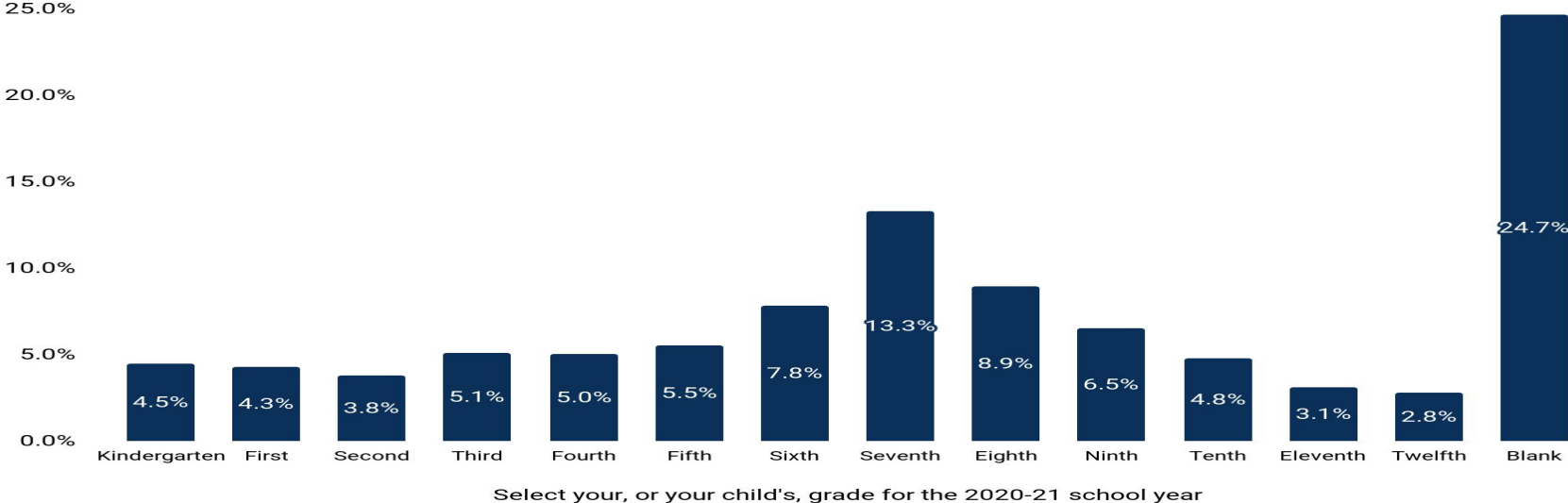
Note: These were self-reported categories.

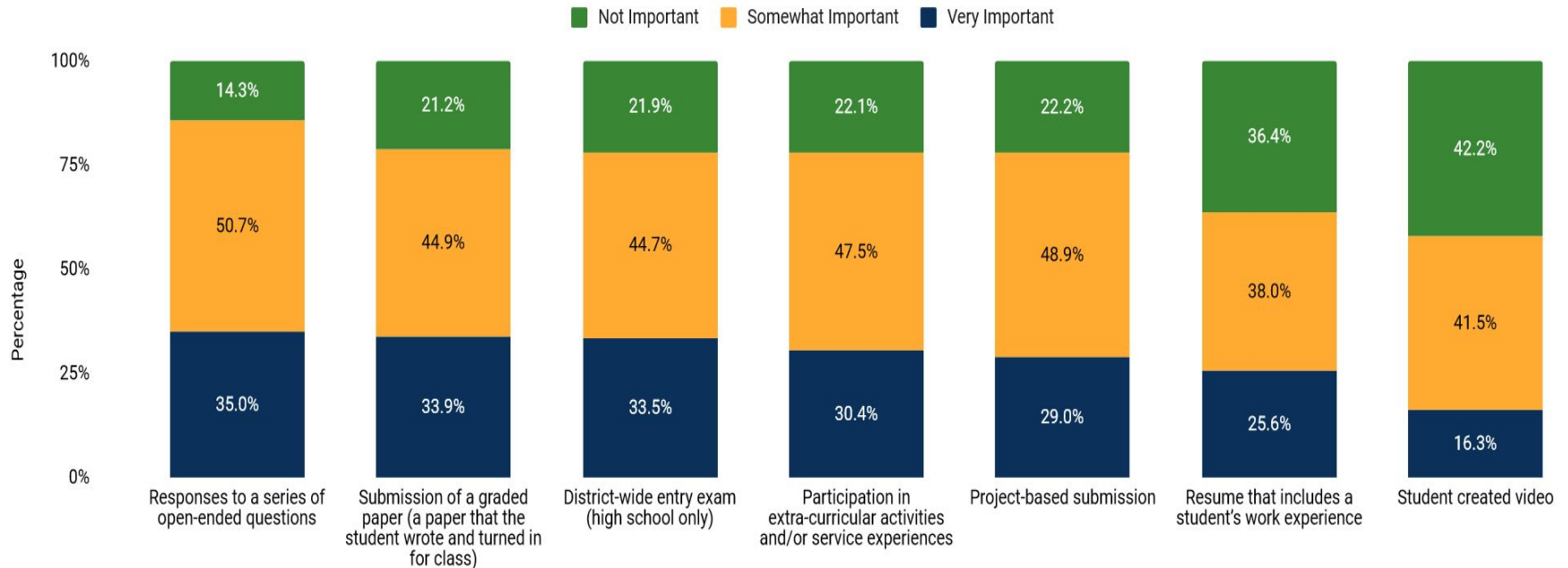# What were the top-ranked possible SSP application components?

