2022-2023 School Selection Evaluation

District of Philadelphia Evaluation Report

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The School District of Philadelphia (referred to as "the District") implemented four key process changes to the Fall 2021 and Fall 2022 School Selection Processes from previous years. These changes included: 1) standardized the school selection process across all criteria-based schools; 2) centrally managed the lottery and waiting lists via the SchoolMint software platform; 3) implemented a zip code preference at four criteria-based schools; and 4) prioritized seats for designated student groups who receive special education services, have a physical or mental disability plan, and/or identify as English Language Learners.

In addition, the District committed to a third-party evaluation to assess if the District met its public obligations when it rolled out the incremental school selection process changes in 2022. The evaluation focused on four research questions:

1. Commitment: Did the District uphold the school selection process it committed to?
2. Communication: Did the District communicate effectively with key stakeholders (e.g., students, parents/guardians, schools, and district-wide staff)?
3. Perception: How are the process changes perceived?
4. Peer and Literature Review: How are other districts facilitating school choice? What does literature say about school choice processes?

Approach

Below are the assessment methods that were used to help answer these four questions:

- Documentation review – Digested over 65 relevant district and public documents that capture processes, outcomes, and stakeholder sentiment.
- SDP Interviews – Solicited feedback on the process by conducting twenty (20) interviews: twelve (12) one-on-one interviews with the District's leadership; and eight (8) School District of Philadelphia office team interviews.
- Surveys – Gathered sentiment regarding process changes and communications from 335 students, 1,316 parents/guardians, 116 counselors, and 73 principals.

- Focus groups – Facilitated focus groups to gain deeper insights on survey results from 19 students, 15 parents/guardians, seven (7) counselors, and 10 principals.
- Quantitative analysis – Evaluated data from the 2019-2022 selection years to determine if the District adhered to the process changes it committed to and if the selection process was successful in expanding access for all students in the District.
- Benchmarking – Compared school selection processes at eight (8) peer districts in the United States to identify possibilities for future initiatives. Literature Review – Reviewed twenty (20) peer-reviewed journal sources on school choice, selection processes, and communications to identify leading practices.

Key Insights

DOCUMENTATION REVIEW

The assessment analyzed documents and communications shared internally and with the public regarding Fall 2022 school selection. On August 16, 2022, the Superintendent informed families of the process, its changes, when the application would open, and announced that PSSA scores would replace the writing sample.[1] Students without PSSA scores had the option to take an alternative assessment. The application opened a month later, on September 15th and closed November 4th, 2022. During the assessment, a detailed communications plan surfaced for both internal and external stakeholders. However, not all planned correspondences were confirmed to be released through the documentation provided.

INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

Interviews with district leaders and staff revealed four key insights. 1) key players, such as counselors, principals, and internal district staff, were not included in strategic conversations regarding the selection process, which led to silos, poor communication, and misalignment; 2) information and resources provided to the public had improved from previous years, but district staff did not have enough time to understand the capabilities of their new enrollment system; 3) District staff auditing application components (e.g., common transcripts, etc.) had to sift through a lot of resources from different websites to check for accuracy; and 4) the shift from school-managed selection to district-managed selection left staff with an increase in workload due to increased demand for the LeGare impartial review process, appeals, and communications from families and schools who needed additional support. These themes underscore how functional silos in the District hindered staffs' ability to support students and led to more bureaucracy and redundancy at a time when increased efficiency and technical acumen was paramount.

SURVEY INSIGHTS

Survey findings showed that 60.3% of student and 62.4% of parent/guardian respondents felt they had enough resources to prepare for the application, but only 29.0% of counselor and 36.7% of principal respondents agreed. While 89.2% of principals were aware of different admissions criteria, 44.6% weren't aware of the policy that if a student didn't meet criteria for a school, they wouldn't be eligible for lottery at that school. Survey results indicate that 44.3% of principal respondents were strongly dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the PSSA as a criterion, compared to 26.2% for attendance, and 24.6% for grades. However, despite their level of awareness of the policy, 43.0% of student respondents admitted that they still applied to at least one school where they did not meet the school's criteria. Satisfaction with the school selection process was low (an average of 21.9%, approximately 1 in 5 respondents) across all stakeholder groups, with counselors having the lowest rate of satisfaction (7.4%).

FOCUS GROUP INSIGHTS

Focus groups led to candid responses that better informed low rates of satisfaction of the school selection process among stakeholders. There was understanding and acknowledgement across most focus group participants, especially counselors and principals, as to the importance and need of updating the selection process from an equality of access and equity standpoint. However, many were not satisfied with the changes made, the process roll-out, nor the communications. Counselors reported not receiving proactive information from the District that offered end-to-end guidance on the process in its entirety. Counselors also believed that the lack of human input had increased inequalities in school selection for those who are most disadvantaged, causing deserving students to potentially slip through the cracks. Likewise, principals pleaded for more school-based discretion, citing that more holistic factors (e.g., essays, interviews, etc.) should be included as criteria. While families had a basic grasp of the criteria, some of the implementation and school-specific details, such as converting attendance and PSSA percentiles into raw numbers, were unclear, which made it challenging when decided which schools to apply to. Second, for new-to-District and non-District families, the perception of communication ranged from poor to nonexistent. Third, being placed on the waitlist comes with its own set of unforeseen difficulties, as parents could never be sure if their children would receive an offer in the end. Students' sentiment mirrored those of the three other stakeholder groups. Students expressed the need for a human touch when researching schools and in being evaluated for school selection. Students also shared the need for improved communication around the lottery process as it is still unclear how outcomes are generated, when they will be made aware of results, and whether an offer is guaranteed. There was alignment across the focus groups that the randomization of the lottery did not effectively place students into schools they wanted most nor were best suited for, further highlighting opportunities to improve the process by which families get to rank or prioritize the schools in which they apply.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS INSIGHTS

The data analysis revealed that:

- 16,496 students participated in the Fall 2022 selection process for citywide, catchment, and criteria-based schools. 14,864 students were eligible for at least one school in which they applied to. 2,976 students (~20%) of applicants did not receive a single offer.
- 6,758 students applied to catchment schools; 8,835 applied to citywide schools, and 11,967 students applied to criteria-based schools. 4,910 (41%) of criteria-based applicants were eligible to at least one criteria-based school in which they applied.
- The criteria set for Fall 2022 was more prohibitive for student eligibility and acceptance than in previous years.
- Twelve criteria-based schools did not have enough eligible applications to meet their lottery cap or enrollment goals. Of those twelve schools, only five would have had enough eligible applications to meet their lottery cap had PSSAs not been considered.
- Of the three primary criterion (grades, attendance, and PSSAs), PSSAs had the greatest impact on ineligibility. Over 90% of applications from rising 9th graders to criteria-based schools did not meet the PSSA requirement. Comparably, 49% of applications were ineligible for the grade requirement, and 33% were ineligible for the attendance requirement.
- In Fall 2022, 184 of 1,775 rising 9th grade students (10.4%) who received offers to the top four schools were from priority zip codes.

- About one out of six rising 9th grade students (1,700 applicants) with an IEP, a 504 Plan, or who identify as English Learners (diverse learners) were approved to waive one of the Fall 2022 admissions criteria under the LeGare Consent Decree.
- Of the total 925 appeals, 162 (18%) were from LeGare applicants as families are not informed why their student waiver request was rejected.
- Diverse learners are more likely to accept offers from certain criteria-based schools, and less likely to accept offers to others. Masterman and Arts Rush have much lower acceptance rates from diverse learners (24% and 33% for rising 9th graders, respectively) than non-diverse-learners (49% and 60% for rising 9th graders, respectively), whereas SLA, Palumbo, and Girls High have higher acceptance rates for diverse learners than non-diverse learners (19%, 12%, and 11% difference between diverse learners and non-diverse-learners, respectively).

BENCHMARKING INSIGHTS

When benchmarking against peer districts, 7 out of 8 districts use a ranking algorithm that allows students to rank their choices, 5 out of 8 districts have adopted a single best offer model that aligns with ranking preferences, and 2 out of 8 districts have confirmed utilizing a technology platform that they customized to fit their districts' needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW INSIGHTS

Selected literature review sources illustrated that randomized lotteries improved selection outcomes due to fairness inherent in randomization (Sage Journal, 2018). In addition, the Journal of Women in Science and Engineering showed that one's 7th grade GPA is a better predictor than a standardized test for high school admissions (2019). Both findings informed long-term recommendations.

Conclusion

COMMITMENT

The District did what they said they would do – they upheld criteria, optimized zip code priority, and integrated the LeGare review. Standardizing the process across all criteria-based schools successfully increased representation, however, the strict criteria impacted eligibility significantly which reduced overall access.

COMMUNICATION

Detailed information was disseminated throughout the school selection process for stakeholders to complete the application successfully. However, post-application, the lack of efficacy of the messaging and training led to a misalignment in understanding outcomes.

PERCEPTION

Majority of stakeholders who were surveyed or participated in focus groups were not satisfied with the Fall 2022 school selection process. Counselors and principals expressed lower rates of satisfaction compared to students and parents.

Recommendations

To enhance the school selection process for future cycles, this report offers six prioritized recommendations for implementation, to be implemented from July 2023 to the Fall of 2025: 1) revise existing communications strategy both internally and externally; 2) enhance the LeGare process to support efficiency and scale; 3) provide offers to all eligible 8th graders in middle-high schools; 4) determine the process to secure spots for qualified students with no offers, where there are open seats; 5) enable schools to select best-fit criteria; and 6) optimize lottery, ranking, and waitlist features to improve efficiency of matches and increase offers per student.

Introduction

The School District of Philadelphia (referred to as "the District") employed four key process changes to the Fall 2021 and Fall 2022 School Selection Process from previous years:
1. Standardized school selection process across all criteria-based schools
2. Centrally managed the lottery and waiting lists via the SchoolMint software platform
3. Implemented a zip code preference at four criteria-based schools
4. Prioritized seats for designated student groups who receive special education services, have a physical or mental disability plan, and/or identify as English Language Learners.

The District hired Accenture as a third-party to analyze the application of changes to the process and their outcomes, as well as stakeholder perceptions of process changes and communications. Amongst the inaccuracies disseminated via news articles, social media, and rumors, it is our goal that this report provides factually accurate information to all relevant parties.

In Spring 2023, the school selection process was assessed using qualitative and quantitative methods, focusing on four research questions to assess if the District met its public obligations:
1. Commitment: Did the District uphold the school selection process it committed to?
2. Communication: Did the District communicate effectively with key stakeholders e.g., students, parents/guardians, schools, and district-wide staff?
3. Perception: How are the process changes perceived?
4. Peer Review: How are other districts facilitating school choice? What does literature say about school choice processes?

School Selection Process Background

School choice has a strong foundation in Philadelphia and its culture.

History of School Selection in Philadelphia

In 1838, the city opened the nation's second public high school – Central High School.[2] In the 1970s, four selective admission magnet schools were established – Masterman, Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), Carver Engineering and Science, and Bodine High School for International Affairs.[3] In the late 1980s, large neighborhood schools were restructured into districtwide, small learning communities (SLCs) that led to universal school choice, providing flexibility for families to select their desired school anywhere within the District.

In 1997, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania approved charter school legislation. By law, charter schools may not exclude students based on merit, leading to additional school options for Philadelphia families and students.[4]

In 2001, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania took over the District due to low academic performance and inequitable financing which led to perpetual deficits. The School Reform Commission governed the District for 16 years, ending in 2017.[5]

Between 2003 and 2008, the District founded 26 additional selective schools.[6] Today, Philadelphia has 217 District operated schools: 178 catchment (neighborhood), 22 criteria-based (formerly known as "special admission"), and 17 citywide.

Historically, there was no single mission or theory underlying the school selection process. In February 2010, during a study conducted by Research for Action, a policy and evaluation research nonprofit, District staff cited a range of objectives for high school choice. These included: 1) retaining a middle-class base in the city; 2) expanding school choice; and 3) matching students to programs of interest.[7]

Overview of the School Selection Process

Every fall, students who will be entering kindergarten up to 12th grade can participate in the District's school application and admissions process. The District offers students a variety of programs across criteria-based, citywide, and neighborhood schools. Prior to the centralized lottery in 2021, school staff reviewed applications and selected students based on the following admissions criteria:[8]

- **Criteria-based schools,** known as special admissions schools prior to 2021, required that 5th through 12th grade applicants exhibit a strong record of grades, test scores (PSSA or TerraNova), behavior, and attendance. Some schools required interviews or additional writing samples, and performance and project-based schools had additional requirements.
- **Citywide admission schools** required that applicants meet at least three of the four criteria: grades, attendance, tardiness, and behavior. All students then interviewed with school staff. Those who passed the interview and met three of the four criteria were then placed into a computerized lottery.

- **Neighborhood schools** guaranteed admission to students who attended a feeder elementary or middle school, or who lived within the catchment area. Families had the option to apply to neighborhood schools outside their catchment based on the District lottery and available seats.

Until the application window in the fall of 2014, families would complete up to five paper-based applications and submit them to counselors, who would then manually enter the application into a networked computer system. As applications were manually submitted, criteria-based and citywide schools would "deselect" applications based on eligibility criteria. Some schools also invited remaining students for an interview or audition and removed those who did not meet performance/project eligibility and/or did not attend the interview or audition from the pool of potential candidates. Criteria-based schools would then accept students and place some on their waitlist. Citywide schools, however, entered students into a lottery run by the District Office of Student Placement.[9]

To ensure that rising 9th graders in designated student groups – including students who are receiving special education services, have a physical or mental disability plan, and are English Language Learners (ELL) – had access to selective schools, the citywide admission lottery was run with the goal of accepting ten (10) percent of students with an IEP and/or 504 plan, and accepting ten (10) percent of ELLs. Likewise, criteria-based schools, which did not run a lottery, had a goal of enrolling students with an IEP, 504 plan, and/or who identified as an ELL at a rate of seven (7) percent.[10]

The District moved to an online application system in the fall of 2014 for enrollment in the 2014-2015 School Year. Students and families could access an online application through either a District or non-District application portal. During this time, counselors and teachers assumed a larger role in assisting students with completing their online application. For many schools, the waitlist continued to be managed at the school level without District input. In 2020, SchoolMint acquired SmartChoice, an enrollment management system used by the District.

There were significant changes to the school selection process in 2021. These changes included: 1) standardize the process for all criteria-based schools; 2) implement a centralized lottery and waitlist only for students who meet the criteria; 3) increase equity of access by implementing a zip-code preference at four criteria-based schools; and 4) adapt the LeGare process for implementation in a centralized admission for designated student groups (e.g., students with IEPs, 504 plans, and/or who identify as an English Language Learner). Due to COVID-19, schools had not administered the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) since Spring of 2019. For Fall 2021, students were required to complete an online, machine-scoring writing exercise.[11]

To achieve enrollment goals, schools were asked in advance of the school selection process to provide demand and available seat projections to inform how many initial offers the randomized lottery should release for each school. As each lottery was run separately by individual school and grade, students could potentially receive up to five (5) offers. Some students who did not obtain initial offers later received offers through the waitlist process.

2021 Admission Requirements:
- **Criteria-based schools** required that students submit their highest grade and attendance records from the previous two school years (super-scored). Certain schools required that students meet a minimum score on their writing sample or complete an audition or project.
- **Citywide admission schools** may have had requirements for grades, attendance, and behavior, which varied by school.

- **Neighborhood schools** guaranteed admission to students who lived within the catchment area. There are no entry requirements for out of catchment students, aside from capacity limits.

Additionally, there were four process changes in Fall 2022: 1) LeGare impartial review occurs before the lottery to determine eligibility; 2) the appeals process for both LeGare eligibility and performance/project-based schools occurs before the lottery is completed; 3) the writing sample was replaced with the PSSA as a criterion; and 4) the priority zip code 19139 replaced 19135 due to year-over-year changes and lowest residential representation in offers to the top four criteria-based schools – Masterman, Central, Palumbo, and Carver.

Overview of School Selection Ecosystem

Below details the 2022-2023 school year selection cycle with dates and key activities outlined:
- **July to Aug.** – District confirmed enrollment projections.[12]
- **Aug. 16th** – Superintendent informed families of application opening and process changes, including the announcement that PSSA scores would replace the writing sample.[13]
- **Aug. to Sept.** – Office of Communications launched a media campaign around school selection that included direct mail, billboards, radio advertisements, transit advertisements, and web banner advertisements.[14]
- **Late Aug.** – Community townhalls held by Office of Student Enrollment and Placement (OSEP), Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE), and the LeGare team. GreatPhillySchools, a third-party nonprofit, also provided resources to families.
- **Sept. 7th & 8th** – District and non-District counselors received training on the SchoolMint platform.
- **Sept. 16th** – Application opened on the Parent & Family Portal or the Student Portal for District families. Non-District families accessed the application through a separate portal.
- **Sept. 27th** – Students and families were given instructions on how to retrieve their PSSA scores from SchoolNet and convert cumulative scores to the corresponding percentile.
- **Oct. 6th to 8th** – Optional TerraNova Assessment, an achievement test commonly given to students in grades K-12, was administered by the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE).[15]
- **Oct. 14th to 15th** – GreatPhillySchools hosted the school fair. Several schools held open houses.
- **Nov. 4th** – Application closed.
- **Nov. 5th** – OSEP began the evaluation and audit of academic data for applications with missing data and for non-District students.[16]
- **Nov. 9th to 10th** – ORE provided state assessment results to the Office of Information Technology, and scores were uploaded into the SchoolMint system.[17]
- **Nov. 11th to 13th and 16th to 17th** – Evaluation, Research, and Accountability (ERA) conducted quality assurance for uploaded individual assessment results.[18]
- **Nov. 16th** - Eligibility script ran for project and performance-based applications.
- **Nov. 16th to Dec. 23rd** – LeGare impartial review occurred for students with accommodations who requested a criterion to be waived.
- **Nov. 18th** – Applicants who applied to project and performance-based schools received communication regarding their eligibility directly in the application portal.
- **Nov. 18th to 30th** – Window for students to appeal their eligibility to project and performance-based schools.
- **Nov. 21 to Jan.** – Students who met the eligibility criteria were invited to complete their audition, project, or interview.

- **Nov. 27th to Dec. 6th** – Non-District students who applied to criteria-based schools with incomplete records allowed to resubmit required forms.[19]
- **Dec. 2nd** – Evaluation phase ended.
- **Dec. 8th to Jan. 6th** – Window for students to appeal their eligibility to non-performance and project criteria-based schools.[20]
- **Dec. 12th** – Appeal decisions for project and performance-based schools finalized.
- **Dec. 19th to 22nd** – Eligibility script ran for all other programs (criteria-based, citywide, and catchment).
- **Dec. 23rd** – Eligibility notifications sent to criteria-based, citywide, catchment, and LeGare applicants.
- **Jan. 4th** – Final eligibility notification sent to students who applied and completed their audition at performance and project-based schools.
- **Mid-Jan.** – Appeals decisions finalized.
- **Jan. 9th to 13th** – Lottery testing in sandbox.
- **Jan. 18th to 20th** – Lottery ran in production.
- **Jan. 20th** – Lottery results released.
- **Jan. 27th** – Deadline for those offered a seat to make a final selection.
- **Jan. 30th** – Waiting list numbers automatically updated and displayed. Waitlisted students have three (3) calendar days to accept an offer from when they received an email and text notification.[21]
- **Feb. 2nd** – Final communication to families.

Methodology

The school selection process was evaluated using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, focusing on four research questions:

1. Commitment: Did the District use the school selection process it committed to?
2. Communication: Did the District communicate effectively with key stakeholders?
3. Perception: What are the perceptions of the process changes?
4. Peer Review: How are other districts facilitating school choice? What does literature say about school choice processes?

Below are the assessment methods that were used to help answer the research questions:

- Documentation review – Digested over 65 existing relevant documents that captures processes, outcomes, and stakeholder sentiment.
- Interviews – Solicited feedback from a diverse sampling of District leaders and staff to assess perceived intended outcomes of process changes. Conducted twenty (20) interviews: twelve (12) one-on-one interviews with the District's leadership; and eight (8) School District of Philadelphia office team interviews.
- Surveys – Gather sentiment on changes to the school selection process and communications from students, parents/guardians, counselors, and principals.
- Focus groups – Facilitated group interview sessions to gain deeper insights on survey results with students, parents/guardians, counselors, and principals.
- Quantitative analysis – Conducted a process audit of the Fall 2022 selection process to evaluate whether the District's process adhered to what it stated it would do, and exploratory analysis of the past four (4) school selection years to

determine if the selection process was successful in expanding access for all students.

- Benchmarking – Compared school selection processes of eight (8) peer districts in the United States to identify possibilities for future initiatives.
- Literature Review – Reviewed twenty (20) peer-reviewed journal sources on school choice, selection processes, and communications to identify leading practices.

Interview Methodology

Interviews were conducted with a sampling of District leaders and offices involved in the Fall 2022 school selection process. They were held from Wednesday, April 12th to Tuesday, May 9th, 2023. Each were one-hour in length, covering a list of pre-determined questions around commitment, communication, and perception.

Interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed, and then analyzed in Excel to identify any recurring patterns or themes in the selection process. Given that interview questions were bespoke for District staff and offices, to protect their identity, interview questions have been omitted from this report.

Survey Methodology

Surveys were administered to gauge the sentiment around the Fall 2022 changes to the school selection process and relevant communications. Counselors, principals, students, and parents/guardians involved in the Fall 2022 school selection process were invited to complete their respective surveys. For District and non-District counselors and principals, the survey was open from May 15th to May 19th, 2023. For students in grades 5 through 11 and parents/guardians of pre-kindergartners through 11th grade students, the survey was open from May 10th to May 19th, 2023.

- Survey questions were developed and finalized with input from the Office of Research and Evaluation (see Appendix B-E for a list of the survey questions).
- The surveys were administered via Qualtrics.
- Communication was sent to principals, letting them know that their counselors, students, and families would be contacted for the third-party evaluation.
- Minimum respondents were met for counselor and parent surveys only. As a result, chi-square tests were run on specific questions that reflected a sufficient sample size.

For counselor and principal surveys, a minimum of 75 respondents was required; 116 counselors completed the survey, and 73 principals completed the survey. Student and parent surveys required a minimum of 385 respondents for descriptive analysis. 335 students completed the survey while 1,316 parents/guardians completed the survey.

Focus Group Methodology

Focus groups were conducted to understand students,' parents'/guardians,' counselors' and principals' desires, attitudes, challenges, and motivations during the school selection process and communications regarding process changes. Ten (10) focus groups were conducted from May 17th to May 30th, 2023, with 19 students, 15 parents/guardians, 7 counselors and 10 principals. Focus groups were approximately one-hour in length. Questions were framed around communication, commitment, and perception of the school selection process. All stakeholders must have participated in the school selection process during the SY 2022 – 2023 cycle to be a focus group participant.

Quantitative Analysis Methodology

The quantitative analysis consisted of three parts to validate whether the District adhered to the Fall 2022 selection process as stated, a descriptive analysis, and exploratory analysis of current and historical selection process data to evaluate the process as a whole and inform recommendations.

Selection data for the past four selection processes (2019-2022) was provided for data analysis. For all students that participated in the school selection process, in

addition to where students applied to, anonymized data was provided on gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, zip code, attendance record (previous 2 years), PSSA scores, letter grades (previous 2 years), 504 status, IEP status, ELL status, and current school.

Data was provided for those who participated in the LeGare impartial review process, and/or appeals process, including outcome information. No information on sexual orientation, socio-economic status, nor sibling/family relation was provided. No data was provided on performance, audition, or interview outcomes. Data was not comprehensive for all years, and there were various levels of missing data. For the Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 selection years, eligibility data was only provided for district-internal applicants, and only for PSSAs, grades, and attendance (school specific criteria also included behavioral considerations, interviews, writing samples, and so on). Within district-internal applicants, roughly 20% of PSSA, grade, and/or attendance eligibility data were missing. This missing data was due to either the data not being part of a student application, and/or separate attachments (i.e., transcripts) to the application, which were not provided to Accenture due to data privacy concerns. For Fall 2021, attendance, grade, and writing score eligibility data was provided for internal and external applicants, with zero missing data. For Fall 2022, attendance, grade, and PSSA percentile category (50th, 65th, or 80th) eligibility data was provided for internal and external applicants, with zero missing data. Additional uploads, such as transcripts, were not provided.

Results

Interviews

While there was evidence of increased communication, communication could be improved both in timeliness and clarity.

Internal interviews with District leaders and offices revealed five (5) key themes outlined below.

Alongside direct communication channels, the District utilizes paid media advertising to ensure families are aware and informed of the school selection process. Despite increased communication, not all communication channels are perceived to be effective, timely, easy to find, and actionable. When it comes to more personalized questions, many families seek additional support from various offices and staff who may not always have the answers or capacity to respond. The District must share information more effectively to orient everyone on what the process is, what it entails, and why changes to the process are made; and ensure capacity to answer school staff and parent questions in a timely manner. There were forty-eight (48) instances in which this theme showed up in interviews. Sample comments reflect what was heard:

- The District made last minute changes to the process which impacted communications. For example, delayed decision-making created a problem for families as they were unaware of the common transcript requirement ahead of this year. Ideally, this information would have been shared in the previous school year so families could easily submit their information at the end of the school year.
- Information on the process is available on all District websites, however it can be difficult for families to locate and sift through the information.
- Since counselors assisting students with applications may not have the expertise to know which schools would be the best fit, it is up to current students or school administrators to promote their establishments.

While silos exist at the District level, there is an opportunity to increase stakeholder buy-in and collaboration.

Despite collaboration across the District organization, there is a need for an internal engagement plan to ensure the right voices are heard at the right times. It is undeniable that stakeholders play a significant role in the school selection process – from offices within 440, principals, counselors, and others. Engaging members within the District early and often in decision-making will set expectations around goals, metrics, and roles and responsibilities in achieving them. Given that several changes were made during the Fall 2022 school selection process – some of which were modified during the rollout – there were fewer opportunities to fully engage key stakeholders in the process and development of school selection. This resulted in downstream effects regarding communication, capacity, and implementation. There were (twenty) 20 instances in which this theme showed up in interviews. Sample comments reflect what was heard:

- Since data attributes required for verification are pulled from disparate sources, stakeholders experienced a significant increase in workload during the application, lottery, and waitlist windows.
- Offices and schools do not have streamlined tools in facilitating conversations regarding concerns (e.g., student didn't get in, etc.), resulting in manual touches in responding to inquiries.
- Those on the front lines – in both 440 and at schools – are not proactively brought into strategic conversations, SchoolMint usability testing, and communications development, which may lead to a lack of understanding of comprehensive implications and nuances.

LeGare review process requires scale to meet increasing demand.

As a greater proportion of students undergo the LeGare process, more resources are needed to expand capacity and enable scale. Approximately one out of six 8th grade students (1,700 out of 10,700 8th grade applicants) with an IEP, a 504 Plan, or who identify as English Learners waived part of the SY 2022 – 2023 admission criteria under the LeGare Consent Decree. The volume of LeGare process reviews has increased in Fall 2022 because of several factors including: changes to the selection criteria, more public awareness, and amplifed interest in criteria-based schools. To accommodate the impartial review and appeals process within a firm deadline, supporting staff have experienced an increase in workload to meet the demand. There were twenty (20) instances in which this theme showed up in interviews. Sample comments reflect what was heard:

- Tight timelines do not always allow for school-based teams to offer personalized input in support of students' unique needs.
- While undergoing the LeGare process, families may mistakenly waive the wrong criteria – as they do not understand the impact – which does not optimize their children's outcomes.
- Counselors, liaisons, and other staff members do not have SchoolMint capabilities to view *why* students are deemed ineligible; similarly, families do not receive notifications specific to eligibility determinations following the LeGare process.

More transparency needed on how application data is processed.

Although resources for the selection process have improved, internal and external stakeholders may not understand how outcomes are generated. The District has leveraged several technology platforms since rolling out the centralized school selection process. The 2023 – 2024 school year will mark the first time the District has maintained one platform, SchoolMint, year over year. Internal IT stakeholders are continuously configuring the system as they operate it, resulting in little time to understand the breadth of SchoolMint's capabilities and how to articulate those features in a way for employees and families to fully grasp the scope of potential outcomes. There were nineteen (19) occurrences in which this theme showed up in interviews. Sample comments reflect what was heard:

- Families have the ability in SchoolMint to apply for schools in which they do not meet the eligibility criteria because the system does not stop students from applying to schools in which they do not meet the criteria.
- Steppers provide common application instructions, but few troubleshooting or detailed systems guidelines.
- Given that lotteries run separately for each school and grade level, families may fail to understand why one student may receive several offers, and another with similar credentials may receive none.