# Report card grades, student attendance records, and student audition/portfolio (for performing arts schools) were listed as the top three very important components



Importance rankings for student application components (n=5,828)

Legend: ■ Not Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Very Important

| Component | Not Important | Somewhat Important | Very Important |
|---|---|---|---|
| Report card grades | 3.6% | 28.9% | 67.5% |
| Student attendance records | 6.9% | 29.5% | 63.6% |
| Audition/Portfolio (for performing arts schools) | 9.8% | 32.8% | 57.4% |
| Letter(s) of recommendation from teacher or community member | 11.2% | 37.2% | 51.6% |
| Student interview | 10.7% | 40.6% | 48.7% |
| Teacher recommendations based on a common rating system | 12.3% | 41.9% | 45.7% |
| Written essay (topical or personal statement) | 12.4% | 46.6% | 41.0% |
| Performance on prior year reading and math within-year assessments (in SDP, this is either Star or Aimsweb) | 20.1% | 43.1% | 36.9% |

# Project-based submission, resume, and student created video were listed as the bottom three very important components

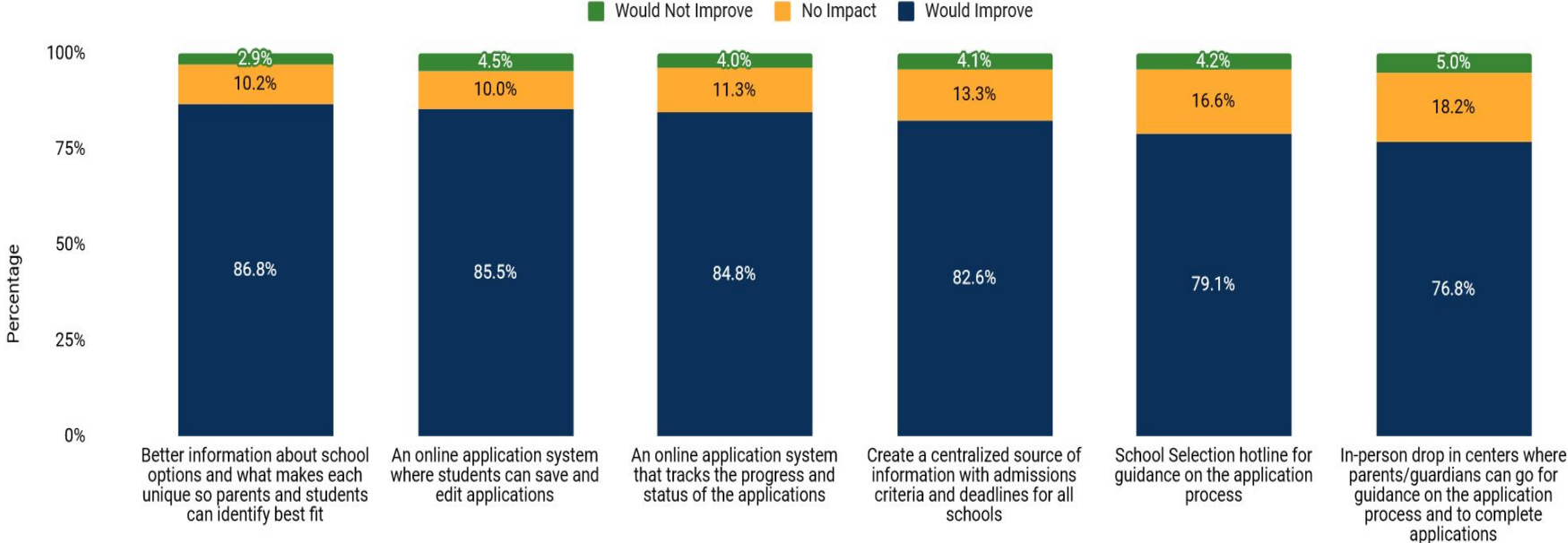Importance rankings for student application components (n=5,828)