Room for improvement at critical steps to reduce District workload.

There is not enough automated application support for students and families via tools and technology. In addition, individuals have varying levels of technical acumen, English proficiency, and access. As a result, the process has created additional work for students and families that could be alleviated by technology. There were ten (10) instances in which this theme showed up in interviews. Sample comments reflect what was heard:

- While counselors can view a report of students' application statuses, families do not receive a technology "nudge" for incomplete applications. Families must rely on counselors to follow-up and inform them that the deadline to submit their application is approaching.
- PSSA score-to-percentile conversion is a manual process, rather than a built-in tool within the SchoolMint system.
- The top troubleshooting error for those calling into the Family Tech Line is password resetting, which can be streamlined through a self-service support tool.

Survey Results

Survey results are summarized into the themes of by navigating the process, the District's commitment to the process, communication of the process, and stakeholder perception.

Counselor Survey

Summary of Key Findings

Navigating the Process: One out of five counselors completed most of their students' applications on their behalf, making them an integral part of the school selection process.

- Counselors largely supported students face-to-face in the application process through classroom visits (62.0%) and events (56.9%).
- Approximately 1 in 5 counselors (20.7%) completed most of their students' applications on their behalf. Catchment counselors, which represent the largest counselor group, submitted applications on students' behalf (46 out of 81, 56.8%) at a higher rate.

District's Commitment to the School Selection Process: Several counselors were not well versed on the school selection process or in troubleshooting the SchoolMint platform.

- 1 out of 3 counselors did not have a firm grasp of understanding the school selection process.
- 65.9% of counselors experienced technical difficulties when viewing SchoolMint (the school selection platform) to monitor or modify applications.

District's Communication on the School Selection Process: Counselors largely did not have enough resources to best support their students.

- Only 29% of counselors felt that they had enough resources to create a structure to best support their students. 40.2% felt as if they did not.

Overall Perception of the School Selection Process: Most counselors were dissatisfied with the school selection process.

- 64.8% of counselors were dissatisfied with the Fall 2022 school selection process. Only one counselor (0.9%) was strongly satisfied.
- If counselors could improve upon the school selection process, they would remove the lottery (31.4%), change the eligibility criteria (29.2%), and enhance communication (24.1%).

Principal Survey

Summary of Key Findings

Navigating the Process: Principals supported their students in various ways, namely through events, printed information, emails, office hours, and classroom visits.

- Principals largely supported students in the application process through events (42.9%) and printed information sent home (43.8%).

District's Commitment to the School Selection Process: Most principals were unaware of how rigid the eligibility criteria would be in excluding promising students from the candidate pool.

- 56% of principals understood how the school selection process worked. Roughly 1 out of 4 principals (25.8%) did not have a firm grasp of understanding on the school selection process.
- 49.2% of principals did not find the application easy for their schools' families to understand and complete. This sentiment was highest for criteria-based principals (66.7% strongly disagreed or disagreed).
- 44.6% of principals were aware of the policy that if their students did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.
- 75% of principals shared that their students applied to at least one school where they did not meet that school's criteria.
- 72.5% of principals hoped they could consider students who did not meet all criteria for enrollment.

District's Communication of the School Selection Process: Principals did not feel equipped with enough information or resources to support students effectively.

- Just as many principals felt as if they did receive enough information to prepare staff and students for the application process as those who did not (36.7%).
- 32.4% of principals felt that they had enough resources to create a structure to best support their students. 44.1% of principals disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Overall Perception of the School Selection Process: Over seventy percent (70%) of principals were dissatisfied with the process, mainly because they were unable to participate in holistically selecting students.

- An overwhelming majority of principals were not satisfied with the Fall 2022 school selection process. 71.6% were dissatisfied. Only two principals (3.3%) were strongly satisfied.
- If principals could improve upon the school selection process, they would interview prospective students (27.6%) and change the eligibility criteria (24.8%).

Student Survey

Summary of Key Findings

Navigating the Process: Counselors play an integral role in aiding students through the application process.

- 54.7% of students learned about the school selection process through their school counselor.

District's Commitment to the Selection Process: Students are able to apply to schools in which they are ineligible, due to a system feature, which minimizes their chances within the lottery because their applications are not entered.

- 93.8% of students were aware of the policy that if they did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school. And yet, 43.0% of respondents applied to at least one school where they did not meet the school's criteria.

District's Communication on the Selection Process: Overall, students believed they had enough information and resources to complete their application.

- 71.4% of students felt as if they had enough information to complete their application.

Overall Perception of the Selection Process: Many students were dissatisfied with the school selection process and offers received, likely due to the lack of ranking or matching in identifying one's best fit.

- In proposing what the District should do to improve the school selection process in the future, 54.4% of students suggested removing the lottery; 38.2% of students suggested allowing future applicants to rank their school choices. (Research on ranking included in Literature Review).

Parent / Guardian Survey

Summary of Key Findings

Navigating the Process: For parents/guardians, the most common school selection barriers were language translation, inadequate access to technology, and resources for students with accommodations.

- While most parents/guardians completed their school selection application on their own (60.3%), many children completed the application (17.8%). For parents/guardians in which English is the primarily language spoken, 80.7% completed their child's application compared to 63.8% of non-primary English-speaking parents/guardians.
- Asian parents/guardians identified technology as a barrier at a higher rate (8.5%) than other races/ethnicities.
- 37.2% of parents/guardians were not satisfied with the assistance they received as a parent or guardian of a child with an IEP, 504 plan, or receiving English Learner services.

District's Commitment to the Selection Process: Some students applied to criteria-based schools they were ineligible for, mainly because parents/guardians weren't familiar with how the lottery worked.

- Overall, 58.9% of parents/guardians agreed that they understood how the lottery worked. However, nearly a quarter of parents/guardians across all races/ethnicities did not.
- 85.1% of parents/guardians were aware of the policy that if they did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school. Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino parents/guardians expressed not being aware of this policy at higher rates than White and Asian parents/guardians (23.2%, 21.3%, 7.2% and 12.9% respectively).
- However, 28.5% of parents/guardians reported that their child applied to at least one school where they did not meet the school's criteria. This rate was slightly higher for non-District parents/guardians (36.2%).

District's Communication on the Selection Process: Despite English not being the primary language for all households, parents/guardians largely felt as if they had enough information and resources to complete the application.

- 87.5% of parents/guardians received communication about the process in the language they understood.
- 62.4% of parents/guardians felt as if they had enough information to complete their application.

Overall Perception of the Selection Process: School selection process satisfaction varied most by race/ethnicity, with Asian parents/guardians feeling most satisfied.

- 61.5% of parents/guardians reported dissatisfaction with the lottery process. Parents/guardians of White and Black children expressed higher rates of dissatisfaction (70.9% and 55.8%, respectively).

Focus Group Results

Counselor

Theme 1: While counselors appreciated receiving system and process training, they requested more proactive information from the District.

- Charter school counselors shared that they did not receive communication regarding the school selection process unless they requested it.
- Counselors noted that while the mid-September training was beneficial, some decisions were still up in the air which led to confusion and unexpected timelines. This left them feeling unprepared and unable to give students and parents/guardians the support they needed.
- Counselors suggest that changes to the school selection process are finalized at the beginning of July or earlier, to provide schools with enough time and capacity in preparing their support structure.
- The PSSA percentile conversion was not determined until the application process began. Students would have benefited by having this information earlier so they could prepare. Springtime – March and April – would've been ideal times for this kind of information to be available to students and parents/guardians, if not earlier.
- Non-District counselors shared that they could not locate conversion information between results on the PSSA and those on the TerraNova. Therefore, non-District students didn't know whether they were eligible for certain criteria-based schools until they were denied.

Theme 2: Counselors were unable to access applications directly in the system, making it hard for them to intuitively provide aid or support. As a note, counselors were given reports in the student information system to track if students had complete applications, requiring them to access multiple systems for the school selection process.

- Due to lack of viewing and editing access for student applications, counselors were required to have students come to their office and log into their application. After that, a counselor would then request the student to either hand over their device or sit next to them to work on the application side-by-side.
- When parents/guardians would get stuck on the application, the counselor was unable to view alongside them and help in a timely fashion. Instead, parents/guardians would have to schedule one-on-one time with counselors onsite to show them their issue/question live.
- Counselors shared that it was difficult for students and parents/guardians to locate the separate pop-up window for submitting PSSA scores.
- The SchoolMint platform cannot tag counselor email addresses to applications so that they receive updates and other forms of communication. In the future, counselors would like to receive up-to-date email addresses, phone numbers, and Student IDs tied to each application so they can ensure students and parents/guardians are receiving appropriate communications.
- Counselors could not easily search and filter applications from current or prospective students, making the experience cumbersome.

Theme 3: Counselors believe that the lack of human input has increased inequalities in school selection for those who are most disadvantaged.

- Prior to centralizing school selection, counselors could view applications and correct any errors.
- The contact information of prospective students who needed to complete an audition was either outdated or incomplete, making it difficult for counselors to contact hard-to-reach students and parents/guardians.
- Without staff input on extenuating circumstances, counselors worry that deserving students will be reduced to their academic numerical information that won't capture all their nuances. That means students who would otherwise succeed may slip through the cracks.

Principal

Theme 1: The lottery system should account for a student's interests and future career path through more holistic measures (e.g., ranking, essays, interviews, etc.).
- In some cases, the lottery and/or the LeGare review is placing students with special circumstances and accommodations into schools without providing the necessary resources to support them.
- Principals cited that students often pick schools that are closer to their home or simply seem 'safer,' which may result in declining a school with an excellent curriculum due to its location, which is consistent with prior selection years.
- When students are accepted into schools in which they aren't interested in core activities, it can create rifts in the school's culture.
- Principals believe that three data points (PSSAs, grades, attendance) should not eliminate a student; rather, they should have the ability to evaluate each application holistically.
- There seemed to be a misunderstanding from some principals on how and why criteria were set for their schools.
- Principals, especially those from performance and project criteria-based schools, struggled to not have contact information on student applications as they were unable to contact students who did not schedule their audition.

Theme 2: Principals advocate for two application rounds – one that ends in November, and one that ends in early spring for new-to-District students or those who wish to repeat the process.
- Many parents/guardians are unaware of the early window for school applications. Schools close their application processes in November, which is too early for many students and parents/guardians to make decisions about next year's schools. High school principals would like to accept applications after the first round of the lottery to fill open seats and to provide students with an additional opportunity to go through school selection.
- Many K-8 principals expressed their concerns around school selection for new-to-District students. Families who move to Philadelphia in the middle of the school year and want to apply to non-neighborhood schools are unable to apply until the next selection cycle.

Theme 3: Principals want the ability to enroll eligible students currently on waitlists who express interest in their schools to fill empty seats prior to the 2023 – 2024 school year.
- By May, principals suggest reaching out to students on waitlists who don't have seats in public schools to reduce District attrition and retain students.
- Schools with open spots do not have visibility into which students are pending on waitlists, nor do they have a way to contact those students directly.
- In previous school selection cycles, principals could potentially add 100+ additional students to their enrollment by reaching out to undecided and/or waitlisted students. Similarly, principals cannot enroll those who applied but made no decision, or those who missed their offer from the waitlist.

Theme 4: Principals plead for continuity in middle-high school cohorts at middle-high schools.
- Principals shared that many middle-high schools are losing middle school enrollment because parents are electing to not send their children to middle-high schools anymore due to the fact that admission into the high school is not guaranteed. This results in larger high school classes, as principals are required to increase rising 9th grade enrollment to maintain funding.
- The District needs a clear and transparent process for middle-high schools, including why some students must apply twice. What does the true middle-high school model look like in Philadelphia?

Theme 5: Messaging on eligibility must be rolled out in a clear, methodical way to avoid confusion.
- After auditions, without any prior communication to parents, the eligibility status changed to ineligible for some, leaving parents confused and angry. "Eligible" or "Ineligible" statuses should be withheld and kept private until the entire process finishes and all decisions are made.
- Principals mostly agree that final application statuses should come from the District.

Student

Theme 1: Many students expressed the need for a "human touch" to the selection process, with interviews, essays, and even letters of recommendation added to guarantee that those admitted to the school are truly dedicated to attending and putting in the necessary effort.
- By incorporating interviews, essays, or letters of recommendation into the criteria, specialized schools (CTE, JROTC programs, and criteria-based) will be able to gauge prospective students' genuine interest in their programming and curriculum.
- Students may be placed into schools they do not want to be in because, through the lottery, they may receive limited offers. This disrupts the school culture as students are frustrated and are less likely to engage in classroom activities.

Theme 2: Information on schools needs to be more comprehensive, not just statistics.
- When researching schools, students stated they were more interested in learning about a school's culture, curriculum, and learning environment, rather than just reading through statistics on demographics and academic performance.
- Students want to be able to find their best fit and understand what is special about the schools they are considering applying to.

Theme 3: Students would like to engage in student-led outreach to middle schools.
- High school upperclassmen expressed their interest in marketing their school to middle school students, so they can share their high school experience and inform prospective students on program offerings and opportunities.
- Allowing prospective students to shadow schools gives them the opportunity to experience a day-in-the-life and understand what schools have to offer and if offerings align with their interests.
- Many schools have specialized programs and learning environments that prospective students are unaware of (e.g., nursing, farming). Mandatory orientation should occur one to two weeks before commencement at selected schools to better prepare new students for the school year.

Theme 4: Although communication on completing the application was sufficient, students would like more clarity on next steps once their applications are submitted.

- Students rely on their counselors for information; however, many expressed the need for improved communication around the lottery process as it is still unclear how outcomes are generated.
- Students expressed their concerns with the waitlist as many do not know they can still be pulled off the waitlist in the spring or summer. Many students feel as if they are not properly notified when they are removed from the waitlist, leading them to miss the three-day acceptance deadline.
- Communication regarding auditions at performance- and project-based schools was clear, however, students would like to know what they will be expected to complete beforehand. For instance, details of auditions and interviews are unknown prior to arrival.

Parent / Guardian

Theme 1: Though parents/guardians had a basic grasp of the criteria, some of the implementation details were unclear.
- Parents/guardians found converting the PSSA raw scores to percentiles confusing, with some sharing it required multiple attempts to fully understand.
- Not all parents/guardians understood the difference in how excused and unexcused absences were labeled, and what steps to take to justify absences.
- Multiple sources for uploading information made the process timely and not straightforward.

Theme 2: For new-to-District and non-District parents, the perception of communication ranged from poor to nonexistent, emphasizing a need for broader communication channels.
- New-to-District parents/guardians expressed difficulty obtaining school specific information and metrics on various catchment schools. One parent stated he had to download publicly available statistics at the state level to determine which K-4 schools to apply to.
- Parents/guardians of non-District students did not always receive communication prior to initiating their applications. In addition, for boomerang students (who left the District but wished to return), parents expressed frustration that their student's historical record was removed from the student portal.
- Some parents of rising kindergartners, who are not originally from Philadelphia, stated that they received numerous notices to enroll their students into catchment schools but were unaware of the broader school selection process, and the optionality it comes with, until they made friends with other parents.
- The process of filling out the non-District application for parents/guardians was made even more challenging by the need to include supplemental test materials and other attachments. During that time, without any notification that their documents had been processed and accepted, they became increasingly worried.

Theme 3: Although the timing of communication did not align to some parents'/guardians' expectations from previous years, they were able to lean on counselors for updates.
- Parents/guardians found counselors to be a very great resource in sharing timelines.
- Parents/guardians stated that in late August, the school year was about to start and there wasn't any information about next steps in school selection.
- The high school directory, a parent cited, was not available until September, limiting time over the summer to sit down with their child and evaluate choices.
- Many parents/guardians do not remember learning about the PSSA score requirement until late September, which caused a lot of anxiety.

Theme 4: Being placed on the waitlist comes with its own set of unforeseen difficulties, as parents can never be sure if their children will receive an offer in the end.

- Parents/guardians felt the need to persuade their children to take any offer as it came, rather than waiting for a coveted placement, because they did not know the probability of whether their children would ultimately be placed.
- Parents/guardians expressed frustration at the inability to remove their children from a waitlist.
- Parents/guardians noted that the unknown of whether their child will get into a school is the most challenging element of the lottery.
- Some parents/guardians misunderstood that if they accepted an offer, they could still maintain their spots on other waitlists. Choosing an offer will decline offers from other schools, potentially declining a spot at one's first choice.

Data Analysis Results

The data presented in this section is not comprehensive of the entire quantitative analysis performed but was selected to provide readers with an overview of the Fall 2022 selection process and its outcomes, as well as to highlight findings that informed the recommendations referenced in this report.

Table 1. Total students that participated in the Fall 2022 selection process for school year 2023-2024. Table includes all student applications to Catchment, Citywide, and Criteria-Based schools. "Eligible Students who Applied" column shows the number of students that applied and were eligible to catchment, citywide, and criteria-based schools, meaning, it does not include students who may have only applied to criteria-based schools and were not eligible to any in which they applied.

Grade	Total Students Who Applied	Eligible Students Who Applied	Eligible Students Without an Offer	% Eligible Students Without a Single Offer
K	807	807	299	37%
1	193	193	73	38%
2	130	130	59	45%
3	126	126	55	44%
4	128	128	52	41%
5	738	647	184	28%
6	1,230	1,165	370	32%
7	348	299	99	33%
8	196	149	54	36%
9	10,701	9,755	1,177	12%
10	1,157	863	307	36%
11	565	464	182	39%
12	177	138	65	47%
Total	**16,496**	**14,864**	**2,976**	**20%**

Table 2. Students that participated in the Fall 2022 selection process for school year 2023-2024, broken down by school type. Table includes all students, all grades, that applied to each school type. The "criteria-based eligible students" column refers to students that were eligible to at least one criteria-based school in which they applied.

	Students Who Applied to Catchment Schools	Students Who Applied to Citywide Schools	Students Who Applied to Criteria-Based Schools	Criteria-Based Eligible Students	% of Criteria-Based Applicants that were Eligible
Fall 2022 Applicants (for SY 2023-2024), All Grades	6,758	8,835	11,967	4,910	41%

Tables 1 and 2 briefly summarize the Fall 2022 selection process across all grades. Notably, this year, across all grades, 11,967 total students applied to at least one criteria-based school. Of those, only 4,910 students (41%) were eligible for at least one criteria-based school in which they applied to and were entered into the lottery for that/those schools. Comparably, last year (Fall 2021 selection process), 69% (8070/11,648) were eligible for one criteria-based school in which they applied to. This is due to a variety of factors, including potential lack of understanding the process such as the strict criteria and the ambiguity of certain criteria (percentiles instead of raw scores), criteria set by each school, and most prominently, the reintroduction of the PSSA criteria for Fall 2022. Compared to previous years when schools managed student selection and eligibility criteria was considered a guideline, eligibility criteria under the centralized process are an unwavering requirement. This previous ambiguity may have led students and parents/guardians to still apply to a school, when they were below or on the cusp of eligibility, with the hope of still getting in. Additionally, schools may have selected criteria that were too strict for prospective students, inadvertently thwarting their enrollment goals for the 2023-2024 school year (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Eligible versus ineligible 9th grade applications to criteria-based school, sorted by decreasing number of total applications. The percentage call out references the percentage of school applications that were deemed eligible. Applications to performance and project-based criteria schools, and students that requested waived criteria through LeGare are not included. The International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are not shown.

Eligible versus Ineligible Applications by School for Rising 9th Graders[1]
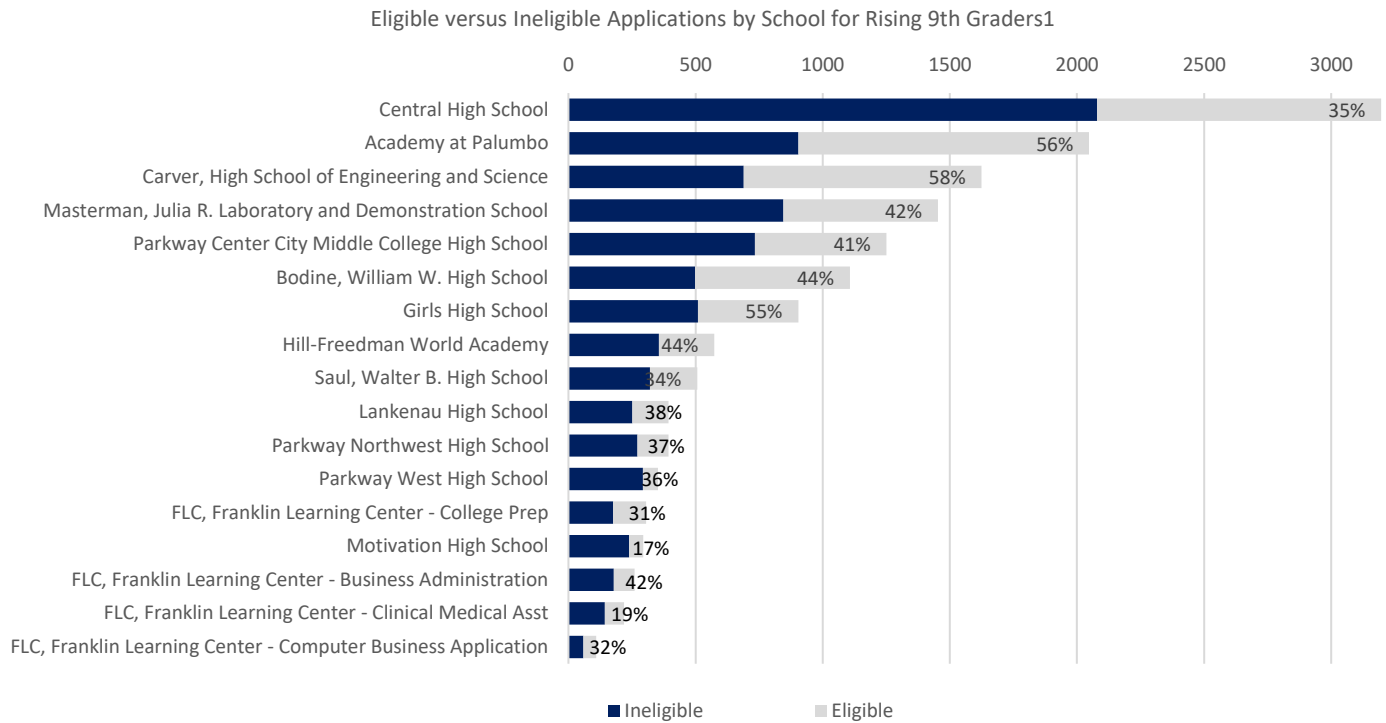
Based on historical offer-to-acceptance ratios, the District, in collaboration with Assistant Supervisors and Principals, set 'lottery caps' to limit the number of extended offers in effort to reach the school's enrollment goals based on estimated projections (offer-to-enrollment projections). Schools that received more eligible applications than their lottery cap placed the remaining students on a waitlist. For rising 9th graders, twelve (12) schools did not receive enough eligible applications to meet their lottery cap, and therefore, nor their enrollment goals (Saul, FLC, Bodine, Girls High, Hill-Freedman, CAPA, Parkway NW, Lankenau, SLA at Beeber, Parkway West, Arts Rush, and Motivation). Parkway Center City met its lottery cap but did not have a waitlist. For these twelve schools as well as Parkway Center City, there was a 100% acceptance rate for eligible applications. However, for the other seven (7) schools (Masterman, Palumbo, SLA, Central, Carver, Northeast High School, and GAMP), given the surplus of eligible applications, some students were placed on waitlists. Therefore, unfortunately, if eligible students only applied to schools within that list of seven (7) (i.e., the most competitive schools), there was a chance they could be waitlisted without a single offer given the randomized nature of the lottery (see Table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of rising 9th grade students that applied to criteria-based schools in Fall 2022. The International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are not shown. Schools with multiple programs are separated by program.

School Program Applied To	Total Applications/Applicants	# of Eligible Applicants	% of Applicants that were Eligible	# of Offers	# of Applicants on Waiting List as of 3/24/23	% Lottery Acceptance Rate (of Eligible Applicants)	Offered Student Acceptance Rate
Masterman, Julia R. Laboratory and Demonstration School	1,570	659	42%	144	515	22%	44%
Academy at Palumbo	2,395	1,290	54%	884	406	69%	34%
Science Leadership Academy (SLA)	1,675	580	35%	320	260	55%	36%
Central High School	3,653	1,252	34%	1,038	214	83%	62%
Carver, High School of Engineering and Science	1,856	1,032	56%	850	182	82%	22%
Northeast High School - Magnet Program	1,566	657	42%	594	63	90%	40%
GAMP, Girard Academic Music Program	360	166	46%	144	22	87%	41%
Science Leadership Academy (SLA) at Beeber	564	231	41%	231		100%	35%
Saul, Walter B. High School	680	242	36%	242		100%	32%
Parkway West High School	461	81	18%	81		100%	27%
Parkway Northwest High School	522	157	30%	157		100%	21%
Parkway Center City Middle College High School	1,490	600	40%	600		100%	21%
Motivation High School	399	78	20%	78		100%	24%
Lankenau High School	532	188	35%	188		100%	16%
Hill-Freedman World Academy	744	254	34%	254		100%	24%
Girls High School	1,088	461	42%	461		100%	24%
FLC - Vocal Music	49	16	33%	16		100%	31%
FLC - Instrumental Music	57	19	33%	19		100%	42%
FLC - Drama	75	18	24%	18		100%	28%
FLC - Dance	120	27	23%	27		100%	33%
FLC - Computer Business Application	177	79	45%	79		100%	28%
FLC - College Prep	404	162	40%	162		100%	24%
FLC - Clinical Medical Asst	289	111	38%	111		100%	29%
FLC - Business Administration	335	106	32%	106		100%	26%
FLC - Art	253	77	30%	77		100%	25%
CAPA - Vocal Music	154	26	17%	26		100%	54%
CAPA - Visual Arts	402	51	13%	51		100%	65%
CAPA - Theatre	213	34	16%	34		100%	56%

CAPA - Instrumental Music	146	56	38%	56	100%	36%
CAPA - Digital Media Production/Mdtv	205	38	19%	38	100%	58%
CAPA - Dance	273	22	8%	22	100%	82%
CAPA - Creative Writing	239	38	16%	38	100%	47%
Bodine, William W. High School	1,348	706	52%	706	100%	21%
Arts Benjamin Rush - Vocal Music	88	21	24%	21	100%	62%
Arts Benjamin Rush - Theatre	165	48	29%	48	100%	54%
Arts Benjamin Rush - Instrumental Music	126	37	29%	37	100%	62%
Arts Benjamin Rush - Dance	143	31	22%	31	100%	68%
Arts Benjamin Rush - Art	508	115	23%	115	100%	60%

It was confirmed during the process audit of this study that *all* students accepted to criteria-based schools met the criteria of the program in which they applied. Of the 4,910 eligible students that applied to criteria-based schools across 5th-12th grade in Fall 2022, 86% received an offer to at least one criteria-based school in which they applied. 696 students were waitlisted without a single offer to a criteria-based school (14%). During the Fall 2021 selection process, 1,304 (16%) were waitlisted without a single offer. Recommendations on this issue are addressed in the Recommendations section of this report.