Legend: **Not Important** (green) · **Somewhat Important** (orange) · **Very Important** (dark blue)

| Component | Not Important | Somewhat Important | Very Important |
|---|---|---|---|
| Responses to a series of open-ended questions | 14.3% | 50.7% | 35.0% |
| Submission of a graded paper (a paper that the student wrote and turned in for class) | 21.2% | 44.9% | 33.9% |
| District-wide entry exam (high school only) | 21.9% | 44.7% | 33.5% |
| Participation in extra-curricular activities and/or service experiences | 22.1% | 47.5% | 30.4% |
| Project-based submission | 22.2% | 48.9% | 29.0% |
| Resume that includes a student's work experience | 36.4% | 38.0% | 25.6% |
| Student created video | 42.2% | 41.5% | 16.3% |

# What were the top-ranked changes to the SSP student application and acceptance process?

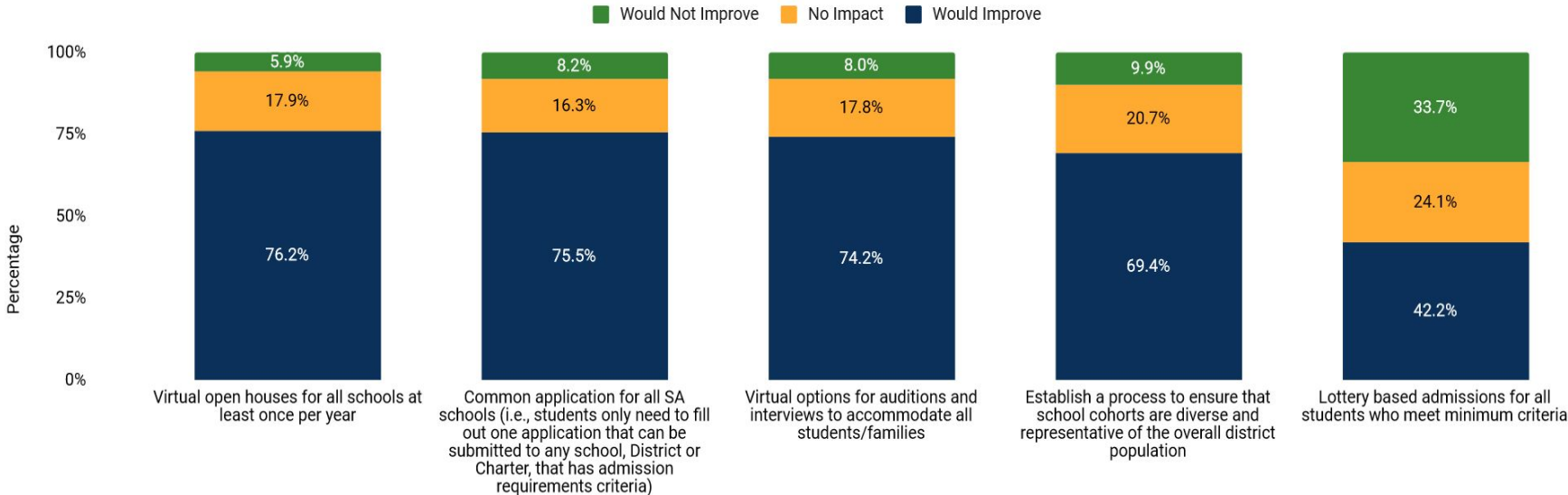# Respondents stated nearly all suggested changes to the SSP would improve the process