Figure 2. Eligible, overall ineligibility, and the percentage ineligible due to PSSAs at a minimum (some students were ineligible to more than one criterion) for 9th grade applications to criteria-based schools, sorted by decreasing number of total applications. Applications to performance and project-based criteria schools, and students that requested waived criteria through LeGare are not included.
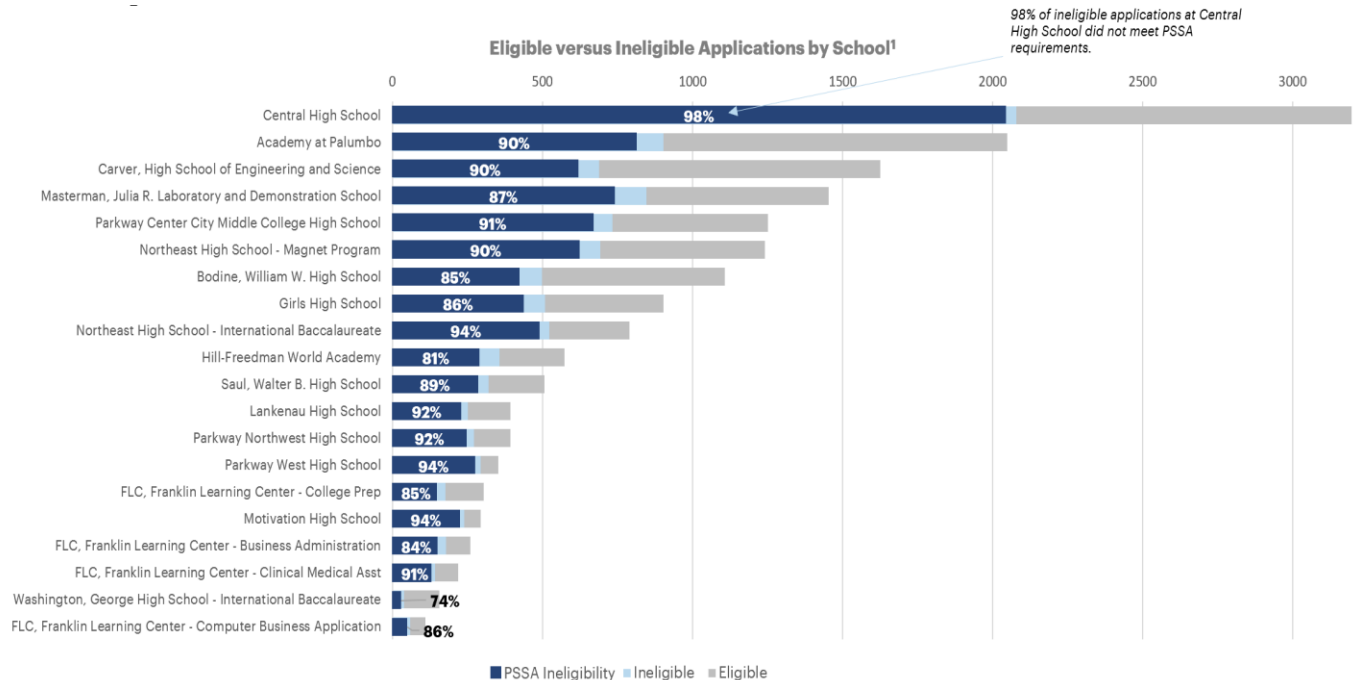
Of the three primary criterion (grades, attendance, and PSSAs), PSSAs had the greatest impact on ineligibility. A substantial 94% of total applications from rising 9th graders to criteria-based schools did not meet the PSSA requirement, excluding performance and project-based schools and those who requested waived criterion through LeGare. Comparably, 49% of applications were ineligible for the grade requirement, and 33% were ineligible for the attendance requirement. 4,939 students were ineligible for two or more criteria (41%).

Figure 3. List of schools that did not receive enough eligible 9th grade applications to meet their lottery cap but would have met their lottery cap had PSSAs not been used as eligibility criteria. The International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are not shown. Criteria-based high schools not listed received sufficient eligible 9th grade applications to meet their lottery cap.

Eligible Applications Compared to Pre-Determined Lottery Caps, if PSSA Wasn't Considered
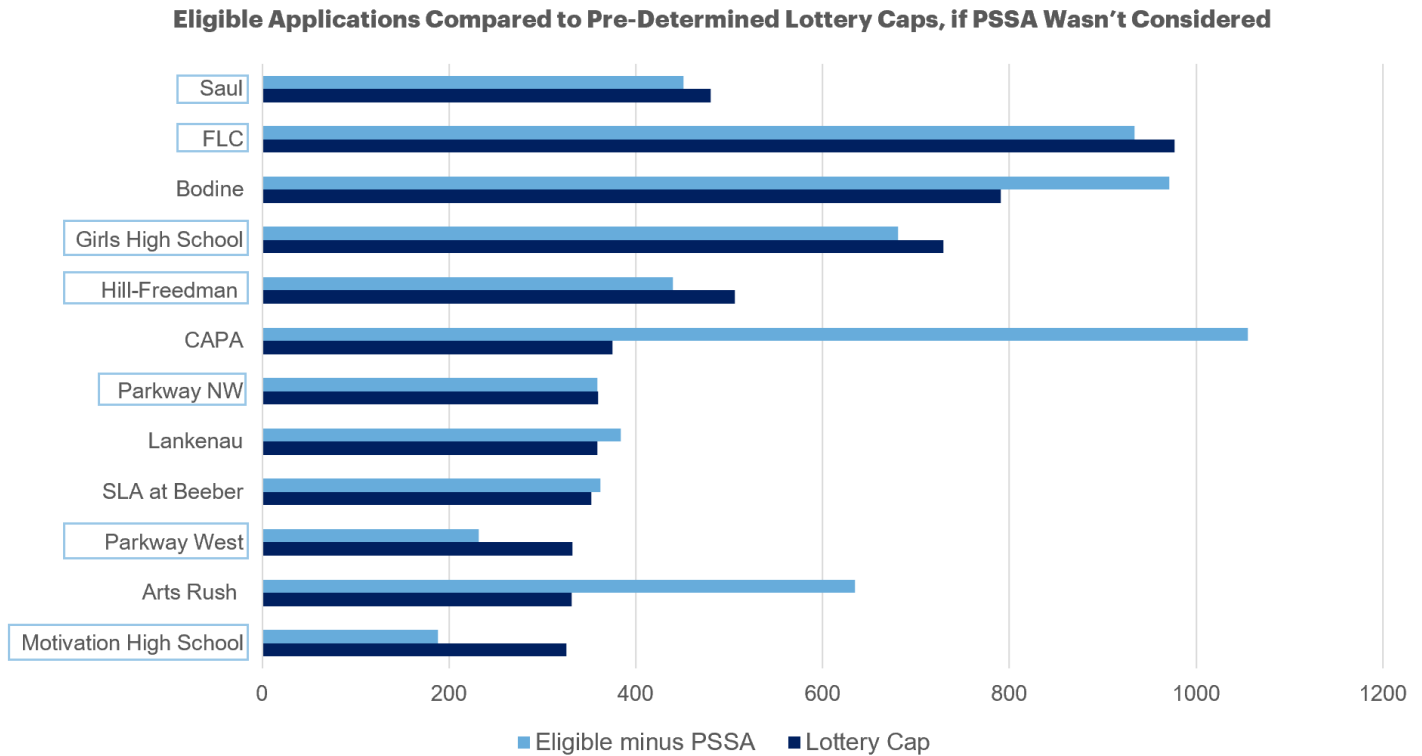
As mentioned above, of the students that applied to criteria-based schools, the PSSA was the primary inhibitor for student eligibility for the SY 23-24 cycle. A scenario was modeled for the twelve (12) schools that did not have enough eligible applications to meet their desired lottery cap. The model was used to determine how many students *would* have been deemed eligible had PSSAs not been included as a criterion (see Figure 3). Five (5) schools would have had enough eligible applications to meet their lottery cap, had grade and attendance been the only criteria and the remaining seven (7) would still face under-enrollment. Granted, this model does not account for additional potential applicants had there been no PSSA requirement.

Figure 4. Race and ethnicity breakdown of rising 9th graders applying to criteria-based schools. The grand total column refers to the breakdown of all students that applied to criteria-based schools (eligible and ineligible), and each subsequent column refers to the demographic breakdown for each eligibility criterion.

Criteria-Based Applications (Rising 9th Graders) by Criterion Eligibility and Race/Ethnic Group
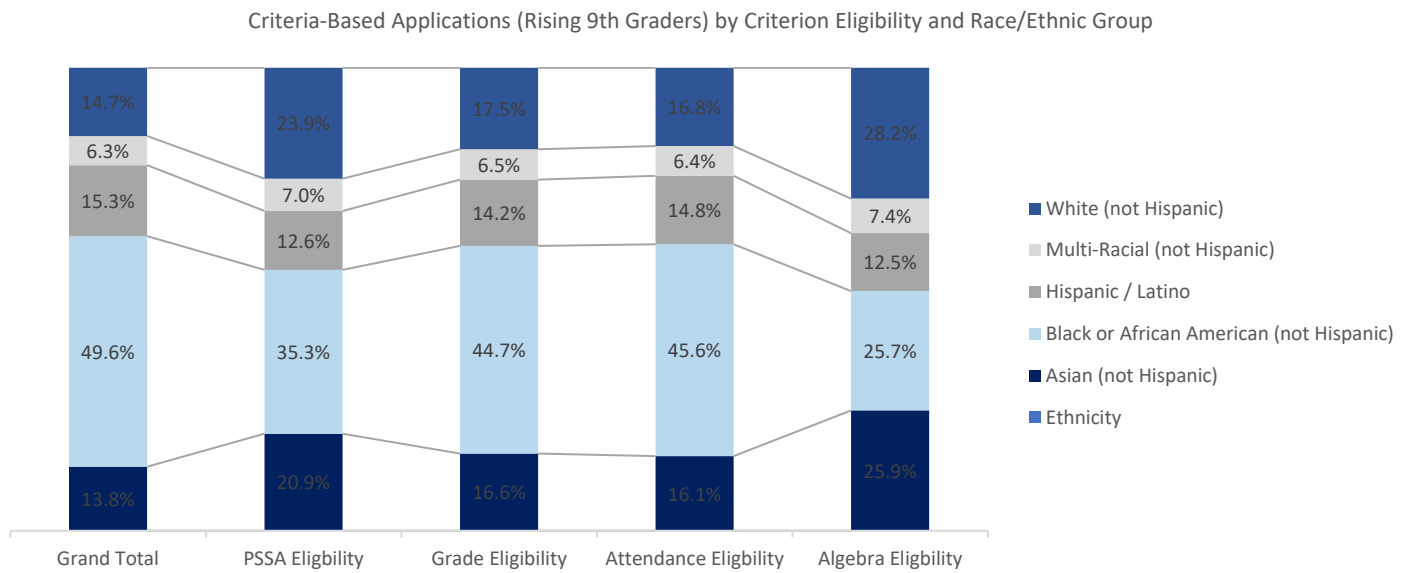
Compared to other eligibility criteria, the PSSA impacted certain demographic groups more than others. Last year, except for Masterman's algebra requirement, eligibility criteria did not have a major impact on racial and ethnic representation. This year, however, the PSSA eligibility requirement impacted racial and ethnic representation within the offered students pool and incoming 9th grade classes for criteria-based schools. More specifically, the PSSA had an adverse impact on Black and African American students, as they were the only racial or ethnic group with a significant dip between applications and eligibility. However, White, and Asian students saw an increase in the proportion of eligibility on PSSAs compared to the overall applications. This trend was not observed in the grades nor attendance criterion. Many students come from catchment schools where algebra is not offered, which majorly impacts opportunity of access to Masterman, Julia R. Laboratory and Demonstration School. There were no significant differences in criteria eligibility between genders.

Figure 5. Breakdown of different racial and ethnic groups across students accepted into criteria-based schools over the past four (4) years. The Fall 2019 and 2020 school selection processes were managed by the schools, while the Fall 2021 and 2022 processes were managed centrally by the District with the lottery.

Yearly Demographic Breakdown of Students (All Grades) Accepted to Criteria-Based Schools

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
White	19.0%	19.6%	16.4%	23%
Multi-Race/Other	7.8%	7.1%	7.2%	7%
Hispanic/Latino	13.7%	14.1%	15.0%	14%
Black	44.9%	43.6%	47.0%	35%
Asian	14.6%	15.6%	14.4%	20%

■ Asian ■ Black ■ Hispanic/Latino ■ Multi-Race/Other ■ White
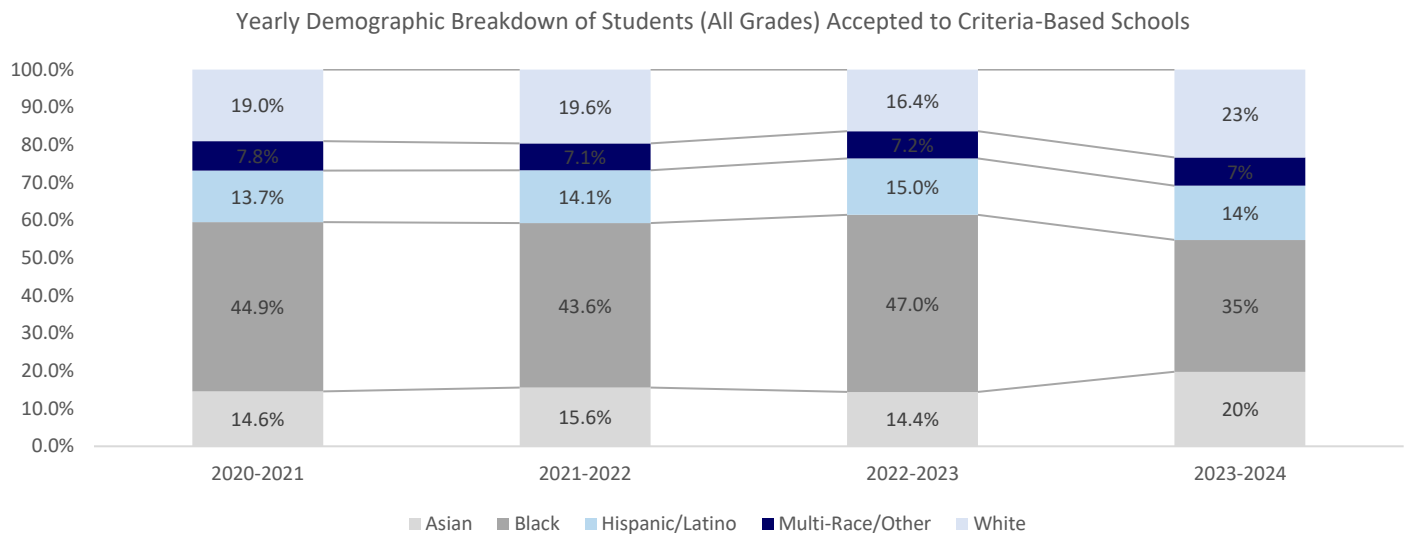
In Fall 2019 (for school year 2020-2021) and Fall 2020 (for school year 2021-2022), racial/ethnic representation remained consistent. The introduction of the lottery and centralized lottery in Fall 2021 (for school year 2022-2023) had a positive impact on representation when compared to the overall demographic breakdown of the district. However, while the centralized process / lottery appeared to have a positive impact on race and ethnic representation during the Fall 2021 process, the dip in representation for certain groups in Fall 2022 process is likely due to the introduction of the PSSA, as shown above in Figure 2.

Percent of Eligible Students Offered a Seat by Racial / Ethnic Group

As previously shown in the data, the criteria set for Fall 2022 was more prohibitive for student eligibility and acceptance than in previous years, across all students, particularly for Black and African American students. From a racial, ethnic, and gender perspective, the lottery, however, maintained more equal representation across randomly offered students than in previous years when the lottery was not used (see Figure 6).

The zip code priority was implemented in Fall 2021 to provide criteria-eligible students (5-12th grade) from zip codes with the lowest historical representation priority to the top four schools (Carver, Central, Masterman, and Palumbo) in efforts of increasing access and geographic equality. In Fall 2020, students from zip codes that were identified as underrepresented (and thus, priority) for Fall 2022 accounted for 7%, 5%, 7%, and 2% of total offers to Carver, Central, Masterman and Palumbo, respectively. Over the past two years, the zip code priority successfully increased geographic representation of students from the zip codes to those top four schools.

- In Fall 2019, 154 of 2,815 rising 9th grade students (5.5%) who received offers to the top four schools were from zip codes identified as priority zip codes in Fall 2022.
- In Fall 2020, 181 of 2,936 rising 9th grade students (6.2%) who received offers to the top four schools were from zip codes identified as priority zip codes in Fall 2022.
- In Fall 2021, 239 of 2,054 rising 9th grade students (11.6%) who received offers to the top four schools were from priority zip codes.
- In Fall 2022, 184 of 1,775 rising 9th grade students (10.4%) who received offers to the top four schools were from priority zip codes.

The process audit confirmed all students from priority zip codes that met the criteria and applied to the top four schools were offered admission.

Historical data from the Fall 2019-2020 selection processes shows that many of the top-ranked schools, such as Central, Carver, and Masterman, have had the lowest representation of students with accommodations of all criteria-based schools.

Figure 7. Comparison of criteria-based school rising 9th grader offer acceptance rate compared to the offer acceptance rate for students with accommodations, for the Fall 2022 selection process. The International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are not shown.

Rising 9th Graders Offer-to-Acceptance Rate By School, Showing Difference Between All Students and Students With Accommodations
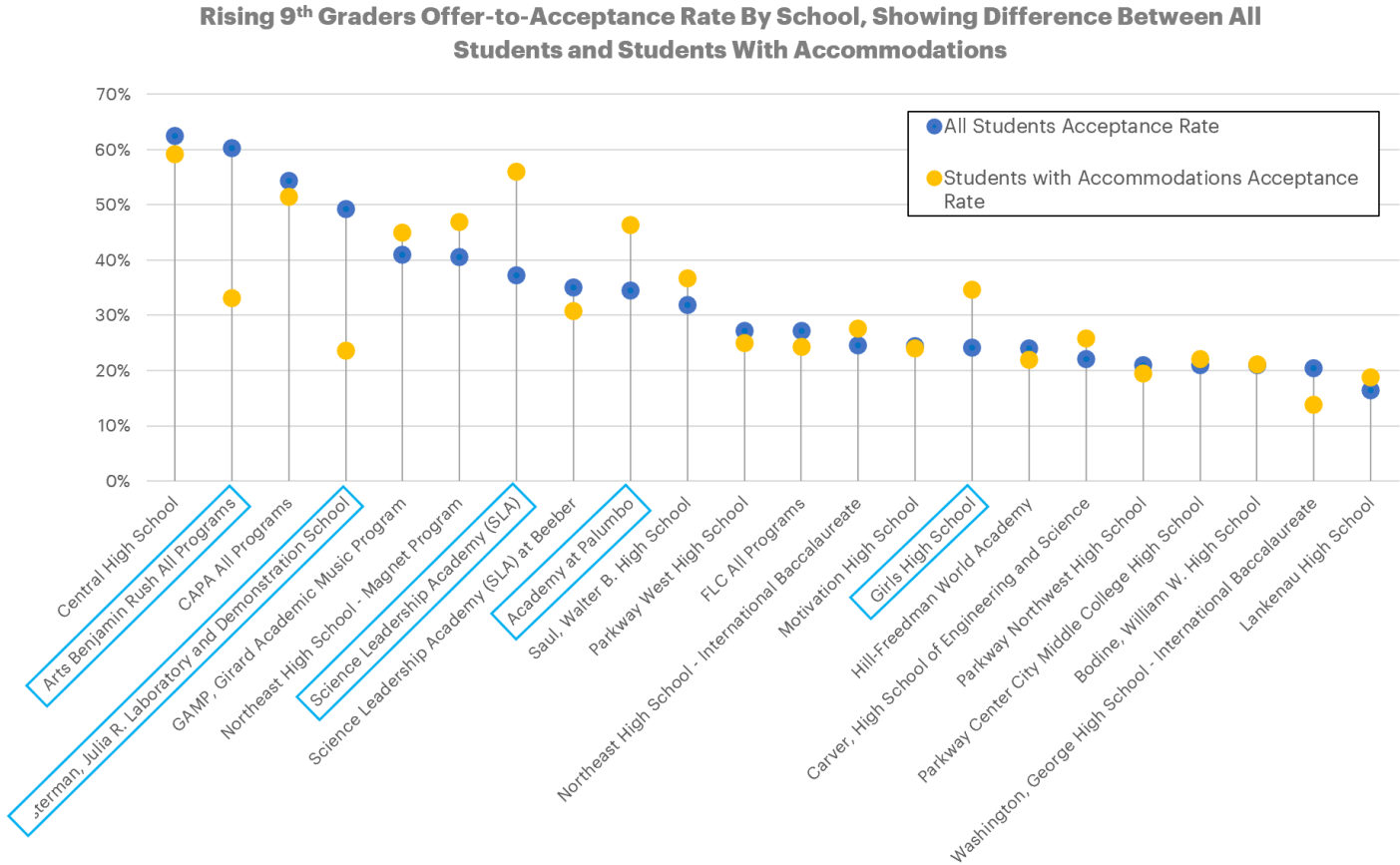
Furthermore, students with accommodations are more likely to accept offers from certain criteria-based schools, and less likely to accept offers to others (Figure 7). More specifically, students with accommodations have a higher accepted offer rate at SLA, Palumbo, and Girls High, suggesting those schools are potentially more inclusive and/or accommodating. However, Masterman and Arts Rush have much lower acceptance rates from students with accommodations than students without accommodations. The recommendation section of this report outlines potential improvements to the LeGare process, which exists to support these students.
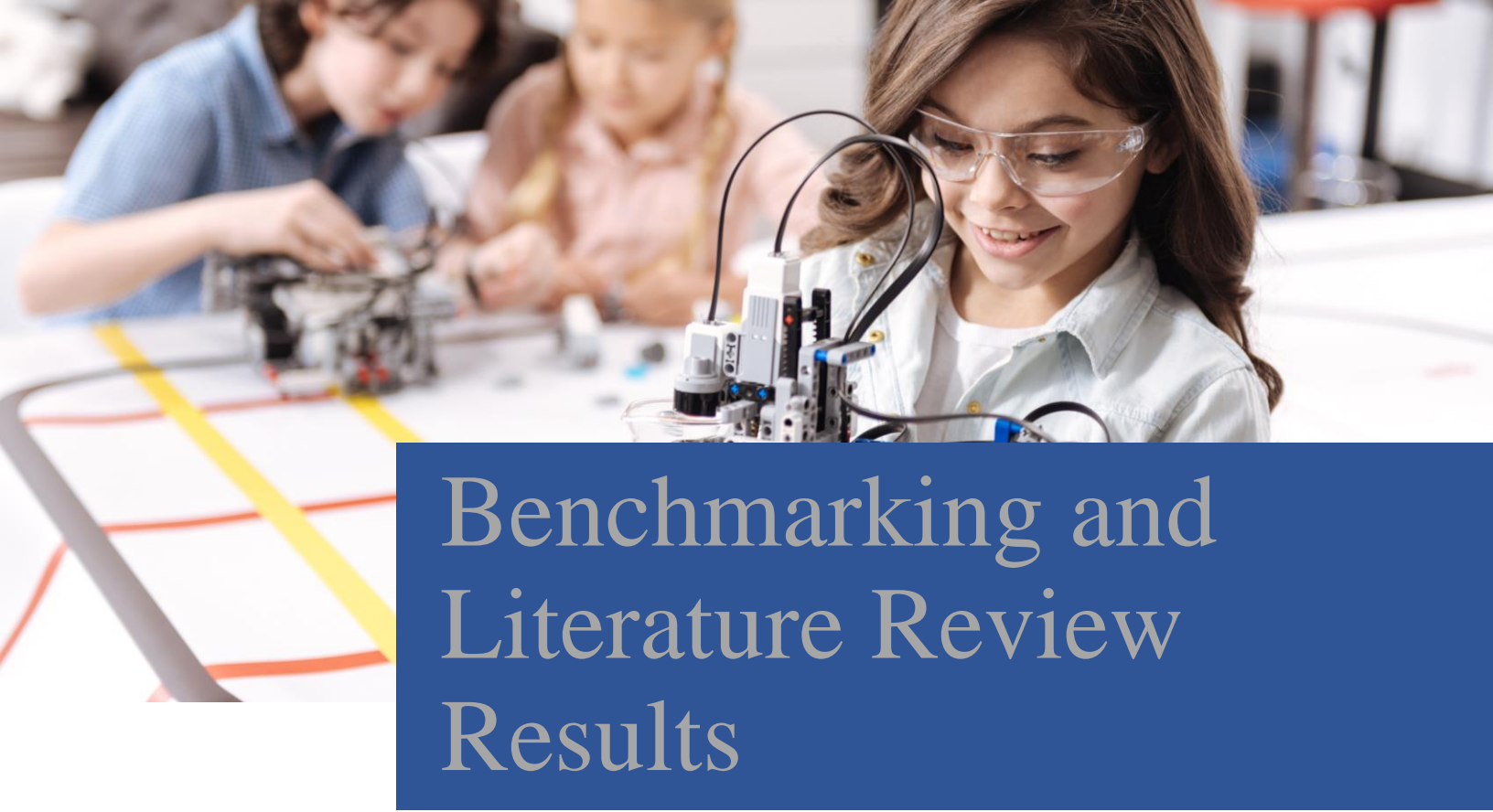
Benchmarking and Literature Review Results

Bench-marking

A top-down comparison of school selection processes at eight (8) peer districts in the United States) to the District was conducted to identify possibilities for future initiatives. The eight (8) districts are:

- Boston
- Chicago
- NOLA (New Orleans)
- Richmond
- DC
- San Francisco
- Denver
- New York City

Key insights from the benchmarking activity include (see Appendix E for more details):

- 7 out of 8 districts use a **ranking algorithm**, in which students and parents/guardians rank their selections in their order of preference.
- 5 out of 8 districts have adopted a **single best offer** lottery procedure, so that the lottery provides a single match to each student that aligns with their ranking preferences. Districts such as New York City allow students to remain on the waitlist for any school ranked higher than where they are placed.
- 5 out of 8 districts **prioritize socioeconomic factors** within their lotteries.
- 4 out of 8 districts have a **sibling priority** for students to attend the same school as that sibling if they apply there.
- 3 out of 8 districts have confirmed **utilizing a platform that enables a level of customization** to meet the complex needs of their school selection process.
- **1 out of 8 districts, Richmond Public Schools, has a completely randomized lottery process** in which parents/guardians submit up to three nonresidential schools. It is important to note that not only is Philadelphia's District nine times the size of

Literature Review

Richmond's, but also that Richmond is not a choice district where students are proactively encouraged to attend schools outside of their neighborhoods.

A literature review on school choice, school selection processes, and communications was conducted to identify leading practices. The review consists of twenty (20) sources, and key insights are highlighted below (see Appendix F for more details):

- 7th grade GPA is a better predictor of high school academics than Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT).[22]
- At selective enrollment high schools, students who score barely above or barely below the cutoff are essentially identical in prior achievement.[23]
- Randomized lotteries improve selection outcomes due to fairness inherent in randomization.[24]
- For school-based discretion, in which medical schools customize their selection criteria, Pareto-optimal weighting better balances predictiveness and diversity.[25]
- When choosing schools, in a school choice model, families prioritize school factors by what is most displayed (e.g., distance, safety, academic performance).[26]
- The intended outcomes of any choice-based mechanism (algorithm) are a result of a combination of factors, including system design, constraint, lack of information, as well as any parental preference.[27]

Conclusion

This audit sought to answer the following questions: 1) Did the District use the school selection process it **committed** to? 2) Did the District **communicate** effectively with key stakeholders? 3) What are the **perceptions** of the process change?

Commitment

The analysis confirmed that the District upheld five out of six of its public commitments:

	Process Standardization	Upholding Criteria	LeGare Process Integration	Zip Code Priority	Communication
Key Commitments	✓ Standardize the process across all criteria-based schools (here)[2] ✓ Increase equality of access by implementing a lottery for students who meet the criteria (here)[1]	✓ All students must meet the school's criteria and students that did not apply are not offered seats in a school (here)	✓ Adapt the LeGare process for implementation in a centralized admission for designated student groups (e.g., students with IEPs, 504 plans, and/or who identify as an English Language Learner) (here)	✓ Increase equity of access by implementing a zip-code preference at four criteria-based schools. This zip code preference is only applicable for qualified students living in underrepresented zip codes (here)	x The process communicated to the public and internal staff was not done in an effective manner (here)

- ✓ Commitment validated through quantitative and qualitative analysis
- x Commitment has not been fully upheld based on collected and received data

The District standardized the process across all criteria-based schools and upheld the standardization 99.99% of the time. There were roughly 20 or fewer students that successfully appealed eligibility after the appeal deadline. Each student was required to meet specific eligibility criteria in order be entered into a criteria-based school's lottery. The analysis did not find evidence of any student being admitted to schools in which they were ineligible. While standardizing the process enabled equality of access at top criteria-based schools, the Moreover, for non-traditional curriculum programs, interviews provide more insight on hands-on learning experiences to help a student determine if such a program tailored to specific occupation(s) truly aligns with their interests. requirements created new barriers. The criteria selected for the Fall 2022 school selection process had an adverse impact on Black/African American students, as they were the only racial or ethnic group with a significant dip between applications and eligibility.

The District aimed to create greater inclusion and opportunity by implementing a zip code preference at four criteria-based schools (Masterman, Central, Palumbo, and Carver). This zip code preference is only applicable for qualified students living in underrepresented zip codes, which are identified annually (using data for the last four (4) years) by the Office of Research and Evaluation. This preference nearly doubled the percentage of 9th grade students who received offers (6.2% to 11.6%) from priority zip codes from school year 21-22 to 22-23. Following the Fall 2022 process, 184 of 1,775 students (10.4%) who received offers to top criteria-based schools were from priority zip codes.

In addition to implementing a zip code preference, the District further integrated designated student groups, including students who are receiving special education services, have a physical or mental disability plan, and are English Language Learners, into the criteria-based school selection process by determining their eligibility prior to the lottery. In Fall 2022, 19% of LeGare eligible students that applied to criteria-based schools received offers, which was an increase from previous years. Given that the PSSA was the greatest preventer of eligibility, those who waived the PSSA benefited most (66% of criteria waivers were for the PSSA).

	Geographic Representation (Zip Code Priority)	Racial/Ethnic Representation	Gender	Accommodations
Outcome of the 2023-2024 Selection Process	✓ The zip code priority update to the selection process has increased criteria-based school access for students across all zip codes (here)	✓ The lottery itself increased equal selection across racial/ethnic groups. Historically, schools were able to maintain racial/ethnic representation; however, removing that ability has negatively impacted racial/ethnic representation due to eligibility criteria (here)	✓ The lottery has not had a negative impact on gender representation; however, this was not a concern in previous years (here)	✓ The lottery has increased access for students with accommodations to all criteria-based schools, however, some students with accommodations are placed in schools that are not able to meet their needs (here)

Communication

"Effective communication" is defined as the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose.

Adequate Information and Resources	Available in Multiple Languages	Understanding of Different Admissions Requirements	Understanding of Eligibility Criteria Policy	Understanding of Eligibility Cutoff
✓ There was information and resources to complete the application (here). x However, there was misinterpretation of the criteria (e.g., 95% attendance, PSSA percentile conversions, Common Transcript).	✓ Students and families received communication in a language they understood (here).	✓ There was an understanding that different schools have different admissions requirements (here).	✓ Applicants were aware of the policy that if an applicant did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school (here).	x Despite awareness, stakeholders still applied to at least one school in which they did not meet the eligibility requirement(s) (here). x There was a lack of comprehension around the strictness of the criteria applied.

In Fall 2022, schools could no longer accept students out-of-order on the waitlist. The centrally managed waitlist allows any qualified student, not initially offered a seat, to automatically know their numeric order on the waitlist and in real-time see their descending position on the waitlist number as seats are accepted and the waitlist declines. There was no evidence of any student receiving an offer out-of-order on the waitlist.

Lastly, the District maintained that the process was communicated to the public and internal staff. In the family survey on the selection evaluation, 62.4% of parents felt as if they had enough information to complete their application. Similarly, 71.4% of students felt as if they had enough information to complete their application.

On the counselor survey, only 1 out of 5 (20.9%) strongly agreed that they understood how the school selection process worked. Just as many principals felt as if they had enough information to prepare staff and students for the application process as those who did not (36.7%). These findings, combined with sentiment shared during interviews and focus groups, suggest that there was a significant gap in communication between internal staff to adequately prepare them for their roles and responsibilities.

And while students, on average, were satisfied with communication, a smaller percentage understood the underlying mechanics. 59.1% of students who completed the survey agreed that they understood how the lottery worked. 93.8% of those students were aware of the policy that if they did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school. However, 43% of respondents applied to at least one school where they did not meet the school's criteria. Only 63% of those students agreed or strongly agreed with knowing how to accept a waitlist offer from a school. The parent survey revealed similar findings, and thus it is concluded that some respondents' lack of comprehension of the enforcement of the criteria existed. Additionally, considering in previous years when selection was up to the schools, some students who were ineligible were still accepted, so it is understandable that students and parents/guardians still attempted to apply to schools where students were short on meeting the criteria. Improving communication with more timely and relevant messaging can enhance comprehension and improve stakeholder trust.

Perception

Overall, all stakeholder groups (students, parents, counselors, and principals) have a negative perception of the school selection process, with principals being the least satisfied. An overwhelming majority (71.6%) of principals were dissatisfied with the Fall 2022 school selection process. Only two principals (3.3%) were strongly satisfied. This may speak to the loss of autonomy and school-based input that schools once had. As mentioned in the recommendations below, including some level of school involvement in the selection process is valuable and will help improve school buy-in and public perception on lottery outcomes.

In conclusion,
1. Did the District use the school selection process it committed to? –Yes, The District did what they said they would do – they upheld criteria, optimized zip code priority, and integrated the LeGare review. Standardizing the process across all criteria-based schools successfully increased representation, however, the strict criteria impacted eligibility significantly which reduced overall access.
2. Did the District communicate effectively with key stakeholders? – Largely No, Detailed information was disseminated throughout the school selection process for stakeholders to complete the application successfully. However, post-application, the lack of efficacy of the messaging and training led to a misalignment in understanding outcomes.
3. What are the perceptions of the process change? – Mostly negative, Majority of stakeholders who were surveyed or participated in focus groups were not satisfied with the Fall 2022 school selection process. Counselors and principals expressed lower rates of satisfaction compared to students and parents. Parents felt largely dissatisfied with the lottery process, mostly because of the unpredictability of lottery outcomes.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the District are grounded to five (5) objectives the District intended with the process changes:

Objectives

1. Increase equity of access by minimizing subjectivity in the school selection process.
2. Create a centralized system to enable fair admissions to criteria-based schools.
3. Increase student representation, across the District, in four (4) criteria-based schools by prioritizing zip codes with the lowest participation in the school selection process from previous years.
4. Increase representation of students with accommodations through an integrated LeGare impartial review.
5. Educate stakeholders on the new process to increase buy-in.

Additionally, the recommendations are categorized across the following time horizons, prioritized by the anticipated level of effort it will take to implement combined with the sense of urgency for implementation:
1. Immediate recommendations to implement by August and November 2023
2. Intermediary recommendations with implementation goal of the Fall 2024
3. Long-term recommendations with an implementation goal of the Fall 2025

1. **Provide Offers to All Eligible 8th Graders in Middle-High Schools Who Meet Criteria** – During the recent selection cycle, there were more available seats in some criteria-based schools than there were eligible rising 9th grade applications to those schools (Table 3). In contrast, Masterman, Palumbo, Science Leadership Academy (SLA), Central, Carver, and Girard Academic Music Program (GAMP) received a greater number of eligible applications than the lottery cap, which led to students being placed on a waitlist. Since the District did not administer the PSSA in Spring 2020 or 2021 due to COVID-19, students could not utilize the super-score of the best of two previous years. The District has experienced test score declines from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022: 34% of students in grades 3-8 met state standards for English, 17% met proficiency standards for math, while 37% of students in grades 4-8 met standards for science. These numbers are down from 36%, 22%, and 40% respectively. Given that many students do not meet the Commonwealth's proficiency standards or perform well on standardized tests, the PSSA criterion and percentile need to be revisited. Further, the PSSA relies almost exclusively on one method of assessment that may fail to measure more innate abilities, such as grit and self-motivation. Additionally, the District has seen a drop in student attendance from 2020-2021 to 2021-2022, with only 37% of students reported attending 95% or more of instructional days, down from 58%.[28] Since less than half of students meet the attendance measure for criteria-based schools, the District should revisit whether to weigh each criterion equally.[29]

   - **Collaborate with school leaders to ensure criteria is a best fit for each school** – Twelve (12) criteria-based schools received fewer eligible applications than the lottery cap, which led to a 100% acceptance rate. This is due to a variety of issues including strict criteria, and possibly the low number of applications submitted for these schools. These schools were Saul, Franklin Learning Center (FLC), Bodine, Girls High, Hill-Freedman, Parkway NW, Parkway West, Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), Lankenau, SLA at Beeber, Arts Rush, and Motivation High. The requirements for admission to these schools, particularly the PSSA percentile, may have been set too high to maximize the number of offers received. If used as a condition for acceptance into criteria-based programs, the PSSA should be applied appropriately to meet those academic standards. The District and school leaders should ensure the PSSA criterion is truly needed for their school - for example, it is possible that the PSSA criterion makes sense for the criteria-based schools ranked highest in Philadelphia but does not make sense for others. The District should continue to co-develop criteria with principals.

   - **Ensure fair comparison between PSSA and alternative assessments** – The District should continue with alternative standardized assessments for select schools to increase equity of access for students homeschooled, in private school, or outside of the District. To utilize such scores as part of the admissions criteria for future application cycles, fairness must be prioritized. Rather than eliminate alternative assessments altogether, the District can normalize percentile conversions to the Philadelphia population (rather than at the national or state levels) so that there is an equal comparison score results for the TerraNova, ISEE, and other alternative exams. In a 2004 study, mathematics correlations (0.66 to .79) between PSSA and CTBS/Terra Nova were typically stronger than reading (.68 to .61) and science (.63 to .64) correlations.[30] Additionally, the TerraNova (an approved alternative assessment), that the District administers, typically takes one and a half hours to five and a half hours over a day's time. By contrast, SDP's PSSA testing window occurs over two weeks. This difference may adversely impact certain student groups more than others.

- **Long-term, apply weightings to criteria-based qualifications** – A student must meet all qualifications to be entered into the lottery for criteria-based schools. Grades, attendance, and the PSSA are all weighted equally in the process, and any one of the three acts as a disqualifier for the other two. While cumulative grades, which are a measure of a student's academic performance, can best speak to one's ability over time, attendance and PSSA scores may not accurately reflect the quality of support or education a student receives. In 2019, researcher Jonathan Taylor evaluated the New York City's elite public high schools' predictive validity and gender bias of the sole admissions criterion, the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). When the score was replaced with an admissions index, based on the SHSAT and seventh-grade GPA, with the GPA given more weight (20.243 + 0.008 *SHSAT + 0.717 *GPA7), the representation of girls increased from 44% to 65%. Similarly, the representation of African American, Hispanic, and White students increased, while Asian students still comprised the majority of students admitted (from 78% to 66%). The use of this hypothetical criterion assigned every student a percentage score rather than relying on binary eligibility criteria. Because course grades earned over the seventh grade were found to be a far better predictor than the SHSAT, this index can also increase equity without diluting the quality of the entering class.[31]
- **Define criteria** – Eligibility criteria needs to be defined in the most basic terms (i.e., concrete numbers) to reduce workload on behalf of the applicant. For example, instead of using percentiles (i.e., 95th percentile for attendance), let schools and families know that the cutoff is 9 or fewer unexcused absences.
- **Simulate admissions probability for criteria-based schools** – To estimate a simulated admissions probability, the District can run a deferred acceptance algorithm on school choices for each application, using a randomized lottery number, up to a thousand times. The admissions probability represents what percentage of a thousand cases a student is assigned to a particular school. Students who match to a single school on their application have a guaranteed admissions probability; those who never match have no admissions probability. Since this is an empirical exercise, the District can only calculate this probability for schools that a student selects. Due to the nature of a probability calculator, the tool can only predict the probability for schools to which a student applies and not the real-world outcome.[32]

2. **Develop an eligibility landing page** – Students are able to apply to schools in which they do not meet the eligibility criteria as the system allows students to select any school that accepts applications leading to a missed opportunity for an offer. To help redirect this outcome, the District should develop a simple and easily accessible landing page in which students can readily determine which criteria-based schools they are eligible for and receive recommendations. Not only would this help students and parents/guardians understand where to apply, but it would also encourage families to gather documentation earlier in the process, provide schools an additional marketing platform, and likely reduce the number of applicants that undergo the eligibility appeals process. Furthermore, future applicants could utilize the page as a motivation tool to strive for eligibility in upcoming years. Initial ideas include:
   - Landing page should direct viewers interested in learning about their eligibility to criteria-based schools to a quiz/survey format, in which they first populate the various eligibility criteria categories with their information and notate if they are eligible for the LeGare Impartial Review. For each criterion, readily available information should be provided on how to locate and format their criteria (i.e., how to find PSSA results). Viewers should be required to populate all fields to move onto the next page.

- The next page could ask students to select their interests, if any, from a list populated by the school's offerings. For example, if any of the criteria-based schools plan to offer a marching band elective for the following school year, that shall be included on the list.
- The viewer should then be taken to a results page in which they are informed of the criteria-based schools in which they are eligible for (based on the information provided in survey), as well as the schools they are ineligible, and which criteria prevented their eligibility to those schools. Students that are eligible for LeGare could receive a recommendation for which criteria to waive, if any. Additionally, viewers could be made aware of the eligible schools that might best suit their interests (i.e., have marching bands). From there, SDP could link additional information to each school for students and parents/guardians to learn more.
- Build and release for the Fall 2024 selection process. In future years, update in the spring with selection and school information.
- Allow log in capabilities to view saved / unfinished process, as well as outcomes. Allow students to retake the 'quiz.'
- Invite current students and parents/guardians to test design through usability testing.
- Create a detailed infographic or video explaining how the lottery works by illustrating lottery number generation, school choice, randomization, and the range of outcomes to decode the lottery for stakeholders.

3. **Revise existing communications strategy** (beginning July 2023) – The District's Communications and Office of Student Enrollment and Placement (OSEP) teams should co-develop a communications strategy, with specific dates, and a responsibility matrix to communicate a shared process on notifying students, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders. The communication plan outlined below has two major differences from previous strategies: 1) 1st through 12th grade lottery results are released the last week of January after holiday breaks. 2) For kindergarten and new-to-District students, the lottery is held the first week of May to ensure catchment students are prioritized and to give schools more accurate waitlist numbers.[33] (See Appendix A for a detailed, proposed communications plan).

4. **Enhance the LeGare review process** – As a greater proportion of students undergo the LeGare process, more resources are needed to expand capacity and enable scale. Approximately one out of six 8th grade District and non-District students (nearly 1,600 out of 10,700 8th grade applicants) with an IEP, a 504 Plan, or who identify as English Learners waived part of the Fall 2022 admissions process under the LeGare Consent Decree. To accommodate the increasing volume of impartial reviews for applications, within a firm deadline, supporting staff have experienced an increase in workload to meet the demand. And although families have taken on more responsibility post-COVID in preparing their children's advocacy folders for the LeGare review, survey results demonstrate that 37.2% of parents/guardians were not satisfied with the assistance they received as a parent or guardian of a child with an IEP, 504 plan, or receiving English Learner services. Parents do not have adequate knowledge to make informed decisions on which schools can best support students with IEP and special education programming – a crucial step in the LeGare process.
   - **Adequately notify stakeholders of the LeGare process** – Principals, counselors, family engagement liaisons, bilingual counseling assistants, and others require comprehensive training (~2 weeks before the application opens) to adequately inform and guide parents in the educational decision-making process under the LeGare Consent Decree. Moreover, a high-quality software demo that counselors can access at any time to learn more about the LeGare process would accelerate learning significantly. Parents need tactical guidance and

understanding of how the process works, how it impacts their child, and how decisions are made in the language(s) and vernacular they are accustomed to. Additionally, ensure families are made aware that the LeGare impartial review is an appeals process, therefore, students, parents/guardians cannot appeal the decision made.

- **List accommodations and services for all criteria-based schools** – The District LeGare Team should require that all school-based LeGare Teams (principal or designee, ELL Teacher, Special Education Liaison (SEL)/Special Education, Building Point of Contact, School Nurse (504 Plan), counselors) list and confirm all reasonable support systems that their schools provide. Guidance counselors can use this information to assist students and parents/guardians in deciding which schools to apply to.

- **Include actionable language within the decision explanation for those deemed ineligible** – A brief, standardized explanation on why a student's waiver was not accepted should be part of the LeGare review for Fall 2023. To accommodate this additional step, the suggested timeline for this assessment has been lengthened. This will minimize the number of families who request an appeal to understand why the impartial review did not work in their child's favor. Long-term, the District can collaborate with their enrollment management vendor to provide specific outcomes, or explanation codes, accessible via the application portal.

- **Assign counselors to provide more school-based support** – Consider promoting selected nurses or counselors of each catchment area into a specialist role in which they are responsible for maintaining working knowledge of all reasonable accommodations for schools within that catchment. Specialists would be the first point of contact when the District LeGare Team has specific inquiries on whether a school can adequately support a student's needs and serve as the final decision-maker for such cases. Alternatively, with the lengthened timeline, more school-based counselors can directly offer input without designating specific individuals.

- **For Fall 2024, encourage families to submit a pre-LeGare screening survey** – Families should submit a pre-LeGare survey along with their child's advocacy folder. The District will provide a Google form survey that when information is inputted, suggests the most optimal criteria to waive, benchmarking the student's credentials against their school choices. Doing so will prevent families from incorrectly waiving criteria, or even undergoing the LeGare process when it is not needed for their child's circumstances. (This would be a part of the "Landing Page" recommendation).

- **For Fall 2025, expand the impartial review process to criteria-based middle school entry grades** – Representation of diverse learners is relevant for all grades. Additionally, one of the recommendations is to allow qualified 8th graders in middle-high schools to enroll in 9th grade automatically. As this would decrease the incoming (new) 9th grade student population, and thus decrease equality of access and student representation, the middle school grades should undergo a similar process to ensure adequate representation of diverse learners. Work with the governing Board of Education to update the LeGare Consent Decree to include an impartial review to entry criteria-based middle school grades as well.

5. **Provide offers to all eligible 8th graders who meet criteria in middle-high schools and eliminate the need for them to reapply** – Schools such as Masterman and the Girard Academic Music Program (GAMP) enroll students from fifth grade through twelfth. With this approach, students who meet academic standards are positioned early to meet the academic rigor and culture that these schools provide. Under the District's current school selection process, eighth graders must be reentered into

the lottery system for a possible opportunity to be offered a seat in the current school's ninth grade class. The process has not made a concerted effort to prioritize academic and cultural continuity. With these implications, the teaching and learning climate may look entirely different from eighth to ninth grade. Instructional program coherence can best be achieved for middle-high school students by ensuring the transition is not too disjointed for students to overcome. Thus, current middle-high school eighth graders that meet criteria should automatically receive offers for program continuation.

- **Standardize 9th grade promotion for existing students** – It is vital to maintain the same rigor as students at middle-high schools transition from grades eighth to ninth. In 2020, Missouri Consultants for Education implemented a successful policy for mid-level feeder school retention. Students who fail to meet grade-level objectives met with a committee to review the student's academic record, test scores, and relevant work samples.[34] Students were then retained, or in some cases expelled, unless there was an upward trend in improving their work. A standardized approach for promotion and retention sends a message that promotion to 9th grade in middle-high schools is not a guarantee for existing students. It will also uphold the standards in which middle-high schools set forth. The standardized requirements should be publicly reported, and the process should be externally audited yearly to minimize bias and ensure fairness for all students.
- **Optimize seats to allow continuity of existing students and opportunity for incoming high school students** – Currently, at certain middle-high criteria-based schools, the middle school average class size is larger than the average high school class size which prevents continuity and the opportunity for new, incoming high school students to apply. At Masterman, for example, the 2023-2024 original enrollment goal average for middle school (5th-8th grades) was 181 students, and 115 students for high school. At GAMP, the original enrollment projections were 83 and 62 students, respectively. Assuming a majority of middle school students at these schools apply to the continued high school, meet the eligibility criteria, and desire attending, the reduction in class size will effectively prevent new, incoming students from attending. As opposed to increasing the overall school population, Masterman and GAMP should gradually (over 1-4 years) increase the size of their high schools and reduce the size of their middle schools to allow opportunity for new students to be enrolled in the 9th grade.
- **Provide resources to help incoming students succeed** – Middle-high schools need to establish effective interventions to fully integrate new students in the existing culture. Summer academic transition programs, in-school tutoring, mentorship, and encouragement in extracurricular activities are some of the recommended interventions based on research. [35] Furthermore, middle-high schools should capitalize every opportunity to integrate incoming students into the existing culture, for example, ensuring a mix of student type in advisories.

6. **Maintain zip code priority preference** – Geographic diversity has long been a method to increase feeder school representation, across the District and in other Districts, at four (4) criteria-based schools.
   - Share the "why" behind the zip code preference – Communicate the explicit purpose of the priority process and the intended outcomes.
   - Explore other approaches to achieve increases in District geographic representation:
     o Utilize catchment school – Prioritize geographic diversity by a designated catchment (neighborhood).
     o Utilize census tracts – Census tracts provide more geographic granularity and are associated with more reliable demographic-economic data. In

Philadelphia, there are 372 census tracts compared to 48 zip codes. Boston Exam Schools created tiers based on census tracts and one school saw a large increase in geographic diversity from 18% to 43%.36 37 To determine this, the District would need to build a map, overlayed with recent Census data, that easily allows families to enter their home address and informs them whether they are in a priority tract. Boston Public Schools has built a tool for families to input their addresses and determine the catchment they live in, with selected zones that are then prioritized in applications.38 This tool would be available on the school selection website, and a stepper would be included to give step-by-step instructions on how to use the tool. During the evaluation phase the District will need to validate addresses.

7. **Continue the simplified lottery for Fall 2023, with the goal of long-term improvement** – The placement of students in the lottery process enables equality of access. However, a long-term continuation of running each school's lottery in a siloed, simplified manner will not further expand access, but hinder it because the lottery is not optimizing offers to students. The District should use the remainder of this school year and next to explore school selection algorithms that enable best-fit offers to students. In addition to that, the following recommendations should also be considered to improve the experience for participants:

   - **Confirm that every school reaches out to students with offers** – Provide principals with a spreadsheet that contains the name and contact information of every student that receives an offer to their school. School staff can then proceed with outreach to notify families of next steps. All schools shall perform outreach by April.
   - **Share rejection letters for interview, performance, and project-based applicants** – Provide students with a short description of why they did not meet eligibility, once lottery results are released.
   - **Have families update their contact information** – Ensure contact information for all students and parents is up to date by requiring applicants to enter all demographic fields. Phone numbers and email addresses can then be imported back into the SIS system and reconciled through each school's administration team.
   - **Permit counselors to submit extenuating circumstances** – As part of the appeals process, permit counselors to submit a letter explaining extenuating circumstances on students' behalf and to submit supporting documentation, when appropriate.
   - **Share lottery outcomes of previous years** – To help families put their children's qualifications into perspective, the District can share the number of applicants offered and waitlisted for previous years for all schools. This information can be shared in a stepper, on the High School Program List within the SDP School Selection website, and in any publications shared at the GreatPhillySchools K-8 and High School Fairs.
   - **Expand user types within the enrollment management system** – There are currently three distinct levels of users within the District's enrollment management system: Super-User, Admin, and Parent – which pose user limitations for the latter two categories. Parent/Guardian accounts cannot override what is directly inputted by student users. Students can complete and submit applications without informed consent. The Admin role, often assigned to counselors and other school staff, enables users to view and edit school-based information (e.g., upload materials). Except for Super-Users, Admins cannot perform the following: add/manage users, manage or edit applications, manage discovery, and decline reasons, input custom messages, or manage registration packets. A school-specific super-user role would allow counselors to provide greater assistance to students and parents/guardians when

completing the application and gain greater visibility into profiles (e.g., updated contact information).

8. **Advocate for the Philly High School Fair to be held earlier** – In 2022, the Philly High School Fair (not affiliated with the School District of Philadelphia) took place Friday, October 14th and Saturday, October 15th – halfway through the application window.[39] The District should recommend that GreatPhillySchools host the fair in late August or early September so that students have an opportunity to get educated on schools to narrow down their five school selections earlier in the process.

9. **Send correspondence to non-District counselors** – The invitation to counselor training and the announcement of the opening of the school selection process should be sent out to counselors outside of the District as well as homeschooling families.

10. **Offer more PSSA resources to students –** For the Fall 2022 selection cycle, 94% of ineligible 9th grade applications to non-performance, criteria-based schools did not meet PSSA eligibility requirements. Currently, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does not provide preparatory resources for PSSAs, they only provide test design and scoring information. To ensure students are adequately prepared for school selection eligibility requirements, the District can collaborate with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to obtain old exams and full practice tests for students. In the interim, more schools can provide college readiness and tutoring support for comprehension of PSSA exam material. Taking it one step further, in New York City, the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) is an assessment administered to eighth and ninth grade students interested in applying to specialized high schools. NYC Public Schools provides two sample tests and two sample SHSAT answer sheets.[40] Within the sample test documents, there are explanations for each answer at the end. The SHSAT webpage also includes information on what to expect on the test, strategies to prepare, scoring, and how the results are reported. The District can also consider developing a Philadelphia-wide test or implementing NWEA MAP, a nationally normed standardized achievement test, for criteria-based schools. With this, the District would then need to provide sample tests, test strategies, and scoring information so students are better prepared for the exam.
    - **Analyze assessment results:** Analyze what parts of the exam students poorly perform in. By placing more emphasis on the areas that contribute to low test scores, school administrators can focus on reteaching specific lesson plans to increase mastery of core material.

11. **Expand open houses and shadow days** – Catchment schools host kindergarten Open House events at least two times a year, typically in the spring. Expand this for non-catchment students, and even citywide schools, so that families can become acquainted with kindergarten learning experiences beyond their neighborhoods.
    - **Offer open houses to admitted students** – Schools should only be required to offer open houses for students who are admitted. Schools that have the capacity to host additional shadow days during the application window can.

12. **Host SchoolMint application labs for families –** The school selection application is open to students and parents/guardians from mid-September to early November (approximately 7 weeks). During this time, families must fill out applications within the portal and may receive support from counselors, Bilingual Counseling Assistants, and Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) liaisons. However, counselors do not have complete access to student applications within the SchoolMint system, hindering them from providing more personalized support. To make the application process easier for families, walk-in assistance sessions should be held at the District building, with involvement from FACE and high school

volunteers. Labs are to be held at convenient times, including nights and weekends leading up to the deadline. Personnel can assist families in determining eligibility, advising on school choices, and ultimately completing the application. This form of advising allows families to interact with a broader range of community members, without increasing the burden on school staff.

13. **Optimize lottery system** – According to the student survey distributed to evaluate the school selection process, most students would like the District to remove the lottery (54.4%) or allow students to rank school choices if the lottery remained (38.2%). Similarly in parent survey results, 27.6% of parents believed that the best way to improve school selection is by allowing students to rank their school choices through an interdependent lottery system. Additionally, due to the independent nature of the lottery runs today, students are not receiving the best and/or optimal number of offers today. There are several existing options that SDP can investigate further:

    - **Allow students to rank applications** – The ability to rank school applications provides insight into a student's best-fit choice in which students are matched to schools that they are most excited to attend. Rankings can also inform a student's place on waitlists for schools ranked higher than where a student is matched. The District can attach a ranking priority to a family's number one choice, which would then impact the order in which students are prioritized for each school lottery in which they apply for. In addition to connecting a student with his or her best-fit school, this data can also be used to help the District expand choice offerings (e.g., increasing funding and seats at higher-ranked schools, offering transportation vouchers, increasing resources for students with disabilities, etc.).
    - **Optimize students receiving at least one offer** – If an interconnected lottery system was implemented, the ranking and matching process could provide each applicant with offers to the highest-ranked schools on their list in which they meet eligibility criteria, and in which space is allotted. The algorithm would work to place as many applicants as possible in the schools they want.
    - **Enhance waitlist features** – Allow students and families to request to be removed from waitlists they wish to leave, freeing up spots for others. The District of Columbia utilizes a similar feature in the My School DC Application system.[41] In this instance, if a student is matched to their number one choice, they are not waitlisted at other schools. If a student is matched to a school that is ranked below their number one choice, they are only placed on the waitlists of schools ranked above where they are matched.

14. **Determine process to secure sports for qualified students with no offers, where there are open seats** – Schools should have the resources and contact information of families to reach out to students without a District school offer. Data from the Fall 2019 school selection suggests that for District applicants, schools were primarily selecting students that met the criteria (albeit not necessarily in sequential order). If there are still unfilled seats after late spring, for instance, the District can collaborate with schools to determine the best process for filling these seats, if necessary, so long there is sufficient demand and capacity to support additional enrollment.

15. **Eliminate organizational silos at the District level** – Significant changes were made for the Fall 2022 school selection process. However, the District did not ensure internal alignment across departments to enable a successful program adoption and launch through change planning. Change planning begins with the analysis of key stakeholder groups and the respective impacts the changes will have on each group. It better prepares stakeholders for upcoming changes and enables better execution of the change to ensure long-term program success through adoption and buy-in.