Ratings for proposed application process changes (n=5,073)

■ Would Not Improve   ■ No Impact   ■ Would Improve

| | Better information about school options and what makes each unique so parents and students can identify best fit | An online application system where students can save and edit applications | An online application system that tracks the progress and status of the applications | Create a centralized source of information with admissions criteria and deadlines for all schools | School Selection hotline for guidance on the application process | In-person drop in centers where parents/guardians can go for guidance on the application process and to complete applications |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Would Not Improve | 2.9% | 4.5% | 4.0% | 4.1% | 4.2% | 5.0% |
| No Impact | 10.2% | 10.0% | 11.3% | 13.3% | 16.6% | 18.2% |
| Would Improve | 86.8% | 85.5% | 84.8% | 82.6% | 79.1% | 76.8% |

# Respondents were divided about lottery-based admissions for all students who meet minimum criteria



Ratings for proposed application process changes (n=5,073)

■ Would Not Improve    ■ No Impact    ■ Would Improve

| | Virtual open houses for all schools at least once per year | Common application for all SA schools (i.e., students only need to fill out one application that can be submitted to any school, District or Charter, that has admission requirements criteria) | Virtual options for auditions and interviews to accommodate all students/families | Establish a process to ensure that school cohorts are diverse and representative of the overall district population | Lottery based admissions for all students who meet minimum criteria |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Would Not Improve | 5.9% | 8.2% | 8.0% | 9.9% | 33.7% |
| No Impact | 17.9% | 16.3% | 17.8% | 20.7% | 24.1% |
| Would Improve | 76.2% | 75.5% | 74.2% | 69.4% | 42.2% |

# 1,330 respondents left feedback to the first open-ended question

Click here for responses to the first open-ended question: "What other ideas do you have for components that could be included in a student's application?"
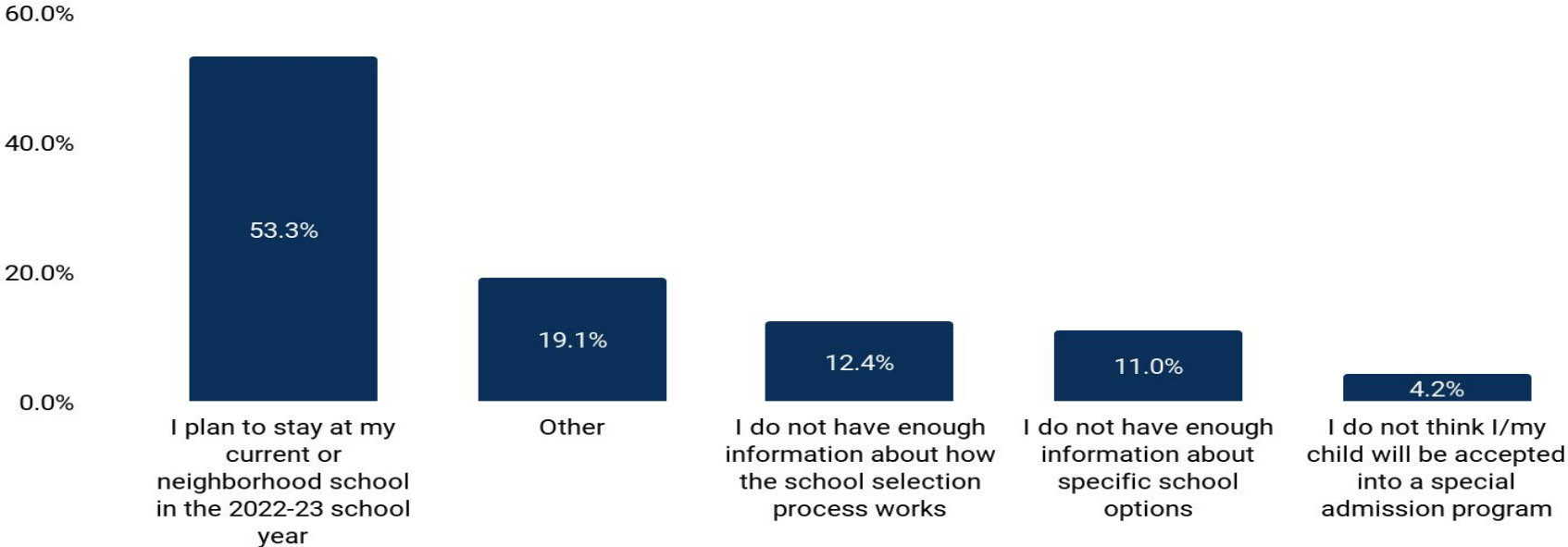
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# 1,031 respondents left feedback to the second open-ended question