- **Catalog stakeholders** – Document each stakeholder group in the school selection process, their role, mindsets, and existing communication channels.
- **Define change impacts** – Determine how the changes to the school selection process will impact those stakeholders, and other processes, and technology. This will inform and refine the change management strategy and future change interventions (e.g., training, communications, etc.) to ensure students and other stakeholders are set up for success.
- **Establish a change network** – Identify key stakeholders, or champions, to drive awareness of the change, communicate benefits, and drive change adoption. Champions can support the District's objectives by advocating the vision, encouraging engagement, and providing an ear on the ground. Whenever possible, champions should have a thorough understanding of the details of the school selection process.
- **Develop a communications strategy and approach** – Review "Revise existing communications strategy" within the Top Recommendations.
- **Conduct training needs analysis and deliver training** – Gather feedback on the existing training approach and resources for counselors, families, and others. Perform a training needs analysis, then socialize and validate. Develop or refresh resources and training that addresses the impacts and complexity levels of each process change (e.g., outcomes of the lottery) and implications. Provide hyper care and training augmentation (e.g., District application assistance labs to support students and parents/guardians in troubleshooting and/or application submission). Conduct training evaluation to capture feedback and best practices to codify for future years.
- **Identify KPI metrics and scorecards** – Ensure readiness and adoption of all stakeholder groups with defined KPIs and metrics that reflect the superintendent's strategic vision and intended outcomes. Build and track readiness scorecards and dashboards to ensure transparency and establish a cadence to review and share outcomes publicly.

16. **Launch a community-centric engagement strategy** – Involve more stakeholders in proposed changes to the school selection process to increase buy-in. The aim of a community-centric engagement is to incorporate the knowledge and perspective of all parties into the District's immediate and long-term recommendations.
    - **Roll out a strategic engagement strategy for SY 2024 – 2025** – Starting in March 2024, the District should develop a process to share proposed changes to key stakeholder groups using existing methods such as on the SDP school selection site, within parent and student portals, and via an anonymous voting procedure. Key performance indicators will track progress toward objectives and ensure transparency to maximize the impact of the plan.

17. **Show a 'Day in the Life' of Students** – School progress reports, handbooks, and websites do not give an accurate representation of what a day in the life of a student is like. Those considering different schools need a way to envision their academic and extracurricular experiences before making their five selections. An app or magazine-style handbook can be excellent mediums in distributing this messaging widely.

18. **Promote CTE programs to increase student interest**– On average, between 20% and a quarter of Philadelphia graduating seniors in recent years have gone through a CTE program. Of the 43 specialties, just seven were at 100% capacity in the 2021-2022 school year.[42] Studies illustrate that CTE programs with well-defined career middle-highs, aligned core academics, and students placed in smaller learning communities had the most positive educational outcomes.[43]
    - **Identify barriers to CTE access** – According to peer-reviewed literature, even when high-quality CTE programs are available, there are barriers to access particularly for girls, students with disabilities, and BIPOC students.[44] Further,

the District's CTE programs, such as West Philadelphia and Mastbaum, struggle to fill their seats during school selection due to low number of applications to the schools. CTE programs can collectively develop strategies to conduct intentional outreach to learners who may not at first consider occupational offerings as part of their school choice.

- **Establish an interview for all CTE and alternative-curriculum schools** – Studies suggest that unstructured, one-on-one traditional interviews can have limited validity on a student's future performance. By contrast, multiple mini-interviews – in which applicants are provided semi-structured questions by trained interviewers (current students and teachers) predict higher objectivity toward future academic performance.[45] Moreover, for non-traditional curriculum programs, interviews provide more insight on hands-on learning experiences to help a student determine if such a program tailored to specific occupation(s) truly aligns with their interests. Career immersion *after* the school selection process may surface shortcomings that could immediately be identified and addressed during an interview phase. Interviews should also apply to service academies, including the Philadelphia Military Academy (PMA).

- **Institute McKinney Vento CTE programs** – Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, learners experiencing homelessness or displacement can immediately access CTE programs of study at any time of year.[46] The expanded definition of special populations includes those facing historical barriers, migrant workers, and others. With an estimated 10,000 homeless students currently attending Philadelphia public schools, the District must provide appropriate academic support and services.[47] While CTE schools can help equip such populations with the skills and credentials needed to obtain jobs with living wages, lack of access to wraparound services cause students to struggle in succeeding. Through the establishment of McKinney Vento programs schools can help address these unique education barriers and pave the way for living-wage employment.

19. **Support marketing for all schools** – Many schools within the District do not have the capacity to effectively market their curriculum and enrichment offerings to prospective students and families. However, the schools offer quality programs that are valued in the community and need to be shared with prospective students to prevent families from selecting schools only based on first-glance reputation. For instance, historically, Strawberry Mansion High School has had a tough time shaking its reputation due to neighborhood safety concerns and a lack of funding. However, Strawberry Mansion has effectively been using marketing to make a powerful impact on the public – and redefine its reputation as a welcoming and safe haven for all students.[48] Given the prominence of school selection in Philadelphia, it is important for the District to empower schools to share their value proposition in a way that excites and attracts students that would be a good fit. As an exemplar, Los Angeles Unified School District has a robust marketing effort that utilizes data-driven insights, school marketing toolkits, advertising, and more.[49]

    - **Implement data-driven marketing** – To increase enrollment at less prominent schools, the District can collect and analyze data on student retention and satisfaction. This will allow schools to easily identify factors that families care most about, and position themselves in a way to exceed those expectations while maintaining their overall mission.

    - **Design customizable marketing toolkit** – To effectively support all District schools, marketing toolkits should be provided. Toolkits may contain briefs, which succinctly articulates what a school wants to accomplish and efforts they currently have underway. Additionally, kits may include an image library of current students, social media snippets, signage, and other creative

imagery. These kits will equip staff and students with the necessary resources needed to launch authentic campaigns. Each school would need a designated campaign manager as well as student advocates who can speak about their day-to-day experiences.

- **Debrief on the Philly School Experience Survey (PSES)** – In June, once the PSES has closed, the District's Office of Research and Evaluation analyzes survey results. Alongside these insights, staff and administrators should stay abreast of student and family reviews (on sites such as Google, Niche, Public School Review), school profiles (on GreatPhillySchools and U.S. News & World Report), and local news. Reviewing this information will allow schools to understand how they are perceived by the public and help them craft talking points in addressing those discernments. Schools can utilize these sources in further enhancing their marketing plans.

Recommendations to Implement by Fall 2025

20. **Evaluate vendors for future lottery and enrollment management system** – The varying needs of schools and students within the District calls for a more complex and custom enrollment algorithm and a system well-suited to those needs. Currently, custom reports are not immediately available for school staff – resulting in external dashboards to track disparate data. The siloed lottery process does not take into consideration the interconnectedness of schools, thus diminishing the chance of each student receiving at least one offer. One of the most concerning issues is that students are allowed to submit applications to schools for which they do not meet the criteria— this leads to a lot of wasted effort and loss of trust in the system itself. The District has the option to build, buy, or borrow:

    - **Build a new enrollment management system from scratch**: The District can build a bespoke, customized platform on top of Salesforce for Education or another integrated platform. This approach requires the most time, capital investment, and long-term commitment, in addition to dedicated staff to scale impact.

    - **Shortlist and select a different platform**: The District can perform a gap assessment of its current software capabilities against key requirements. After the gap assessment report, a project team can carry out vendor shortlisting and facilitate demos, including with the District's current vendor. With the help of community stakeholders, the project team would then evaluate each system and share findings. Lastly, the District will finalize an implementation roadmap for the selected system. With an upgraded platform, the District has more power to make sure that their wants and needs are expressed and accomplished before signing the contract. Nevertheless, switching to a different platform entirely might bring about issues that weren't originally foreseen.

    - **Integrate new features on existing platform**: Overall, the experience of using the existing tool is familiar for both families and schools. When it comes to more complex tasks – such as integrating lottery algorithms or displaying scorecards for principals to evaluate performance and project candidates – other back-end platforms can be utilized, and their results can be brought back into the current platform and displayed to families. This is an effective workaround that would allow the District to assess what they need from an enrollment management system without any disruption to the current user experience. A feature wish list includes:

Enrollment Management Feature Wishlist			
Sign-up and login	**Application**	**School Selection**	**Selection Outcome**
Lasting login credentials (single sign-on) so those set during the application process are used for SIS system, as well	Request verified electronic transcripts from school administrators by officially signing release forms through the system	Codes and explanations that explain why students are ineligible, then allows them to make another school selection	Ability for schools to manage schedule of tours, interviews, and other admissions activities by contacting students directly in-platform
Allow families to update their contact information year-round with SIS integration	Customize reports to track the entire enrollment process, including family progress on submissions, and administrative users' workflow status. Users notified of incomplete sections, with ability for staff to view patterns/trends of incomplete applications	For schools with more complex admissions process, ability to read, score, and review applications and submissions within platform	Predictive Enrollment Analytics to provide insights to address challenges around budgeting, facilities, and staff planning, and promotes data-driven decisions for management teams and school boards
Separate application portals for new-to-District versus non-District families. Archive, rather than delete, inactive accounts (for students who transition out-of-district)	Tooltips that users can turn on/off to guide through the application process. For instance, a tooltip reminding parents to input PSSA scores prior to hitting "submit."	LeGare and appeals processes run in-platform (no external information or data entry required)	Streamline communication with easy email notifications to all applicants on their application status following the lottery results
Self-service password reset with use of mobile text code and notification	Counselors receive edit and notification access for students currently attending their schools	Ability to customize algorithm, weightings, and preferences by school and grade with pre-built scenario modeling; ability to change weightings at the District level	Online registration for students accepted through the lottery. Students can officially enroll in school and submit additional information, documents, and records
Provide email address deliverability and validation, helping to understand why particular messages may have bounced or skipped in transit.	Make sure every field that users must complete are already within the application (e.g., test scores)	Update "eligible" and "ineligible" language for LeGare and project/performance-based applicants to state "qualified" or "unqualified"	Automatically emails and texts students and parents when movement on a waitlist occurs, with ability to customize preferences (e.g., any movement, offer received, etc.)
Enable Live artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot to limit helpdesk calls	Application automatically rejects forms not in an acceptable format (e.g., common transcript)	Automatically notify when applications are incomplete and tag counselors to notifications	Waitlist management - allow students to monitor their place in the queue on their phone and receive notifications, get an estimate of their chances of getting off the waitlist, opt out of the list at any time, and be contacted through several methods when a seat becomes available
Comprehensive manual – technical and non-technical, updated on an feature-release basis (either paper-based or an online wiki)	Timeline and calendar embedded within application portal, with ability to view by clicking on a button at anytime	Allow students to update their school selection after learning of ineligibility	

Appendices

Appendix A. Proposed Communication Timeline

Date	Message	Audience	Timeline/Process Change
1st – 12th Grade			
June 13th – July 24th	Leveraging short-term recommendations in this report, define selection process for upcoming year	Internal staff	New
June 20th	Communicate to schools that the District will define criteria for Fall 2023 in collaboration with school principals between July 1st – July 21st	School leaders	New
July 1st – August 1st	Align with schools on specific criteria requirements. Ensure all criteria is in layman's terms (e.g., raw score, number of absences, numerical grades). *In future years, ideally to be finalized in late Spring*	School leaders	Update
July 24th – Aug 3rd	Prepare documentation and communications for selection process, work with departments to check for understanding	Internal staff	
Aug 3rd – August 11th	Translate documentation and communications into additional languages, ensuring proper reviews with native speakers	Communications Team	
August 14th	In easy-to-understand language, announce the detailed selection process, timeline and key dates, appeals process, highlighting all changes to the school selection process that differ from previous year. Include information on the eligibility landing page, include town hall information	District-wide (publicly)	Update

August 14th (offer May 1st in future years)	Publish "How the Lottery Works" and LeGare review steppers and communication for how to leverage *(if feasible)*	District-wide (publicly)	New
August 30th	Host counselor/school staff training (interpreters) #1 for all counselors who serve students participating in school selection (record)	Counselors and school staff aiding in the selection process	Update
August 31st	Host counselor/school staff training (interpreters) #2 for all counselors who serve students participating in school selection (record)	Counselors and school staff aiding in the selection process	Update
Sep 5th – 6th	Host school selection townhalls	Families	
Sep 7th – 8th	Host LeGare Impartial Review townhalls	Families, Counselors	
August 30th	Publish themes and high-level notes from town halls. Highlight if any follow up actions will be taken by District, available on the website	Publish district wide, send out communication to families	Update
August 30th	Remind audience of selection information, key dates, and resources (reminder) via website and flyers. Include information about application assistance labs and school information resources	Families	
Sept 4th	External counselors to confirm training attendance and complete questionnaire to receive SchoolMint access	External Counselors/appropriate school staff	
Sept 15th	Open application window on the first day of school, announce to families. Include information (in communications, and in student and family portal) to reference eligibility landing page for criteria-based schools	District-wide	
Sept 15th – Oct 27th	Host weekly application assistance labs at the District office and participating high schools for troubleshooting and general help	Families	New
Sept 15th – Oct 27th	Offer office hours for counselors and school staff	Counselors/school staff	
Mid Sep –Oct	Host alternative assessments on Saturdays: Sept 23rd, Sept 30th, Oct 14th (other dates as needed)	Students	
Oct 2nd	Reminder Communication: School selection deadline is Friday, October 27th	District-wide	
Oct 16th	Reminder Communication: School Selection Deadline is Friday, October 27th	District-wide	
Oct 26th	Final Reminder: Application window closes tomorrow, October 27th	District-wide	
Oct 27th	Last day to upload alternative assessments		Update
Oct 27th	Last day to submit advocacy folders for LeGare Impartial Review	Families of students who participate in the LeGare process	
Oct 27th	Application window closes		
Oct 30th	Communication that LeGare Impartial Review will now be conducted for interview, project, and performance-based schools	Counselors/ school staff	New
Oct 27th – Dec 15th	OSEP audits academic data, ORE audits test scores, and communicates to counselors. OSEP and ORE to prioritize 1) review of all common transcripts, 2) applications to performance/project-based schools with requests for waived criteria to allow LeGare to get started as soon as possible. 3) non-LeGare students to performance and project-based schools 4) LeGare students to all CB schools 5) all remaining non-District students; 6) all other students and schools	Counselors	
Nov 3rd	Communication to applicants that did not submit the required common transcript form or have missing or incomplete fields/pages school Selection Application - Immediate Action Required by Wednesday, Nov 8th	School Selection applicants that did not submit the required common transcript form or with fields/pages were incomplete	

Nov 7th	Reminder communication to applicants that did not submit the required common transcript form or have missing or incomplete fields/pages school Selection Application - Immediate Action Required by Tomorrow, Nov 8th	School Selection applicants that did not submit the required common transcript form or with fields/pages were incomplete	
Nov 9th	Systems team runs eligibility script for performance and project-based schools, and results per each student's application are posted	Counselors/school staff	
Nov 10th	OSEP reviews missing data for interview, project, and performance-based schools	Internal	
Oct 30th – Nov 10th	LeGare Impartial Review is being conducted for interview, project, and performance-based schools from now until Nov 13th (prioritize students without missing information in first week, since those families will be contacted)	Counselors/ school staff	
Nov 13th	Communication that LeGare Impartial Review will now be conducted through Dec 15th for remaining criteria-based schools	Counselors/ school staff	New
Nov 15th – Dec 15th	LeGare Impartial Review is conducted for remaining criteria-based schools	Counselors/school staff	
Nov 14th	Schools, families, and students that participated in LeGare Impartial Review process and applied to performance, project-based schools are notified of their results	Families, students, counselors/school staff	Update
Nov 14th	Schools are provided with all contact information for eligible students, to contact for auditions/interviews	Performance/Project based schools	
Nov 14th	For eligible students, communication for scheduling interview, performance, or project at selected schools is provided	Families of students for performance or project-Based Schools	
Nov 17th – Dec 20th	Interviews, performances, and project reviews take place. Results are not published until all criteria-based school results are published	All families of students who apply for interview, performance, or project-based schools	Update
Dec 18th	Eligibility script for criteria-based schools (non-performance, project based, non-LeGare) is run	Internal	
Dec 19th	Schools, families, and students that participated in LeGare Impartial Review process are notified of their results	Families of LeGare Eligible students for all other Criteria-Based Schools (NOT performance or project-based schools)	Update
Dec 19th	Eligibility information is communicated for all criteria-based schools. Results (in form of eligible/ineligible) are provided to students that completed interviews/auditions. Communications clearly inform that for students that had interviews/auditions, if their application now says "ineligible," it means they did not pass the audition process. Information is shared for those would like to appeal. Communicate to students that participated in LeGare that they are ineligible for additional appeal	Counselors/school staff, and all families that applied to criteria-based schools	Update
Dec 20th	Students who went through interview or audition process and were not selected are notified and provided reasoning	Students	New
Dec 19th - Jan 10th	Appeals window opens for students appealing eligibility (not for performance results)	Students, parents/guardians	
Dec 19th – Jan 12th	Appeals requests are reviewed as they come in by Student Rights and Responsibilities. Results are not shared until after the deadline	Counselors/school staff	
Jan 3rd – Jan 17th	Lottery tested in sandbox (not contingent on students that submitted appeals)	Internal	
Jan 4th	Communication reminder to students to submit appeals request by Friday, Jan 12th	Families of LeGare review students who submitted an Appeals request	
Jan 9th	Communication reminder to let stakeholders know the lottery decisions will be released Jan 26th, and accept/deny responses are requested a week after	Counselors/school staff, parents/guardians, students	New

Jan 10th	Communication reminder to families to submit appeals request by Friday, Jan 12th	Counselors/school staff, parents/guardians, students	
Jan 10th	Appeals deadline	Families	
Jan 18th	Appeals decisions communicated	Counselors/school staff, parents/guardians, students	New
Jan 19th	Lottery run	Internal	
Jan 19th – Jan 25th	Lottery results analyzed to prepare District for public response and equip schools with information needed, if any	Internal	Update
Jan 26th	Lottery results released. Information that student decisions are required by Feb 2nd, as well as waitlist process	Applicants (message received based on activity in system) and District-wide messaging	
Jan 29th	Communication reminder for students to respond to lottery decisions	Counselors/school staff, parents/guardians, students	New
Feb 2nd	Students to respond to lottery decisions	Counselors/school staff, parents/guardians, students	
Feb 6th	Waitlist results are posted. Communication is shared	Counselors/school staff, parents/guardians, students	Update
Feb 6th - *ongoing*	Waitlist shall be updated on a weekly cadence (for example, Monday - Tuesday at 5pm), with responses required by the following Monday at 5pm, to prevent having to check constantly. Schools to make available space requests by Friday EOD.	District-wide (publicly)	
Apr 1st – May 3rd	After the waitlist, if seats are empty, work with schools and school leaders to fill these seats from students who did not receive offers	District-wide (publicly)	New
By Apr 1st	Schools required to notify all families of next steps for following year	Families	Update
By Apr 1st	District issues request for proposal (RFP) for third-party assessment to assess the following year's process	Internal staff	New
May 1st	As scores become available, encourage schools to submit PSSA scores once they are released	District-wide (publicly)	New
Kindergarten and New-to-District Applicants			
Jan 31st	Announcement: Kindergarten and New-to-District school selection process (for new-to-district, if there is space, no waiting list, and students meet the criteria)	Philadelphia-wide	New
Feb 2nd	Host Kindergarten and New to District town hall	Families	New
Feb 5th – Mar 29th	Kindergarten in-catchment registration	Philadelphia-wide	
Apr 1st	Accurate numbers of seats available of participating schools shared with families	District-wide	New
Apr 1st – May 3rd	Out-of-catchment and citywide registration for schools with open seats	Philadelphia-wide	New
May 17th	Lottery results released	Families	

Appendix B. Counselor Survey

The District made significant changes to the school selection process in Fall 2022. Accenture has been brought in to conduct a third-party evaluation to assess if this new process delivered on the commitments the organization shared publicly, the outcomes they intended, and to understand key stakeholder perceptions on the process. Additionally, Accenture administered a survey for both District and non-District counselors involved in the Fall 2022 school selection process.

The survey was open from May 15th – 19th, 2023. Of all the potential respondents, there were 116 counselors that completed the survey. Accenture did not test for significance, given the small number of respondents.

Most counselors who responded to the survey work at elementary (44.0%) and middle schools (31.9%). Of those schools, 69.8% are categorized as neighborhood (catchment) schools.

This memo summarizes the findings from the counselor survey and provides considerations to address the challenges and concerns identified by staff.

What type of school most applies to you?

Type	Count
Elementary School	28
High School	22
Middle School	15
Middle-High School	8
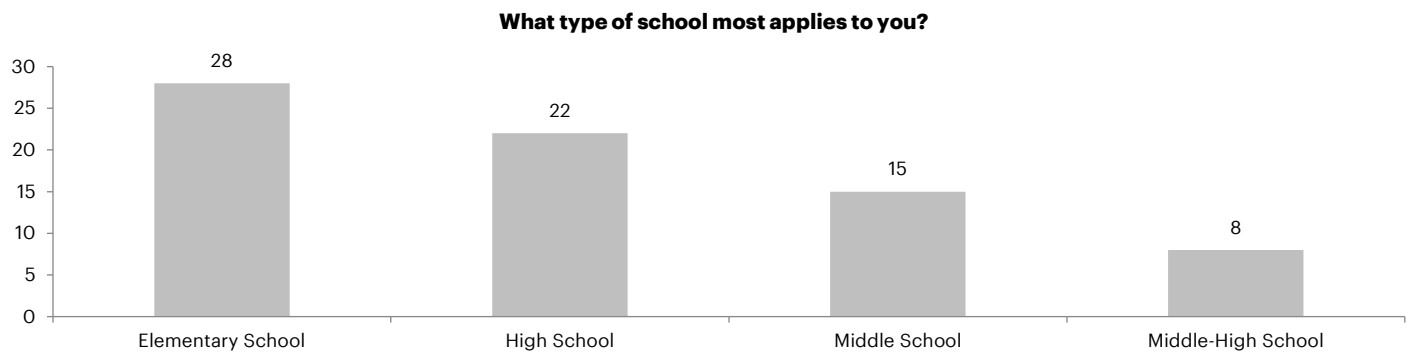
Methods

- Accenture developed and finalized the survey questions with input from the Office of Research and Evaluation.
- The survey was administered via Qualtrics, and a link was sent to both District and non-District counselors with a SchoolMint account during the Fall 2022 school selection cycle (for enrollment during SY23-24).
- The sample size was insufficient to separate District counselors and non-District counselors in analysis as (n = 10) for non-District counselors.
- Communication was sent to principals, letting them know that their counselors will be contacted by Accenture for the third-party evaluation.

Findings

Counselors who responded to the survey were likely to work at elementary (44.0%) and middle schools (31.9%). An overwhelming majority of counselors work at neighborhood (catchment) schools. Roughly one out of eight counselors (12.9%) work at criteria-based schools.

Table 1. Representativeness of Survey Respondents

Q2. Are you a counselor or in an administrative school role?	Count	Percent
Yes	99	96.1%
Other (Explain below)	4	3.9%

Table 2. School Type of Survey Respondents

School Type	Count	Survey Respondents
Elementary School	51	44.0%
Middle School	37	31.9%
High School	20	17.2%
Middle-High School	8	6.9%

Table 3. School Description

School Type	Count	Survey Respondents
Neighborhood (Catchment) School	81	69.8%
Criteria-Based School	15	12.9%
Citywide School	10	8.6%
Charter School	5	4.3%
Private School	5	4.3%

Navigating the Process

46.0% of counselors learned about the school selection process through District staff. 42.3% of counselors also learned about the Fall 2022 process through various communications (e.g., flyers, emails, and announcements).

Q5. How did you learn about the school selection process? [Select all that apply]

	Source	Count (#)	Percent (%)
Counselors	District staff	63	46.0%
	Communication (Flyer, email, announcement)	58	42.3%
	Other counselors	32	23.4%
	My principal	25	18.2%
	Event (conference, information session, school night)	20	14.6%
	Other staff	10	7.3%

Counselors largely supported students face-to-face in the application process through classroom visits (62.0%) and events (56.9%). Counselors also provided printed information (54.0%) and held office hours specifically on school selection topics (53.3%).

Q6 - I or someone at my school provided these resources to our students to support in their decision-making and application process. [Select all that apply]

	Source	Count (#)	Percent (%)
Counselors	Classroom visits	85	62.0%
	Events (high school expo, town halls, information sessions, school assembly)	78	56.9%
	Printed information sent home (flyers, newsletters, announcements)	74	54.0%
	Office Hours	73	53.3%
	Emails	68	49.6%
	Computer and technology use	60	43.8%
	High school fairs (in-person or digital)	45	32.8%
	Social media	28	20.4%
	Other (Explain below)	23	16.8%

Approximately 1 in 5 counselors (20.7%) completed most of their students' applications on their behalf. In contrast, many counselors (49.1%) did not submit any of their students' applications, suggesting less hands-on involvement for most students.

Q7. How involved were you in submitting your students' applications through the online SchoolMint system?

	Count (#)	Percent (%)
I submitted none of my student's applications on their behalf.	57	49.1%
I submitted a few of my student's applications on their behalf.	35	30.2%
I submitted most of my student's applications on their behalf.	24	20.7%

Catchment counselors, which represent the largest counselor group, submitted applications on students' behalf (46 out of 81, 56.8%) at a higher rate. 100% of counselors from charter schools who completed the survey submitted applications on their students' behalf. The lack of direct student application submissions from private schools may speak to a further need to enhance resources and training for non-District staff.

School Type	I submitted a few of my student's applications on their behalf.	I submitted most of my student's applications on their behalf.	I submitted none of my student's applications on their behalf.
Charter	3	2	0
Citywide	2	2	6
Criteria-Based	3	0	12
Neighborhood (Catchment)	26	20	35
Private	1	0	4

District's Commitment to the Selection Process

1 out of 3 counselors did not have a firm grasp of understanding on the school selection process. Only 1 out of 5 counselors strongly agreed that they understood how the school selection process worked.

Q9. Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Count	5	12	23	47	23
%	4.5%	10.9%	20.9%	42.7%	20.9%

65.9% of counselors experienced technical difficulties when viewing SchoolMint, the school selection platform, to monitor or modify applications.

Q13. I experienced technical difficulties when viewing the SchoolMint system to monitor or modify applications.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Count	7	4	22	37	27
%	7.2%	4.1%	22.7%	38.1%	27.8%

78.8% of counselors found it easy to upload support materials for students with accommodations. Counselors who found the experience difficult were likely to work in catchment schools, of which the majority submitted a few or most applications on their students' behalf.

Q14. It was easy for me to upload supporting materials for special education students and/or English Learners.
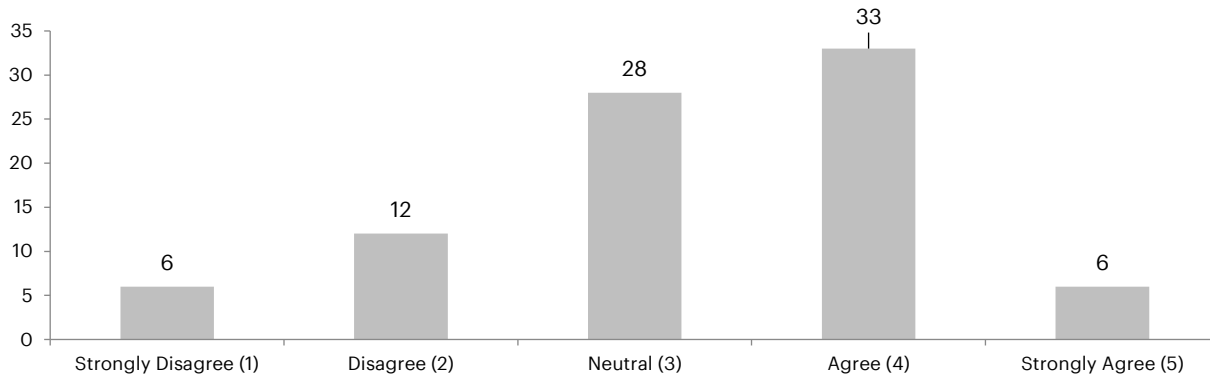
Q14. It was easy for me to upload supporting materials for special education students and/or English Learners. [By School Type]

School Type	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Charter	0	0	1	1	1
Citywide	0	0	2	3	0
Criteria-Based	0	1	4	3	1
Neighborhood (Catchment)	6	11	20	25	4
Private	0	0	1	1	0

55.9% of counselors did not find the application easy for their schools' families to understand and complete. This sentiment was highest for charter school counselors (75% disagreed), followed by neighborhood school counselors (of which 30.8% strongly disagreed and 29.5% disagreed) and criteria-based school counselors (7.7% strongly disagreed and 38.5% disagreed).

Q15 - The application was easy for my school's families to understand and complete.
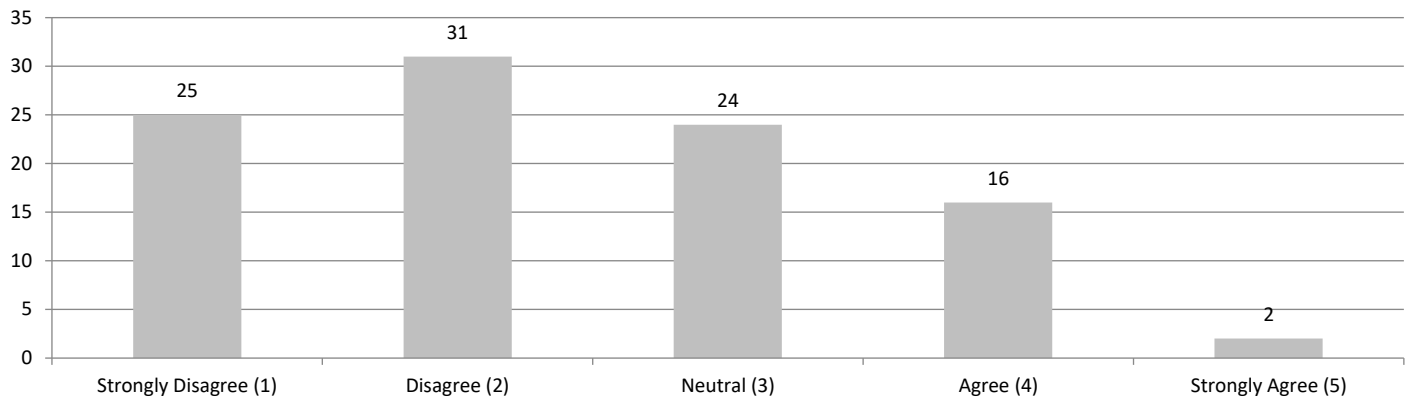
Q15. The application was easy for my school's families to understand and complete. [By School Type]

School Type	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Charter	0.0	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	100
Citywide	7.7	38.5	23.1	23.1	7.7	100
Criteria-Based	30.8	29.5	24.4	14.1	1.3	100
Neighborhood (Catchment)	20	0.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	100
Private	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100

94.5% of counselors were aware that different schools have different admission criteria.

Q19. I was aware that different schools have different admission criteria.

	Count	Percent
Yes	104	94.5%
I don't know	3	2.7%
No	3	2.7%

92.7% of counselors were aware of the policy that if their students did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.

Q20. I was aware of the policy that if a student did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.

	Count	Percent
Yes	102	92.7%
I don't know	4	3.6%
No	4	3.6%

78.6% of counselors shared that their students applied to at least one school where they did not meet that school's criteria. Further investigation is needed on the implications of eligibility criteria was communicated to staff, and if there were opportunities to check for understanding.

Q21. My students applied to at least one school where they did not meet that school's criteria.

	Count	Percent
Yes	77	78.6%
No	11	11.2%
Does Not Apply	10	10.2%

District's Communication on the Selection Process

64.7% of counselors felt that they had sufficient information to effectively communicate the process to their students and families in the languages they understood. Elementary school counselors disagreed with this statement at a higher rate (8.2% strongly disagreed and 16.3% disagreed) compared to other counselor groups, indicating that there may be larger immigrant populations that do not speak English or Spanish in grades K-4.

Q12. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to my students and families in the languages they understood.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	7	11	17	48	16
Percent	7.1%	11.1%	17.2%	48.5%	16.2%

Q10. Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.
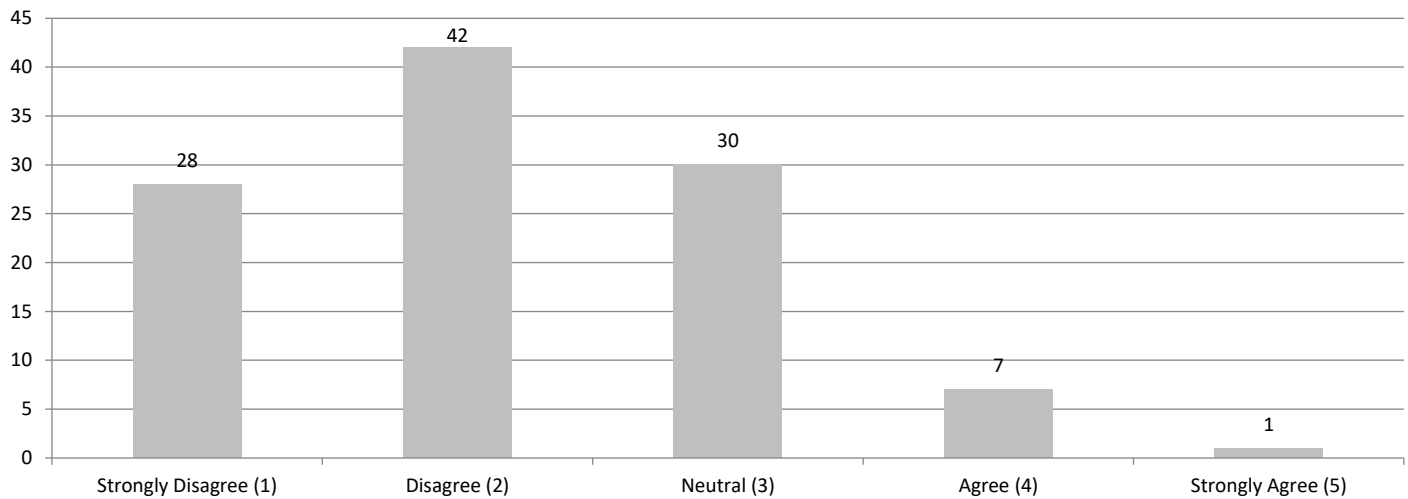
Q12. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to my students and families in the languages they understood. [By Grade Range]

Grade Range	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary School	4	8	6	27	4
High School	0	2	3	3	2
Middle School	3	1	7	15	9
Middle-High School	0	0	1	3	1

Only 29% of counselors felt that they had enough resources to create a structure to best support their students. 40.2% of counselors felt as if they did not.

Q11. I had enough resources to create a structure to best support my students throughout the entire selection process.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	11	32	33	23	8
Percent	10.3%	29.9%	30.8%	21.5%	7.5%

Overall Perception of the School Selection Process

64.8% of counselors were dissatisfied with the Fall 2022 school selection process. Only one counselor (0.9%) was strongly satisfied.

For criteria-based schools, satisfaction with the following evaluation criteria (grades, attendance, and PSSA scores) varied by criterion.
- 74.3% of counselors agree or strongly agree with being satisfied with **grades** as an evaluation criterion.
- 62.2% of counselors agree or strongly agree with being satisfied with **attendance** as an evaluation criterion.
- Only 24.7% of counselors agree or strongly agree with being satisfied with **PSSA** as an evaluation criterion.

Q16_1. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Grades.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	4	11	12	59	19
Percent	3.8%	10.5%	11.4%	56.2%	18.1%

Q16_2. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Attendance

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	8	16	16	47	19
Percent	7.5%	15.1%	15.1%	44.3%	17.9%

Q16_3. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – PSSA

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	27	28	24	20	6
Percent	25.7%	26.7%	22.9%	19.0%	5.7%

If counselors could improve upon the school selection process, they would remove the lottery (31.4%), change the eligibility criteria (29.2%), and enhance communication (24.1%). Few counselors would want to remove the zip code preference (7.3%) or standardize resources (2.9%).

Q30. What should the School District of Philadelphia consider to improve the annual school selection process? [Select up to 3]

Choice	Percent	Count
Removing the lottery	31.4%	43
Changing the eligibility criteria	29.2%	40
Better communication about on the process and admission requirements	24.1%	33
More resources in assisting and supporting students and their families	23.4%	32
Communicate changes with more advanced time	21.9%	30
Enabling schools to interview prospective students	21.2%	29
Allow students to rank their school choices	13.9%	19
Other (Explain below)	13.9%	19
Providing more time to complete the application	13.9%	19
Centralized school tour and shadowing calendar	12.4%	17
Provide more professional development for school staff who will support students	7.3%	10
Removing the zip code preference	7.3%	10
Offering more standardized resources	2.9%	4

Considerations

The following considerations were developed by Accenture based on the feedback received from counselors on the survey. Accenture reviewed emerging themes from ~130 comments. Below are the top themes that counselors provided.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Theme 1: Counselors expressed a need for more sufficient training about the school selection process.
- Non-District counselors felt as if they did not have enough training to turnkey the process to their families and other staff.
- During training, counselors were not able to get all their LeGare questions answered.

Theme 2: SchoolMint and supporting platforms are not user-friendly, providing misleading information to applicants.
- When PSSA scores are submitted, students receive a green check even if scores are inputted incorrectly.
- Students with high scores were initially determined to be ineligible due to a glitch in the system.
- Students who are not eligible are not blocked from schools they don't qualify for.

Theme 3: The process to determine LeGare eligibility is unwieldy.
- Trying to upload files for LeGare was a hassle and repetitive.
- IEP files that were unreadable or could not be opened were marked ineligible with no explanation for families or counselors.
- Parents do not have adequate knowledge to make informed decisions on which schools can best support students with IEPs and special education programming.

Theme 4: While students and parents/guardians require counselor support, counselors' ability in SchoolMint has decreased.
- The district has removed the ability of the counselors to view, alter and submit applications however, we are still responsible for the submissions.
- The ability to track applications and generate reports is housed within a different platform from SchoolMint.
- Counselors do not receive emails when students are accepted off the waitlist. Instead, notifications are sent to students' emails, in which they may miss updates.

Counselor Questions

1. Are you a counselor or in an administrative school role?
   - o Yes
   - o No
   - o Other (Explain below)
2. What type of school most applies to you?
   - o Elementary School
   - o Middle School
   - o Middle - High School
   - o High school
3. How would you describe your school?
   - o Neighborhood School (Catchment School)
   - o Charter School
   - o Private School
   - o Citywide School
   - o Criteria-based School
4. **Grid:** How did you learn about this year's school selection process? [Select all that apply].
   - o Communication (Flyer, email, announcement)
   - o Event (conference, information session, school night)
   - o News media (radio, tv, newspapers)
   - o My principal
   - o District staff
   - o Other counselors
   - o Other staff
   - o Other (Explain below)
5. **Grid View:** I or someone at my school provided these resources to our students to support in their decision-making and application process. [Select all that apply]
   - o Events (high school expo, town halls, information sessions, school assembly)
   - o Emails
   - o Printed information sent home (flyers, newsletters, announcements)
   - o Office Hours
   - o Classroom visits
   - o Computer and technology use
   - o Social media
   - o High school fairs (in-person or digital)
   - o Other (Explain below)
6. How involved were you in submitting your students' applications through the online SchoolMint system?
   - o I submitted none of my student's applications on their behalf.
   - o I submitted a few of my student's applications on their behalf.
   - o I submitted most of my student's applications on their behalf.

For the next set of questions, we want to understand your perception of the current school selection process. For each question, select your response, on a scale of 1-5 from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

7. Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.
   - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
8. Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.
   - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
9. I had enough resources to create a structure to best support my students throughout the entire selection process.
   - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
10. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to my students and families in the languages they understood.

- o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
11. I experienced technical difficulties when viewing the SchoolMint system to monitor or modify applications.
- o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
12. It was easy for me to upload supporting materials for special education students and/or English Learners.
- o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
13. The application was easy for my school's families to understand and complete.
- o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
14. **Grid:** The following school selection criteria were fair.
- o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
  1. Standardized Assessment Scores (e.g., PSSA)
  2. Attendance
  3. Grades
15. I understand how the school selection process lottery works.
- o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
16. I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.
- o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
17. I was aware that different schools have different admission criteria.
- o Yes
- o No
18. I was aware of the policy that if a student did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.
- o Yes
- o No
19. My student's applied to at least 1 school where they did not meet that school's criteria.
- o Yes
- o No
- o I don't know
- o Does Not Apply
20. What should the School District of Philadelphia consider to improve the annual school selection process? [Select up to 3]
- o Allow students to rank their school choices
- o More resources in assisting and supporting students and their families
- o Better communication about on the process and admission requirements
- o Changing the eligibility criteria
- o Removing the lottery
- o Removing the zip code preference
- o Providing more time to complete the application
- o Communicate changes with more advanced time
- o Offering more standardized resources
- o Provide more professional development for school staff who will support students
- o Enabling schools to interview prospective students
- o Centralized school tour and shadowing calendar
- o Other (Explain below)

Appendix C
Principal Survey

The District made significant changes to the school selection process in Fall 2022. Accenture has been contracted to conduct a third-party evaluation to assess if this new process delivered on the commitments the organization shared publicly, the outcomes they intended, and to understand key stakeholder perceptions on the process. Additionally, Accenture administered a survey for both District and non-District principals involved in the Fall 2022 school selection process.

The survey was open from May 15th – 19th, 2023. Of all the potential 107 respondents, there were 73 District and non-District principals who completed the survey. Because Accenture aimed for a sample size of 75 or higher, the organization could not test for statistical significance.

This memo summarizes the findings from the principal survey and principals' considerations to address the challenges and concerns identified by staff.

Most principals who responded to the survey work at elementary (40.3%) and middle schools (30.6%). 40.3% of principals work at neighborhood (catchment) schools. Approximately, 1 out of 3 of principals who completed the survey work at criteria-based schools (27.4%) and 1 out of 5 principals work at citywide schools.

What type of school most applies to you?
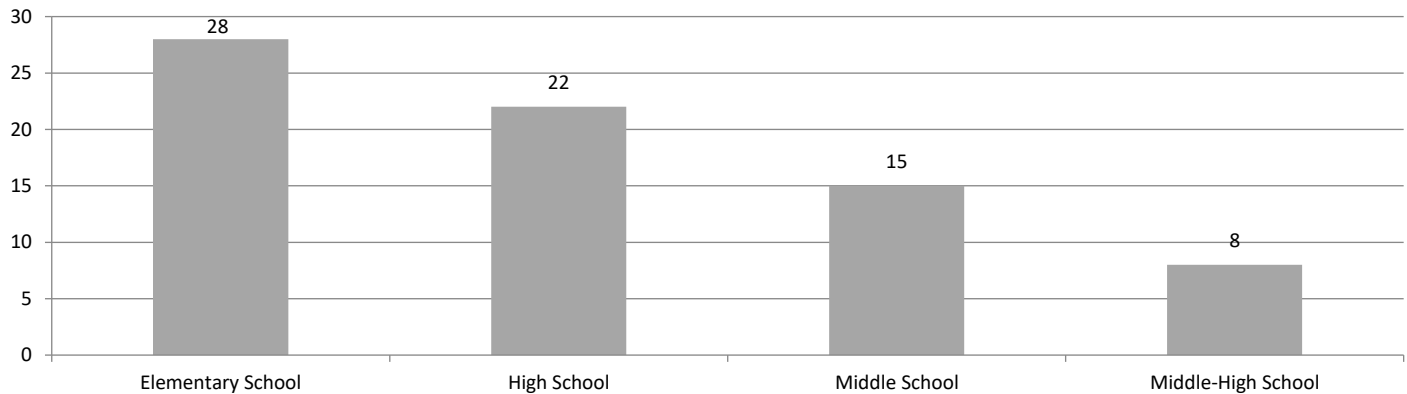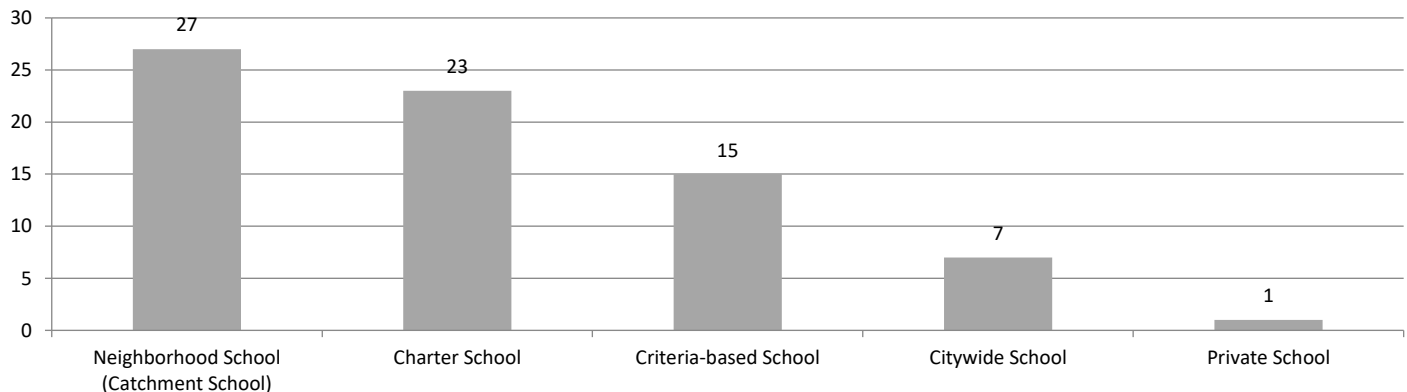
School Type	Count
Elementary School	28
High School	22
Middle School	15
Middle-High School	8

How would you describe your school?

School Description	Count
Neighborhood School (Catchment School)	27
Charter School	23
Criteria-based School	15
Citywide School	7
Private School	1

Methods

- Accenture developed and finalized the survey questions with input from the Office of Research and Evaluation.
- The survey was administered via Qualtrics, and a link was sent to both District and non-District principals with a SchoolMint account during the Fall 2022 school selection cycle (for enrollment during SY23-24).
- Communication was sent to principals, letting them know that their principals will be contacted by Accenture for the third-party evaluation.
- When there is a difference between District and non-District principal responses, results are split to show the trends across each.

Findings

Principals who responded to the survey were likely to work at elementary (38.4%) and middle schools (20.5%). An overwhelming majority of principals work at neighborhood (catchment) schools (37.0%). 1 out of 5 of principals who completed the survey work at criteria-based schools (20.5%) and approximately 1 out of 10 principals work at citywide schools.

Table 1. Representativeness of Survey Respondents

Q2. Are you a principal or in an assistant principal?	Count	Percent
Principal	57	78.1%
Assistant Principal	14	2.7%
Other (Explain below)	2	19.2%

Table 2. School Type of Survey Respondents

School Type	Count	Survey Respondents
Elementary School	28	38.4%
Middle School	15	20.5%
High School	22	30.1%
Middle-High School	8	11.0%

Table 3. School Description

School Type	Count	Survey Respondents
Neighborhood (Catchment) School	27	37.0%
Criteria-Based School	15	20.5%
Citywide School	7	9.6%
Charter School	23	31.5%
Private School	1	1.4%

Navigating the Process

29.5% of principals learned about the school selection process through various communications (e.g., flyers, emails, and announcements). Other ways in which principals were likely to learn about the school selection process was through District staff (29.5%) and school counselors (21.0%).

Q5. How did you learn about the school selection process? [Select all that apply]

	Source	Count (#)	Percent (%)
Principals	Communication (Flyer, email, announcement)	31	29.5%
	District staff	31	29.5%
	School counselor	22	21.0%
	Other principals	15	14.3%
	News media (radio, tv, newspapers)	13	12.4%
	Event (conference, information session, school night)	8	7.6%
	Other (Explain below)	7	6.7%
	Other staff	2	1.9%

Principals largely supported students in the application process through events (42.9%) and printed information sent home (43.8%). Principals provided resources about the school selection process via computer and technology use (23.8%), or through social media (20.0%) at much lower rates.

Q6 - My school provided these resources to our students to support in their decision-making and application process. [Select all that apply]

	Source	Count (#)	Percent (%)
Principals	Events (high school expo, town halls, information sessions, school assembly)	45	42.9%
	Printed information sent home (flyers, newsletters, announcements)	46	43.8%
	Emails	37	35.2%
	Office Hours	32	30.5%
	Classroom visits	32	30.5%
	High school fairs (in-person or digital)	30	28.6%
	Computer and technology use	25	23.8%
	Social media	21	20.0%
	Other (Explain below)	12	11.4%

District's Commitment to the Selection Process

56% of principals understood how the school selection process worked. Roughly 1 out of 4 principals (25.8%) did not have a firm grasp of understanding on the school selection process.

Q8. Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Count	5	12	12	28	9
%	7.6%	18.2%	18.2%	42.4%	13.6%

41.5% of principals experienced technical difficulties when viewing SchoolMint, the school selection platform, to monitor or modify applications. Approximately a quarter of principals (26.5%) did not experience much or any difficulties.

Q13. I experienced technical difficulties when viewing the SchoolMint system to monitor or modify applications.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Count	3	11	17	10	12
%	5.7%	20.8%	32.1%	18.9%	22.6%

49.2% of principals did not find the application easy for their schools' families to understand and complete. This sentiment was highest for criteria-based principals (66.7% strongly disagreed or disagreed) and for neighborhood principals (48% strongly disagreed or disagreed).

Q11. The application was easy for my school's families to understand and complete.
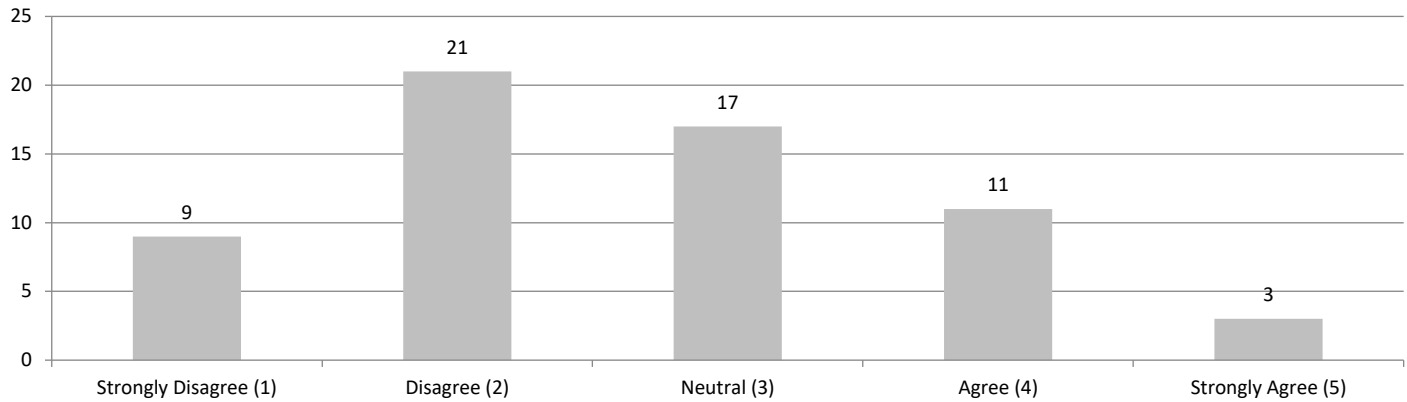
Q11. The application was easy for my school's families to understand and complete. [By School Type]

School Type	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Charter	29.4%	11.8%	29.4%	29.4%	0.0%	100
Citywide	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	100
Criteria-Based	16.7%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	8.3%	100
Neighborhood (Catchment)	4.0%	44.0%	28.0%	20.0%	4.0%	100
Private	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100

Q11. The application was easy for my school's families to understand and complete. [District vs Non-District]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
District	9.3%	44.2%	25.6%	14.0%	7.0%	100
Non-District	27.8%	11.1%	33.3%	27.8%	0.0%	100

89.2% of principals were aware that different schools have different admissions criteria.

Q19. I was aware that different schools have different admissions criteria.

	Count	Percent
Yes	58	89.2%
No	7	10.8%

Only 44.6% of principals were aware of the policy that if their students did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school. 41.5% of principals expressed that they did not know enough about eligibility criteria for criteria-based schools.

Q19. I was aware of the policy that if a student did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.

	Count	Percent
Yes	29	44.6%
I don't know	27	41.5%
No	9	13.8%

75.0% of principals shared that their students applied to at least one school where they did not meet that school's criteria. Further investigation is needed on the implications of eligibility criteria was communicated to principals and staff, and if there were opportunities to check for understanding.

Q20. My students applied to at least one school where they did not meet that school's criteria.

	Count	Percent
Yes	36	75.0%
No	11	22.9%
Does Not Apply	1	2.1%

	District	Non-District
Yes	24	11
No	1	0
Does Not Apply	11	0

72.5% of principals hoped they could consider students who did not meet all criteria for enrollment. Of the total population that responded, 38% stated "Does Not Apply," given that their schools did not have eligibility criteria for enrollment.

Q21. I had hoped that I would be able to consider students who did not meet all criteria for enrollment.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Count	1	3	7	7	22
Percent	2.5%	7.5%	17.5%	17.5%	55.0%

District's Communication on the Selection Process

36.7% of principals felt as if they did not receive enough information to prepare staff and students for the application process. However, 36.8% believe that they received enough information.

Q10. I received enough information to prepare my staff and students for the application process.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	9	16	16	20	5
Percent	13.2%	23.5%	23.5%	29.4%	7.4%

58.8% of principals had sufficient information to effectively communicate the process to their students and families in the languages they understood.

Q12_1. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to my students and families in the languages they understood.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	3	7	12	30	10
Percent	4.4%	10.3%	17.6%	44.1%	14.7%

Q12_2. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to my students and families in the languages they understood. [By Grade Range]

Grade Range	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary School	1	2	5	14	4
High School	1	2	5	9	0
Middle School	0	3	1	4	4
Middle-High School	1	0	1	3	2

Q12_3. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to my students and families in the languages they understood. [District vs Non-District]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
District	2.3%	9.1%	25.0%	52.3%	11.4%	100
Non-District	11.1%	16.7%	5.6%	38.9%	27.8%	100

Only 32.4% of principals felt that they had enough resources to create a structure to best support their students. 44.1% of principals felt as if they did not have enough resources.

Q11. I had enough resources to create a structure to best support my students throughout the entire selection process.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	9	21	14	17	5
Percent	13.2%	30.9%	20.6%	25.0%	7.4%

Overall Perception of the School Selection Process

An overwhelming majority of principals were not satisfied with the Fall 2022 school selection process. 71.6% were dissatisfied. Only two principals (3.3%) were strongly satisfied.

Q10. I am satisfied with the school selection process.
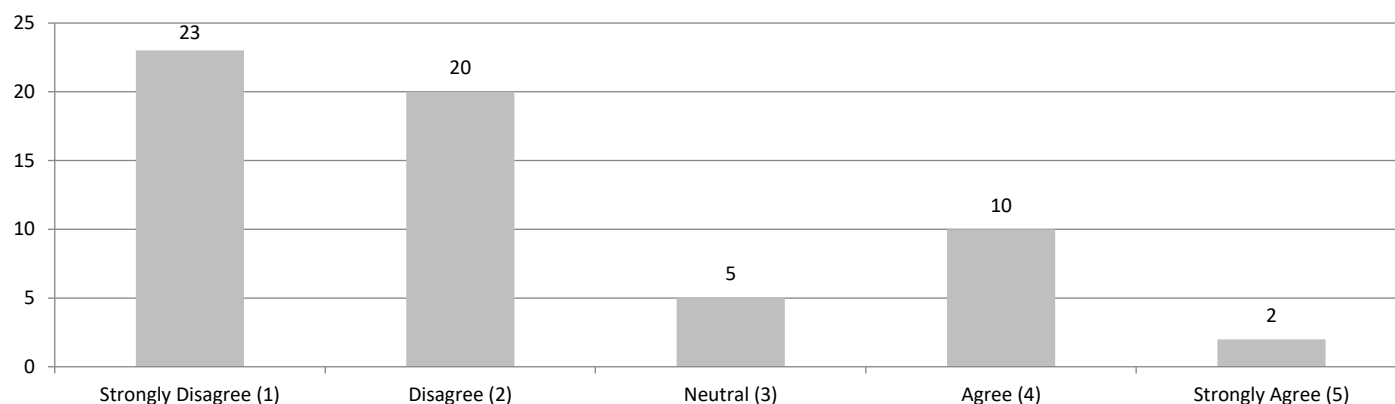
Q10. I am satisfied with the school selection process. [District vs Non-District]

Grade Range	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
District	39.1	30.4	19.6	10.9	0
Non-District	21.1	21.1	26.3	26.3	5.3

37.1% of principals did not understand how the lottery process works.

Q15. I understand how the school selection lottery process works.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	7	16	11	20	8
Percent	11.3	25.8	17.7	32.3	12.9

Q15_1. I understand how the school selection lottery process works. [District vs Non-District]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
District	13.6	29.5	22.7	25.0	9.1	100
Non-District	5.6	16.7	5.6	50.0	22.2	100

For criteria-based schools, satisfaction with the following evaluation criteria (grades, attendance, and PSSA scores) varied by criterion.