Click [here](#) for responses to the second open-ended question: "What other ideas do you have for improving the school selection process?"

# Almost half of respondents to this question (43%) planned to submit an SSP application for the 2022-23 school year while 29% stated no and 28% were not sure
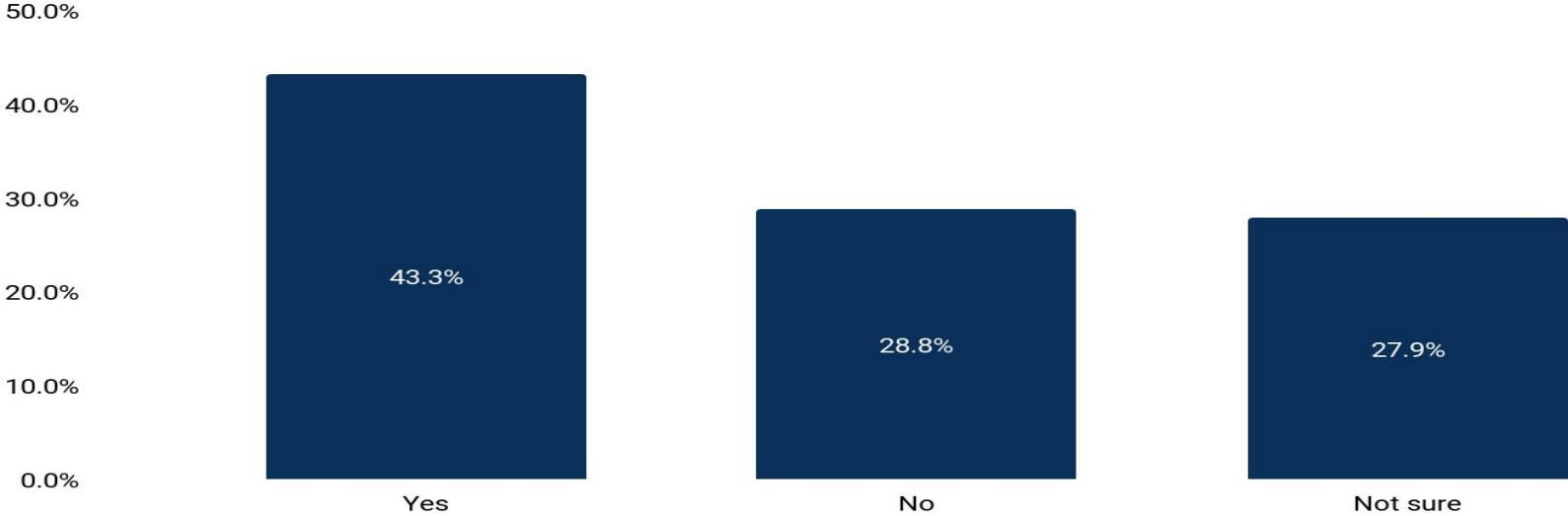


Do you (or your child) plan to submit an application for the 2022-23 school year? (n=3,795)

# Of those not planning or unsure about submitting an application for 2022-23, the majority (53%) planned to stay at their current school



Why did you answer no or not sure? (n=2,142)

# Of those not planning or unsure about submitting an application for 2022-23, 410 respondents chose other and left a comment

Click [here](#) for the responses.

# Conclusions

The top three **SSP application components** ranked as most important:

- Report card grades

- Student attendance records

- Student audition/portfolio (for performing arts schools)

The top three **School Selection Process changes** ranked as most positive:

- Better information about school options and what makes each unique so parents and students can identify best fit

- An online application system where students can save and edit applications

- An online application system that tracks the progress and status of the applications