- 57.3% of principals agreed with using **grades** as an evaluation criterion.
- 57.4% of principals agreed with using **attendance** as an evaluation criterion.
- Only 29.4% of principals agreed with using the **PSSA** as an evaluation criterion.

Q16_1. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Grades

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	5	10	11	24	11
Percent	8.2%	16.4%	18.0%	39.3%	18.0%

Q16_1. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Grades [District vs Non-District]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
District	9.1	20.5	20.5	25.0	25.0	100
Non-District	5.9	11.8	50.9	52.9	23.5	100

Q16_2. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Attendance

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	5	11	10	20	15
Percent	8.2%	18.0%	16.4%	32.8%	24.6%

Q16_2. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Attendance [District vs Non-District]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
District	9.1	20.5	20.5	25.0	25.0	100
Non-District	5.9	11.8	50.9	52.9	23.5	100

Q16_3. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – PSSA

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Count	12	15	16	11	7

Percent	19.7%	24.6%	26.2%	18.0%	11.5%

Q16_3. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – PSSA. [District vs Non-District]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
District	22.2	24.4	28.9	13.3	11.1	100
Non-District	12.5	25.0	18.8	31.3	12.5	100

If principals could improve upon the school selection process, they would interview prospective students (27.6%), change the eligibility criteria (24.8%), and enhance communication (15.2%). Few principals would want to centralize the school tour and shadowing calendar (6.7) or offer more standardized resources (1.9%).

Q30. What should the School District of Philadelphia consider to improve the annual school selection process? [Select up to 3]

Choice	Percent	Count
Enabling schools to interview prospective students	27.6%	29
Changing the eligibility criteria	24.8%	26
Better communication about on the process and admission requirements	15.2%	16
Removing the lottery	14.3%	15
Communicate changes with more advanced time	13.3%	14
Removing the zip code preference	12.4%	13
Allow students to rank their school choices	11.4%	12
More resources in assisting and supporting students and their families	11.4%	12
Other (Explain below)	11.4%	12
Providing more time to complete the application	8.6%	9
Provide more professional development for school staff who will support students	7.6%	8
Centralized school tour and shadowing calendar	6.7%	7
Offering more standardized resources	1.9%	2

Considerations

The following considerations were developed by Accenture based on the feedback received from principals on the survey.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

1. **Open enrollment**: Allow students to select again for any open seats once enrollments are initially determined.
2. **Eliminate K-8 school selection:** Consider eliminating school selection for K-8.
3. **Invest in neighborhood schools** and stop letting people shop around at different schools.
4. **Criteria for CTE schools**:
   o Consider returning some degree of academic/behavioral criteria to CTE schools.
   o Provide a screener interview so that students are aware of specific expectations at each CTE school (e.g., working outside in the weather, working with animals, working in the mud, wearing boots, etc.).
5. **Revisit eligibility criteria range for IEP students**: Consider students with IEP's when they can test in the Basic range, which essentially equates to a C average.
6. **Provide schools with resources to support students with accommodations**: The District needs to assist schools that now have students with elevated needs that do not have those resources.
7. **Expand application window**:
   o Deadlines for put schools at a disadvantage. The short window to make decisions frequently included a weekend when we could not intervene.

- - The timeline constantly changed and caused anxiety and stress for all involved, especially our young Philadelphia students.
8. **Eliminate the algebra criteria** for Masterman unless there is access to a middle-high to algebra at every 8th-grade school.
9. **Offer notifications**: Send acceptance emails with counselors/principals copied so we can support children when the waitlist moves. Some children at our school missed their waitlist opportunity because they missed an email.
10. **Improve confirmation notifications**: Families and school counselors should receive immediate email confirmation that the application was submitted.
11. **More feedback opportunities for high school principals and staff**:
    - I am a high school principal. I would like to answer more questions about my experiences as a school leader who is on the receiving end.
    - I would love to be included in school selection workshops for educators.
    - Schedule time to speak with leaders outside of Central Office to discuss this process.
12. **Principals to weigh in on applicants:**
    - I think schools should be allowed to select 50% of their students for site selection.
    - The loss of human discretion has resulted in unfilled seats at some schools that could be filled with potential students.
13. **Align District and Charter timelines**: It is not clear for families that they can apply to schools in two systems - district & charter and aligning timelines might help families understand that enrollment is a thing at a certain time of year.
14. **Improve communication for new families:** Families moving into the city have a tough time navigating to try to find a school. Can the window be pushed to spring?
15. **Eliminate the lottery**: Using a lottery truly ruins the personal touch needed to truly get to know students prior to welcoming them to a difficult learning environment that is challenging.
16. **Provide considerations for students in alternative education**, who should receive a second chance and often do better when re-enrolled.
17. **Clarify how strict the eligibility criteria are**: The biggest issue is about students who do not meet the eligibility criteria. For example, if a student has more than 11 absences, but strong PSSA scores and grades, will they still be considered?
18. **Provide a grading rubric consistent across schools**: The use of school records does not allow for a straight comparison of each students' merit.
19. **Improve SchoolMint notifications**: The communication post lottery has been difficult. Many of the students' email addresses are counselor email addresses. Please share student email addresses as well. It a tedious process to try to reach out to SDP students based on their student ID. As a result, less than half of our expected students responded for our welcome night.
20. **Maximize at least one offer per student**: The most important thing is that the algorithm for the lottery needs to be changed to make sure every student gets into one school whose criteria they meet.
21. **Improve communications regarding LeGare process**: The timing and results of the LeGare process were very confusing and unfair this year – with SchoolMint at times providing contradicting updates on whether students met admissions criteria.
22. **Communicate with charter schools earlier**: Communication with charters has been absent, late and/or incorrect on too many occasions to count. This automatically puts students who attend charters at a disadvantage.
23. **Incorporate principals in decision-making**: The process was not shared with Principals until after the decisions were made.
24. **Strive for continuity in middle-high schools**: The high school process adversely affects middle school selection processes.
25. **Increase catchment school marketing efforts** so that the process is fairer.
26. **Allow schools to interview students**: to provide seats to students that experience testing anxiety, missed PSSAs, etc.
27. **Monitor district attrition**: The District lost many families to charters, private schools, an even some moved out of the area to accommodate their children's educational needs when the process was removed from principals and school teams.

Principal Questions

21. Are you a principal or in an administrative school role?
    - ○ Yes
    - ○ No
    - ○ Other (Explain below)
22. What type of school most applies to you?
    - ○ Elementary School
    - ○ Middle School
    - ○ Middle - High School
    - ○ High school
23. How would you describe your school?
    - ○ Neighborhood School (Catchment School)
    - ○ Charter School
    - ○ Private School
    - ○ Citywide School
    - ○ Criteria-based School
24. **Grid:** How did you learn about this year's school selection process? [Select all that apply].
    - ○ Communication (Flyer, email, announcement)
    - ○ Event (conference, information session, school night)
    - ○ News media (radio, tv, newspapers)
    - ○ My principal
    - ○ District staff
    - ○ Other principals
    - ○ Other staff
    - ○ Other (Explain below)
25. **Grid View:** I or someone at my school provided these resources to our students to support in their decision-making and application process. [Select all that apply]
    - ○ Events (high school expo, town halls, information sessions, school assembly)
    - ○ Emails
    - ○ Printed information sent home (flyers, newsletters, announcements)
    - ○ Office Hours
    - ○ Classroom visits
    - ○ Computer and technology use
    - ○ Social media
    - ○ High school fairs (in-person or digital)
    - ○ Other (Explain below)
26. How involved were you in submitting your students' applications through the online SchoolMint system?
    - ○ I submitted none of my student's applications on their behalf.
    - ○ I submitted a few of my student's applications on their behalf.
    - ○ I submitted most of my student's applications on their behalf.

For the next set of questions, we want to understand your perception of the current school selection process. For each question, select your response, on a scale of 1-5 from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

27. Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.
    - ○ [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
28. Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.
    - ○ [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
29. I had enough resources to create a structure to best support my students throughout the entire selection process.
    - ○ [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]

30. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to my students and families in the languages they understood.
    o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
31. I experienced technical difficulties when viewing the SchoolMint system to monitor or modify applications.
    o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
32. It was easy for me to upload supporting materials for special education students and/or English Learners.
    o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
33. The application was easy for my school's families to understand and complete.
    o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
34. **Grid:** The following school selection criteria were fair.
    o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
        1. Standardized Assessment Scores (e.g., PSSA)
        2. Attendance
        3. Grades
35. I understand how the school selection process lottery works.
    o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
36. I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.
    o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
37. I was aware that different schools have different admission criteria.
    o Yes
    o No
38. I was aware of the policy that if a student did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.
    o Yes
    o No
39. My student's applied to at least 1 school where they did not meet that school's criteria.
    o Yes
    o No
    o I don't know
    o Does Not Apply
40. What should the School District of Philadelphia consider to improve the annual school selection process? [Select up to 3]
    o Allow students to rank their school choices
    o More resources in assisting and supporting students and their families
    o Better communication about on the process and admission requirements
    o Changing the eligibility criteria
    o Removing the lottery
    o Removing the zip code preference
    o Providing more time to complete the application
    o Communicate changes with more advanced time
    o Offering more standardized resources
    o Provide more professional development for school staff who will support students
    o Enabling schools to interview prospective students
    o Centralized school tour and shadowing calendar
    o Other (Explain below)

Appendix D. Student Survey

The District made significant changes to the school selection process in Fall 2022. Accenture has been brought in to conduct a third-party evaluation to assess if this new process delivered on the commitments the organization shared publicly, the outcomes they intended, and to understand key stakeholder perceptions on the process. Additionally, Accenture administered a survey for 5th through 11th grade students involved in the Fall 2022 school selection process.

279 out of 335 students that completed the survey indicated that they participated in the school selection process (83%). 92.1% of students (279 out of 303) applied to at least one criteria-based school.

The survey was open from May 10th – 19th, 2023. Of the 10,369 students who received the survey, there were 335 students that completed the survey, for a response rate of approximately 3.2%. This memo summarizes the findings from the student survey and provides considerations to address the challenges and concerns identified by students.

Methods

- Accenture developed and finalized the survey questions with input from the Office of Research and Evaluation.
- Communication was sent to principals, letting them know that their families will be contacted by Accenture for the third-party evaluation.
- The survey was administered via Qualtrics, and a link was sent to both District and non-District students enrolled in grades 5 to 11 who applied during the Fall 2022 school selection cycle (for enrollment during SY23-24).
  - 12th grade students were not included because they will matriculate out of the District at the end of the school year.
  - One (1) 3rd grade student responded to the survey; their responses were removed from the sample as 3rd graders cannot apply to criteria-based schools.
- Students who did not participate in the school selection process in Fall 2022 were excluded from results.

Findings

Compared to District representation, Asian students were over-represented by (+19.9 percentage points) in the survey sample and Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students were under-represented (-20.9 and -7.8 percentage points, respectively). In addition, the percentage of males in the survey were underrepresented by 22.4 percent.

Table 1. Representativeness of Survey Respondents

	Survey Respondents	District Representation	Percentage Point Difference
Race/Ethnicity [1]			
Asian	26.9%	7%	+19.9
Black/African American	30.1%	51%	-20.9
Hispanic / Latino	15.2%	23%	-7.8
Multi-racial / Other*	9.6%	5%	+4.6
White	18.2%	13%	+5.2
Gender [1]			
Female	61.8%	46%	+15.8
Male	31.6%	54%	-22.4

[1] "School District of Philadelphia: Demographics", accessed May 24, 2023, https://dashboards.philasd.org/extensions/enrollment-public/index.html#/demographics.

Non-Binary	3.9%	0%	+3.9
Prefer Not to Say	2.7%	0%	+2.7
Grade [1]			
5th Grade	2.4%	5%	-2.6
6th Grade	2.1%	7%	-4.9
7th Grade	0%	10%	-10
8th Grade	72.8%	9%	+63.8
9th Grade	15.9%	9%	+6.9
10th Grade	5.1%	10%	-4.9
11th Grade	1.8%	8%	-6.2

Table 2. School Type of Survey Respondents

School Type	Count	Survey Respondents
Neighborhood (Catchment) School	147	49.7%
Criteria-Based School	101	34.1%
Citywide School	38	12.8%
Charter School	4	1.4%
Homeschool	3	1%
Public School Outside of Philadelphia	2	0.7%
Private School	1	0.3%

Navigating the Process

54.7% of students learned about the school selection process through their school counselor.

Q9. How did you learn about the school selection process? [Select all that apply]

Source	Count
My school counselor	185
Teachers or other adults at my school other than my principal or counselor	103
The School District of Philadelphia's website	96
My friends	83
A family member	81
My school's website	69
My school principal	57
Event (conference, information session, school night, school assembly)	32
School District of Philadelphia's High School Directory or other printed…	28
School visits from current high school students or staff	27
Great Philly Schools website	21
Social media	18
High School Expo	18
Other (Explain below)	18
Robocall from the School District of Philadelphia	12
News media (radio, tv, newspapers)	7
School alumni	6

66.3% of students received support from teachers and/or counselors throughout the application process.

Q18. My teachers and/or counselors offered me support throughout the application process.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Percent (%)	5.8	6.8	21.0	34.7	31.6	100
Count (#)	23	27	83	137	125	100

While most students completed their school selection application on their own (83%), many received help from a parent or guardian (35.5%). Only a fraction of students' counselors completed the application on their behalf (13.7%).

Q10. Who completed your school selection application? [Select all that apply]

Myself — 278
My parent or guardian — 119
My counselor — 46
Other — 6
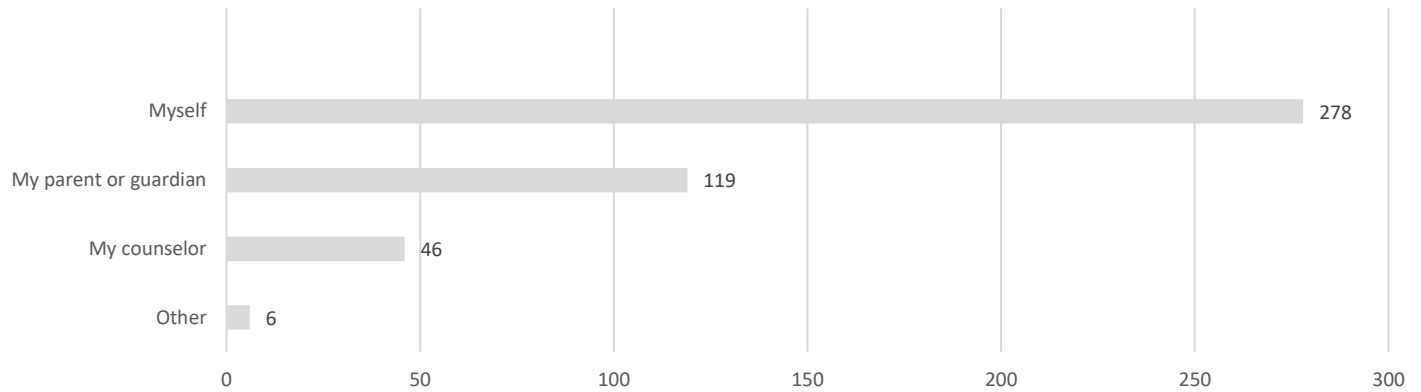
70.2% of applicants found the online application easy to understand and complete. 10.2% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Q19. The online application was easy for me to understand and complete.

Strongly Disagree — 10
Disagree — 14
Neutral — 76
Agree — 145
Strongly Agree — 90
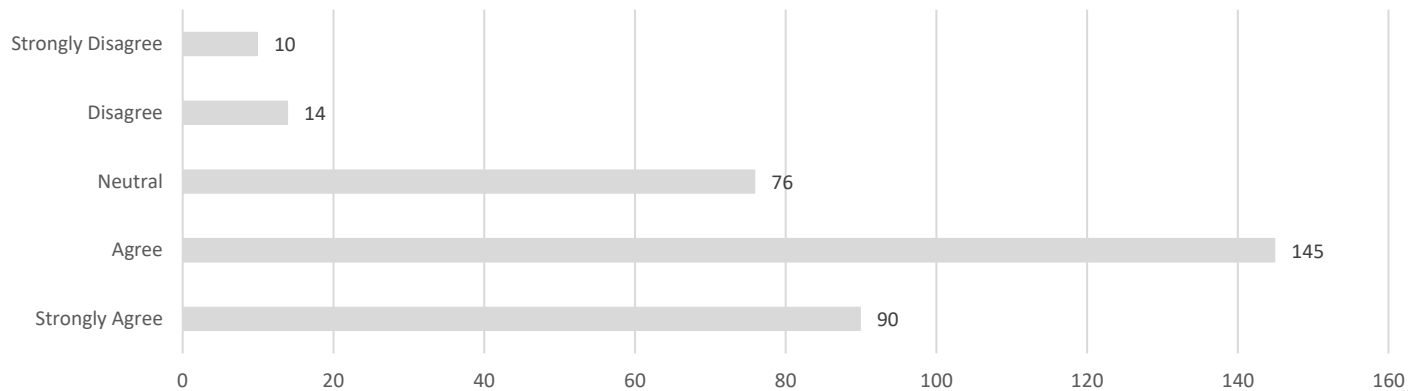
District's Commitment to the Selection Process

Overall, 59.1% of students agreed that they understood how the lottery worked. However, 20.5% of students who identify as Multi-racial/Other and 18.7% of Asian students did not understand how the lottery worked.

Q21. I understand how the school selection process lottery works.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	10.4	8.3	19.8	40.6	20.8	100
Black/African American	2.7	12.5	25.0	40.2	19.6	100
Hispanic/Latino	5.8	7.7	38.5	30.8	17.3	100
Multi-racial/Other*	2.9	17.6	29.4	29.4	20.6	100
White	6.1	3.0	25.8	37.9	27.3	100

97.9% of students were aware that different schools have different admission criteria.

Q21. I was aware that different schools have different admission criteria.

	Count	Percent
Yes	328	97.9
No	7	2.1
Total	335	100

93.8% of students were aware of the policy that if they did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.

Q21. I was aware of the policy that if I did not meet a school's criteria, I would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.

	Count	Percent
Yes	330	93.8
No	22	6.3
Total	352	100

Q28. I was aware of the policy that if I did not meet a school's criteria, I would not be eligble for the lottery at that school.
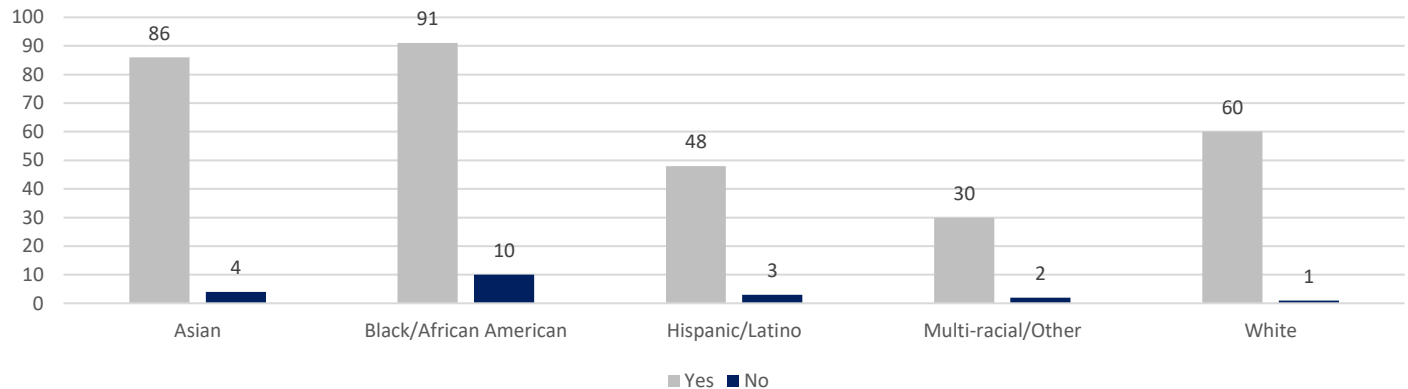
However, 43% of respondents applied to at least one school where they did not meet the school's criteria. Black and Hispanic/Latino students applied to a school in which they did not meet criteria (67% and 67.5% respectively) at a greater rate than Asian and White students (21% and 23% respectively). There is a statistically significant difference between certain races/ethnicities and likelihood of applying to schools in which students did not meet the school's criteria (p–value: < 0.00001, chi-square: 54.5), meaning, the difference is not likely due to chance. The statistically significant pairwise comparisons are shown in the table below (Table x).

Q29. I applied to at least one school where I did not meet that school's criteria.

	No	Yes	Percent that Applied to a School in Which They Did Not Meet Criteria
Asian	60	16	21%
Black/African American	26	53	67%
Hispanic/Latino	13	27	67.5%
Multi-racial/Other*	13	11	46%
White	44	13	23%
Total	156	120	276

Pairwise Comparisons	Statistically Significant Difference
Asian – Black	Yes
Asian – Hispanic/Latino	Yes
Asian – Multi-racial/Other	Yes
White – Black	Yes
White – Hispanic/Latino	Yes
White – Multi-racial/Other	Yes

68.8% of students agreed that it was easy for them to view their position on the waitlist. However, students did not receive push notifications regarding waitlist updates or movement, which meant that they and their parents/guardians were required to view their application status from the student dashboard in their account [Source].

Q25. It was easy for me to view my position on the waitlist.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	4.2	8.3	18.8	44.8	24.0
Count (#)	12	24	54	129	69

63% of students knew how to accept a waitlist offer from a school. 17.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Q26. I understood how to accept a waitlist offer from a school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	6.4	10.9	19.6	38.5	24.5
Count (#)	17	29	52	102	65

For criteria-based schools, satisfaction with the following evaluation criteria (grades, attendance, and PSSA scores) varied by race and ethnicity.
- For **grades**, 72.5% of students were satisfied. There was a statistically significant relationship between race/ethnicity and dissatisfaction with using grades as criteria (p-value: <0.05, chi-square: 49.4).
- 66.7% of students agree to using **attendance** as an evaluation criterion.
- 52.1% of students were satisfied in using the **PSSA** as an admissions criterion.

Q20. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Grades

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	9.4	4.2	11.5	40.6	34.4	100
Black/African American	3.6	6.3	17.0	46.4	26.8	100
Hispanic / Latino	1.9	0.0	28.8	28.8	40.4	100
Multi-racial / Other*	2.9	14.7	14.7	38.2	29.4	100
White	0.0	6.1	19.7	37.9	36.4	100

Q20. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Attendance

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	8.3	5.2	12.5	33.3	40.6	100
Black/African American	6.3	5.4	23.2	41.1	24.1	100
Hispanic / Latino	3.8	1.9	30.8	34.6	28.8	100
Multi-racial / Other*	2.9	8.8	32.4	35.3	20.6	100
White	3.0	3.0	25.8	33.3	34.8	100

Q20. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – PSSA

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	11.5	13.5	22.9	24.0	28.1	100
Black/African American	6.3	8.9	32.1	33.0	19.6	100
Hispanic / Latino	5.8	5.8	34.6	32.7	21.2	100
Multi-racial / Other*	5.9	8.8	38.2	26.5	20.6	100
White	10.6	7.6	28.8	31.8	21.2	100

Pairwise Comparisons	Statistically Significant Difference
Asian – White	Yes
Asian – Multi-racial/Other	Yes

District's Communication on the Selection Process

For 65.0% (216 out of 338) of students, English is the primary language spoken at home.

Q8. Is English the primary language spoken at home?

	No (%)	Yes (%)	Total
Asian	67.0	33.0	100
Black/African American	7.6	92.4	100
Hispanic/Latino	67.2	32.8	100
Multi-racial/Other*	12.2	87.8	100
White	21.1	78.9	100

81.7% of students received communication about the process in the language they understood.

Q17. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	3.8	1.9	13.3	39.0	41.9	100
Black/African American	0.8	1.6	13.1	43.4	41.0	100
Hispanic / Latino	1.9	0.0	15.1	34.0	49.1	100
Multi-racial / Other*	0.0	2.6	10.5	34.2	52.6	100
White	5.4	4.1	14.9	21.6	54.1	100

Most students learned about the school selection process through their school counselor.

Q9. How did you learn about the school selection process? [Select all that apply]

Source	Count
My school counselor	185
Teachers or other adults at my school other than my principal or counselor	103
The School District of Philadelphia's website	96
My friends	83
A family member	81
My school's website	69
My school principal	57
Event (conference, information session, school night, school assembly)	32
School District of Philadelphia's High School Directory or other printed information	28
School visits from current high school students or staff	27
Great Philly Schools website	21
Social media	18
High School Expo	18
Other (Explain below)	18
Robocall from the School District of Philadelphia	12
News media (radio, tv, newspapers)	7
School alumni	6

Majority of students stated they had enough resources to decide what school(s) they wanted to apply to. 60.3% of respondents agreed.

Q16. I had enough resources (e.g., school fair, open house, webinar) to confidently decide what school(s) I wanted to apply to

Response	Count
Strongly Agree	71
Agree	131
Neutral	85
Disagree	30
Strongly Disagree	18
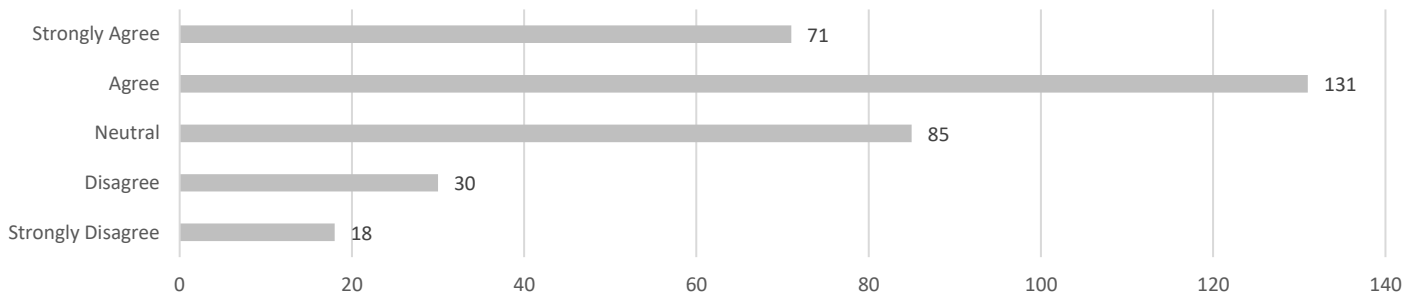
Most students felt as if they had enough information to complete their application. 71.4% of respondents agreed.

Q26. I had enough information to complete my application.

Response	Count
Strongly Agree	71
Agree	131
Neutral	85
Disagree	30
Strongly Disagree	18
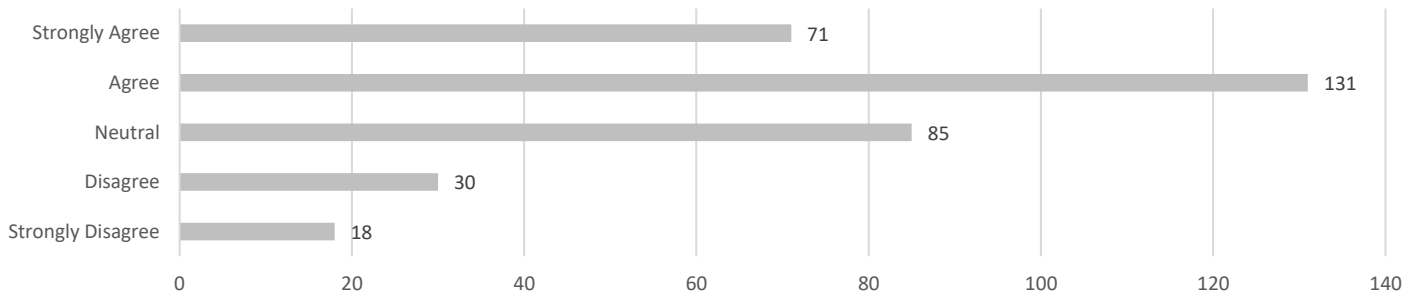
Overall Perception of the School Selection Process

Asian students had the highest rate of dissatisfaction with the school selection process. There was a higher representation of Black students for those who agreed or strongly agreed to feeling satisfied with the school selection process, at 36.9% and 24.4% respectively. There is a statistically significant relationship between race/ethnicity and dissatisfaction with the school selection process (p–value: <0.01, chi-square: 43.4).

Q13. Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	33.7	40.3	21.0	18.1	25.0	100
Black/African American	20.9	17.7	43.8	37.2	25.0	100
Hispanic / Latino	10.5	11.3	10.5	18.1	18.8	100
Multi-racial / Other*	8.1	11.3	9.5	7.4	14.6	100
White	26.7	19.4	14.3	18.1	14.6	100

Pairwise Comparisons	Statistically Significant Difference
Asian – Black/African American	Yes
Asian – Hispanic/Latinx	Yes
Black/African American - White	Yes

Asian, Multi-racial/Other, and White students reported less satisfaction with the lottery process than Black and Hispanic/Latino students. There is a statistically significant relationship between race/ethnicity and dissatisfaction with the lottery process (p–value: <0.001, chi-square: 51.7).

Q22. I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	40.0	23.3	16.7	17.9	7.8	100
Black/African American	11.9	14.9	31.7	27.7	13.9	100
Hispanic / Latino	21.6	7.8	31.4	29.4	9.8	100
Multi-racial / Other*	41.9	9.7	22.6	19.4	6.5	100
White	37.7	9.8	19.7	26.2	6.6	100

Pairwise Comparisons	Statistically Significant Difference
Asian – Black/African American	Yes
Asian – Hispanic/Latinx	Yes
Black/African American – Multi-racial/Other	Yes
Black/African American - White	Yes

46.2% of students were satisfied with the offer(s) they received, while 30.5% of students were dissatisfied.

Q23. I am satisfied with the offer(s) I received.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	27.1	13.5	16.7	22.9	19.8	100
Black/African American	13.4	12.5	29.5	30.4	14.3	100
Hispanic / Latino	13.5	7.7	26.9	26.9	25.0	100
Multi-racial / Other*	11.8	14.7	32.4	11.8	29.4	100
White	18.2	16.7	13.6	25.8	25.8	100

Most students would like the District to remove the lottery (54.4%) or allow students to rank school choices if the lottery remained (38.2%). Students also would like to receive additional push notifications for deadlines and changes to the process (29.6%) and would like the District to reconsider the eligibility criteria (28.1%).

Q30. What should the School District of Philadelphia consider to improve the annual school selection process? [Select up to 3]

Choice	Percent	Count
Removing the lottery	54.4%	184
Allow students to rank their school choices	38.2%	129
Additional ways to alert me of deadlines and changes (text, phone, banners, intercom announcements)	29.6%	100
Changing the eligibility criteria	28.1%	95
Removing the zip code preference	24.9%	84
Better communication on the process and evaluation criteria	21.9%	74
More resources on navigating and comparing school offerings	16.3%	55
Communicate changes with more advanced time	12.1%	41
Providing more time to complete the application	9.8%	33
Offering resources in more languages	8.0%	27
Make the online application (School Mint) more user-friendly	7.1%	24
More support from counselors and teachers with the application	6.8%	23
Other (Explain below)	5.9%	20

Correlation Matrix

A correlation matrix was developed to evaluate the relationship between student survey questions. Correlations closer to one indicate a strong relationship (green), while correlations closer to zero indicate a weak relationship (orange/red). Key insights include:
- Students who were satisfied with the selection process were also satisfied with the lottery process (0.738).
- Although students were satisfied with the selection process, they were unclear on how to accept waitlist offers (0.076).
- Students who were satisfied with the school selection process faced fewer language barriers (0.206).
- Although students felt satisfied with the school selection process, they did not feel the selection criteria were fair (PSSA – 0.181; attendance – 0.162; grades – 0.201).

Correlation Matrix

	Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.	Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.	I had enough time to complete my application.	I had enough information to complete my application.	I had enough resources (e.g., school fair, open house, webinar) to confidently decide what school(s) I wanted to apply to.	Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood.	My teachers and/or counselors offered me support throughout the application process.	The online application was easy for me to understand and complete.	The following school selection criteria were fair. - Standardized Assessment Scores (e.g., PSSA)	The following school selection criteria were fair. - Attendance	The following school selection criteria were fair. - Grades	I understand how the school selection process lottery works.	I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.	I am satisfied with the offer(s) I received.	It was easy for me to view my position on the waitlist.	I understood how to accept a waitlist offer from a school.
Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.		0.317	0.402	0.466	0.325	0.346	0.228	0.462	0.193	0.210	0.146	0.483	0.185	0.331	0.365	0.336
Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.	0.317		0.314	0.383	0.320	0.206	0.315	0.380	0.181	0.162	0.201	0.245	0.738	0.647	0.224	0.076
I had enough time to complete my application.	0.402	0.314		0.566	0.444	0.540	0.246	0.510	0.309	0.296	0.253	0.337	0.282	0.376	0.292	0.182
I had enough information to complete my application.	0.466	0.383	0.566		0.574	0.456	0.294	0.525	0.274	0.202	0.192	0.405	0.309	0.423	0.285	0.324
I had enough resources (e.g., school fair, open house, webinar) to confidently decide what school(s) I wanted to apply to.	0.325	0.320	0.444	0.574		0.427	0.246	0.374	0.243	0.185	0.181	0.266	0.229	0.329	0.229	0.226
Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood.	0.346	0.206	0.540	0.456	0.427		0.324	0.489	0.282	0.282	0.312	0.400	0.152	0.275	0.344	0.307
My teachers and/or counselors offered me support throughout the application process.	0.228	0.315	0.246	0.294	0.246	0.324		0.304	0.165	0.081	0.160	0.218	0.305	0.326	0.193	0.125
The online application was easy for me to understand and complete.	0.462	0.380	0.510	0.525	0.374	0.489	0.304		0.285	0.212	0.250	0.434	0.287	0.335	0.387	0.349
The following school selection criteria were fair. - Standardized Assessment Scores (e.g., PSSA)	0.193	0.181	0.309	0.274	0.243	0.282	0.165	0.285		0.425	0.455	0.266	0.216	0.250	0.178	0.095
The following school selection criteria were fair. - Attendance	0.210	0.162	0.296	0.202	0.185	0.282	0.081	0.212	0.425		0.608	0.274	0.169	0.188	0.118	0.155
The following school selection criteria were fair. - Grades	0.146	0.201	0.253	0.192	0.181	0.312	0.160	0.250	0.455	0.608		0.213	0.226	0.254	0.148	0.166
I understand how the school selection process lottery works.	0.483	0.245	0.337	0.405	0.266	0.400	0.218	0.434	0.266	0.274	0.213		0.334	0.304	0.413	0.360
I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.	0.185	0.738	0.282	0.309	0.229	0.152	0.305	0.287	0.216	0.169	0.226	0.334		0.593	0.222	0.122
I am satisfied with the offer(s) I received.	0.331	0.647	0.376	0.423	0.329	0.275	0.326	0.335	0.250	0.188	0.254	0.304	0.593		0.270	0.161
It was easy for me to view my position on the waitlist.	0.365	0.224	0.292	0.285	0.229	0.344	0.193	0.387	0.178	0.118	0.148	0.413	0.222	0.270		0.482
I understood how to accept a waitlist offer from a school.	0.336	0.076	0.182	0.324	0.226	0.307	0.125	0.349	0.095	0.155	0.166	0.360	0.122	0.161	0.482	

Considerations

The following considerations were developed by Accenture based on the feedback received from students on the survey.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

1. **Waitlist notifications**: Regarding the waitlist, many people didn't know that they moved up or got accepted. In addition, some students shared that they weren't properly notified of their offers from off the waitlist, leading them to miss out on opportunities.
2. **Lack of transparency**: Students could not view why they were ineligible and/or not selected from their schools of choice.
3. **Errors within SchoolMint**: Some applications were removed or erased from SchoolMint without notice. It was difficult to follow-up with technical support in recovering lost information.
4. No guarantee to get into any high-performing school for students who meet eligibility criteria.
5. **Resources in more languages** needed for households in which English is not the primary language.

6. **Attendance criteria** is unfair because some schools code "excused" versus "unexcused" absence improperly.
7. **Choice often left to parents**, who select high schools for children, rather than children having more input into where they will shine and excel most.
8. **Increase numbers of applications** so that children can choose more than five schools.

Student Questions

The purpose of this evaluation is to examine how your perceptions may differ based on several factors, such as gender or school type. This first set of questions will provide us the information we need to do that.

These questions help us know if students with different characteristics have the same or different answers to questions on the survey. This first set of questions will provide us the information we need to do that.

1. What is your current grade?
   o [Dropdown for choices of 3 through 11]
2. Did you apply to a criteria-based school during the Fall 2022 selection process (to attend in Fall 2023)? A criteria-based school is one that has requirements to attend like test scores, attendance, or an audition, for example.
   o Yes
   o No
   o I don't know
3. What is your race/ethnicity?
   o American Indian / Alaska Native
   o Asian
   o Black/African American
   o Hispanic / Latinx
   o Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
   o White
   o Multi Racial / Other
4. Do you identify as:
   o Male
   o Female
   o Non-binary
   o Prefer not to say
5. What zip code do you live in? [Five digits allowed]
   o [Text Entry]
6. What type of school do you attend this year?
   o Neighborhood School (Catchment School)
   o Charter School
   o Private School
   o Citywide School
   o Criteria-based School
   o Homeschool
   o Public School Outside of Philadelphia
   o I don't know
7. Is English the primary language spoken at home?
   o Yes
   o No
8. Grid: How did you learn about this year's school selection process? [Select all that apply].
   o My school's website
   o My school principal
   o My school counselor
   o The School District's website
   o A family member
   o Robocall from the School District
   o My friends
   o Teachers or other adults at my school other than my principal or counselor
   o Great Philly Schools website
   o Social media
   o News media (radio, tv, newspapers)
   o School visits from current high school students or staff
   o SDP's High School Directory or other printed information

- School alumni
- High School Expo
- Event (conference, information session, school night, school assembly)
- Other (Explain below)
    1. [Text Entry]

9. Who completed your school selection application? [Select all that apply]
    - Myself
    - My parent or guardian
    - My counselor
    - Other (Explain below)
        1. [Text Entry]

Our next set of questions will explore your opinions of the current school selection process. For each question, select your response, on a scale of 1-5 from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

10. Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
11. Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
12. I had enough time to complete my application.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
13. I had enough information to complete my application.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5
14. I had enough resources (e.g., school fair, open house, webinar) to confidently decide what school(s) I wanted to apply to.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
15. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
16. My teachers and/or counselors offered me support throughout the application process.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
17. The online application was easy for me to understand and complete.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
18. Grid: The following school selection criteria were fair.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
        1. Standardized Assessment Scores (e.g., PSSA)
        2. Attendance
        3. Grades
19. I understand how the school selection process lottery works.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
20. I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
21. I am satisfied with the offer(s) I received.
    - [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
22. I was placed on the waitlist for one or more schools I applied to.
    - Yes
    - No
    - [Branching: If placed on waitlist]
        1. 1) It was easy for me to view my position on the waitlist.
            1. [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
        2. 2) I understood how to accept a waitlist offer from a school.
            1. [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
23. I was aware that different schools have different admission criteria.
    - Yes
    - No
24. I was aware of the policy that if I did not meet a school's criteria, I would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.
    - Yes
    - No
25. I applied to at least 1 school where I did not meet that school's criteria.
    - Yes
    - No
    - I don't know
26. What should the School District of Philadelphia consider to improve the annual school selection process? [Select up to 3]
    - Allow students to rank their school choices
    - More resources on navigating and comparing school offerings
    - Better communication about on the process and admission requirements

- o   Make the online application (School Mint) more user-friendly
- o   Additional ways to alert me of deadlines and changes (text, phone, banners, intercom announcements)
- o   More support from counselors and teachers with the application
- o   Changing the eligibility criteria
- o   Removing the lottery
- o   Removing the zip code preference
- o   Providing more time to complete the application
- o   Communicate changes with more advanced time
- o   Offering resources in more languages
- o   Other (Explain below)
    1.   [Text Entry]
27. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Appendix E. Parent/Guardian Survey

The District made significant changes to the school selection process in Fall 2022. Accenture has been brought in to conduct a third-party evaluation to assess if this new process delivered on the commitments the organization shared publicly, the outcomes they intended, and to understand key stakeholder perceptions on the process. Additionally, Accenture administered a survey for parents/guardians of pre-kindergartners through 11th grade students involved in the Fall 2022 school selection process.

The survey was open from May 10th – 19th, 2023. Of the 18,104 parents/guardians who received the survey, there were 1,316 parents/guardians that completed the survey, for a response rate of approximately 7.3%.

Compared to District representation, parents/guardians of White students were overrepresented by +24.9 percentage points in the survey sample and parents/guardians of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students were under-represented (-16.9 and -14.9 percentage points, respectively). Parents/guardians of rising kindergartners and rising 9th graders were overrepresented in the survey (by 6.1 and 46 percentage points, respectively). 1,270 out of 1,316 parents/guardians that completed the survey indicated that they participated in the Fall 2022 school selection process (96.5%).

This memo summarizes the findings from the parent survey and provides considerations to address the challenges and concerns identified by parents/guardians.

Methods

- Accenture developed and finalized the survey questions with input from the Office of Research and Evaluation.
- Communication was sent to principals, letting them know that their families will be contacted by Accenture for the third-party evaluation.
- The survey was administered via Qualtrics, and a link was sent to both District and non-District parents/guardians enrolled in grades 5 to 11 who applied during the Fall 2022 school selection cycle (for enrollment during SY23-24).
- 12th grade parents/guardians were not included because they will matriculate out of the District at the end of the school year.
- 9 respondents who did not identify as a parent or guardian responded to the survey; their responses were removed from the sample.
- 35 respondents did not participate in the school selection process in Fall 2022, and thus were excluded from results.

Findings

Compared to District representation, parents/guardians of White students were overrepresented by +24.9 percentage points in the survey sample and parents/guardians of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students were under-represented (-16.9 and -14.9 percentage points, respectively). Parents/guardians of male students in the survey were underrepresented by 6.4 percentage points. Parents/guardians of rising kindergartners and rising 9th graders were overrepresented in the survey (by 6.1 and 46 percentage points, respectively).

Table 1. Representativeness of Survey Respondents

	Survey Respondents	District Representation	Percentage Point Difference
Race/Ethnicity of Child [2]			
Asian	8.9%	7%	+1.9
Black/African American	34.1%	51%	-16.9
Hispanic / Latino	8.1%	23%	-14.9
Multi-racial / Other*	11.0%	5%	+6.0
White	37.9%	13%	+24.9
Gender of Child [1]			
Female	49.7%	46%	+3.7
Male	47.6%	54%	-6.4
Non-Binary	1.7%	0%	1.7
Prefer Not to Say	1.0%	0%	1.0
Accommodations of Child [1]			
Has IEP	9.3%	17.8%	-8.5
Has 504	3.6%	Data not available	Data not available
English Learner	1.7%	17.4%	-15.7
Grade of Child [1]			
Pre-Kindergarten	6.1%	0	+6.1
Kindergarten	1.5%	7%	-5.5
1st Grade	1.0%	8%	-7.0
2nd Grade	1.1%	7%	-5.9
3rd Grade	1.4%	8%	-6.6
4th Grade	12.4%	8%	+4.4
5th Grade	7.1%	5%	+2.1
6th Grade	3.3%	7%	-3.7
7th Grade	2.4%	10%	-7.6
8th Grade	55.0%	9%	+46
9th Grade	6.6%	9%	-2.4
10th Grade	1.8%	10%	-8.2
11th Grade	0.4%	8%	-7.6

---

[2] "School District of Philadelphia: Demographics", accessed May 24, 2023, https://dashboards.philasd.org/extensions/enrollment-public/index.html#/demographics.

Table 2. Number of Children in Household Currently Enrolled in the District

District Children in Household	Count	Survey Respondents (%)
0	189	14.3
1	445	33.8
2	522	39.6
3	119	9.0
4	31	2.4
5	5	0.4
6	1	0.1
7	3	0.2
8	1	0.1
9	0	0.0
10	2	0.2

Table 3. School Type of Survey Respondents

School Type	Count	Survey Respondents (%)
Neighborhood (Catchment) School	512	39.1
Criteria-Based School	192	14.7
Citywide School	63	4.8
Charter School	273	20.9
Homeschool	24	1.8
Public School Outside of Philadelphia	14	1.1
Private School	194	14.8
I Don't Know	37	2.8

61.4% of respondents are parents/guardians of non-District students. When relevant, survey findings will primarily be factored into internal (District) and external (non-District) groupings.
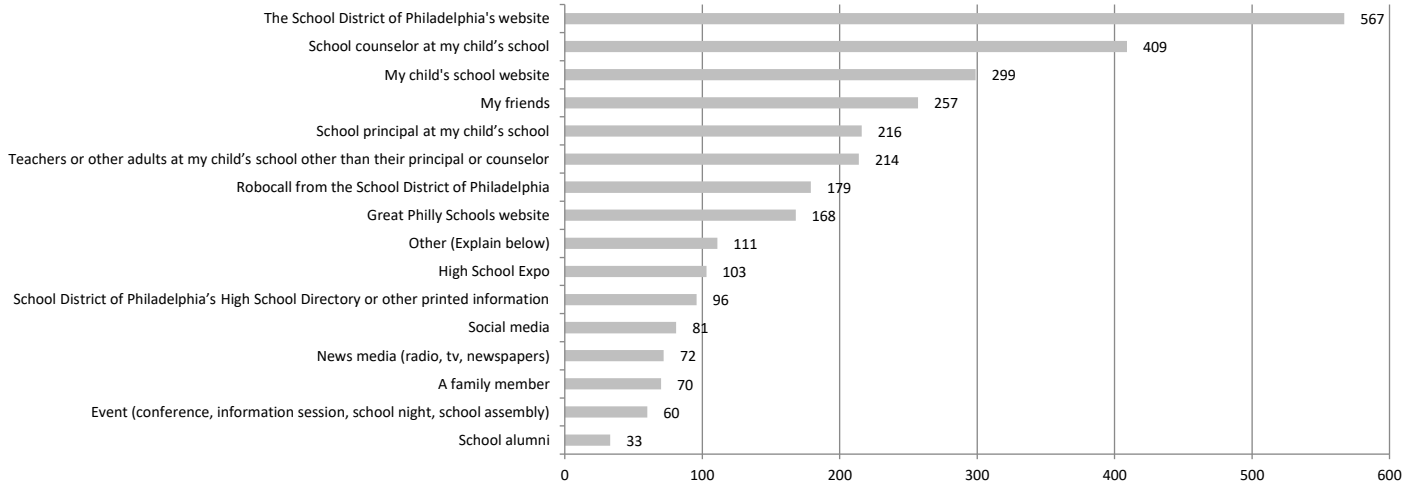
Table 3. School Type of Survey Respondents [Internal vs External]

School Type	Count	Survey Respondents (%)
External	505	38.6
Internal	804	61.4

Navigating the Process

32.7% of parents/guardians learned about the school selection process through the School District of Philadelphia website. Beyond the District's website and school counselors, 28.2% of external parents/guardians learned about school selection through Greatphillyschools.org.

Q12. How did you learn about the school selection process? [Select all that apply]

The School District of Philadelphia's website	567
School counselor at my child's school	409
My child's school website	299
My friends	257
School principal at my child's school	216
Teachers or other adults at my child's school other than their principal or counselor	214
Robocall from the School District of Philadelphia	179
Great Philly Schools website	168
Other (Explain below)	111
High School Expo	103
School District of Philadelphia's High School Directory or other printed information	96
Social media	81
News media (radio, tv, newspapers)	72
A family member	70
Event (conference, information session, school night, school assembly)	60
School alumni	33

Q12. How did you learn about the school selection process? [Select all that apply] [External vs. Internal]

|	Top 1	Top 2	Top 3	Top 4	Top 5
External	The School District of Philadelphia Website (38.0%)	School counselor at my child's school (33.3%)	Great Philly Schools Website (18.8%)	My friends (16.8%)	My child's school website (14.1%)
Internal	The School District of Philadelphia Website (46.1%)	School counselor at my child's school (29.7%)	My child's school website (28.2%)	My friends (20.9%)	School principal at my child's school (20.5%)

Just 44.6% of parents/guardians received support from teachers and/or counselors throughout the application process. There is no statistically significant relationship between non-District versus District parents/guardians and the support from school staff they received.

Q22. Teachers and/or counselors offered my family support throughout the application process.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	17.3%	15.4%	22.8%	26.9%	17.7%
Count (#)	215	191	283	334	220

While most parents/guardians completed their school selection application on their own (60.3%), many children completed the application (17.8%). Only a fraction of parents' counselors completed the application on students' behalf (7.4%). For parents/guardians in which English is the primarily language spoken, 80.7% completed their child's application compared to 63.8% of non-primary English-speaking parents/guardians.

Q13. Who completed your school selection application? [Select all that apply]
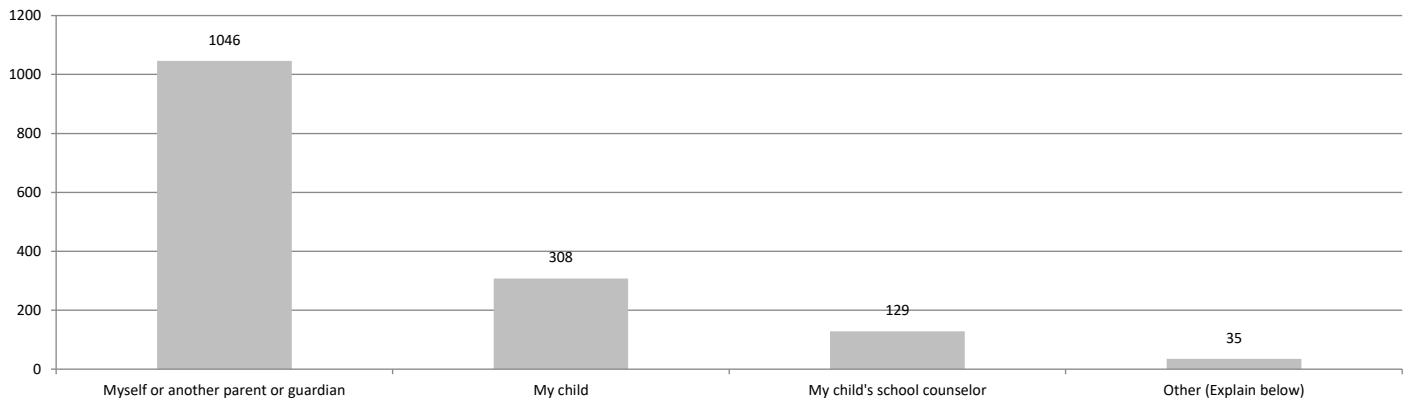
Percent (%)	Myself or another parent or guardian	My child	My child's school counselor	Other (Explain below)
English – Primary language	80.7	22.7	9.0	2.7
English – NOT primary language	63.8	29.1	16.5	2.4

63.7% of applicants found the online application easy to understand and complete. Nearly 1 out of 5 (22.7%) of non-District parents/guardians disagreed. There is a statistically significant relationship between non-District and District parents/guardians' perception of how easy the online application was (p-value: < 0.00001, chi-square: 32.0).

Q23. The online application was easy for my family to understand and complete.
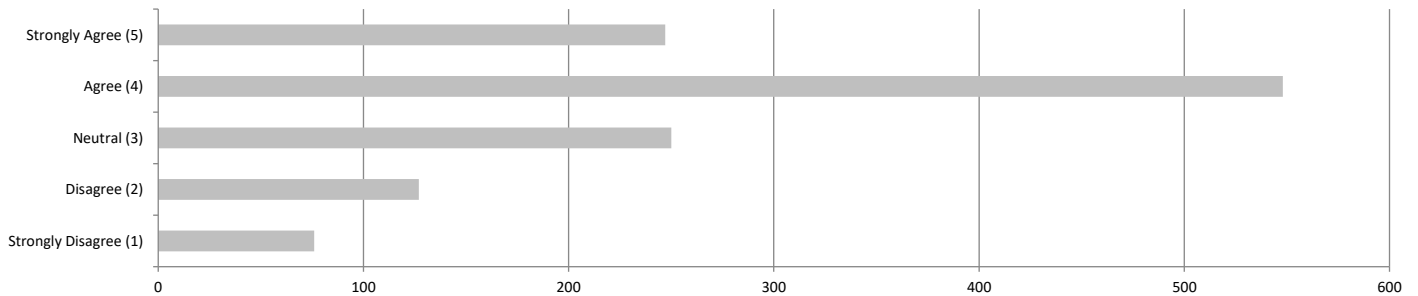
Q23. The online application was easy for my family to understand and complete. [External vs Internal]

|	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
External	9.3%	13.3%	20.6%	42.2%	14.6%	100
Internal	3.9%	8.4%	19.7%	45.1%	22.9%	100

Asian parents/guardians identified technology as a barrier at a higher rate (8.5%) than other races/ethnicities. There is a statistically significant relationship between race/ethnicity and technology access (p-value: < 0.00001, chi-square: 72.0).

Q5. Access to technology was not a barrier to completing the application. [By race/ethnicity]

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	4.7%	3.8%	19.8%	42.5%	29.2%	100
Black/African American	3.4%	3.8%	7.9%	45.9%	38.9%	100
Hispanic/Latino	3.0%	2.0%	11.0%	42.0%	42.0%	100
Multi-racial/Other*	0.7%	2.2%	6.6%	44.1%	46.3%	100
White	1.3%	1.3%	4.2%	36.8%	56.4%	100

37.2% of parents/guardians were not satisfied with the assistance they received as a parent or guardian of a child with an IEP, 504 plan, or receiving English Learner services.

Q26. I am satisfied with the assistance I received as the parent or guardian of a child with an IEP, a 504 Plan, or receiving English Learner Services.
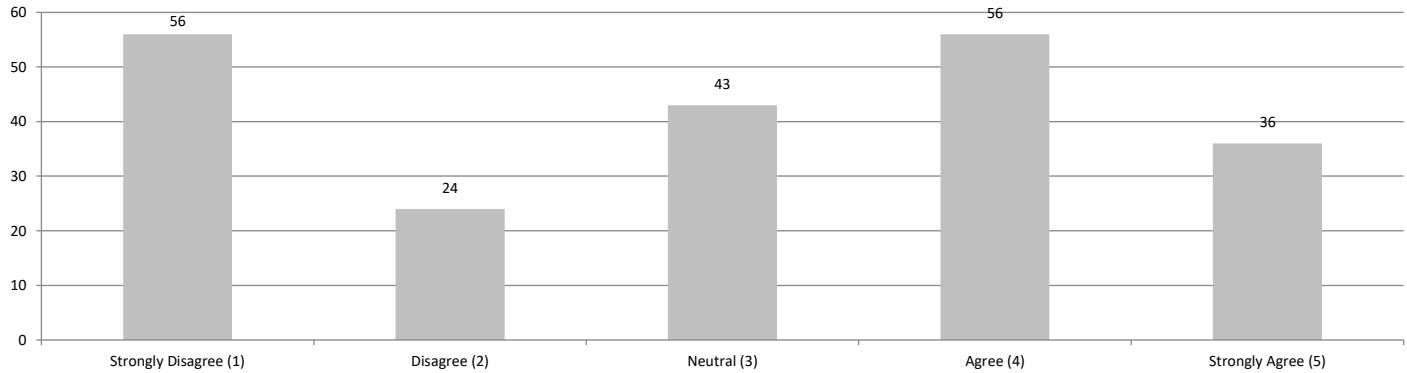
District's Commitment to the Selection Process

Overall, 58.9% of parents/guardians agreed that they understood how the lottery worked. However, nearly a quarter of parents/guardians across all races/ethnicities did not.

Q15. Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	10.3%	13.6%	17.1%	40.8%	18.1%
Count (#)	132	174	219	522	232

Q15. Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked. [By race/ethnicity]

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	15.0%	8.8%	19.5%	39.8%	16.8%	100
Black/African American	10.1%	13.6%	17.6%	37.3%	21.4%	100
Hispanic/Latino	10.7%	17.5%	23.3%	30.1%	18.4%	100
Multi-racial/Other*	8.6%	12.2%	22.3%	41.0%	15.8%	100
White	9.7%	14.5%	12.8%	46.2%	16.8%	100

89.0% of parents/guardians were aware that different schools have different admission criteria.

Q34. I was aware that different schools have different admission criteria.

	Count	Percent
Yes	1079	89.0
No	133	211.0
Total	335	100

85.1% of parents/guardians were aware of the policy that if they did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school. Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino parents/guardians expressed not being aware of this policy at higher rates than other races/ethnicities (23.2% and 21.3%, respectively).

Q35. I was aware of the policy that if my child did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.

	Count	Percent
Yes	1030	85.1
No	180	14.9
Total	1210	100

Q35. I was aware of the policy that if my child did not meet a school's criteria, they would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.
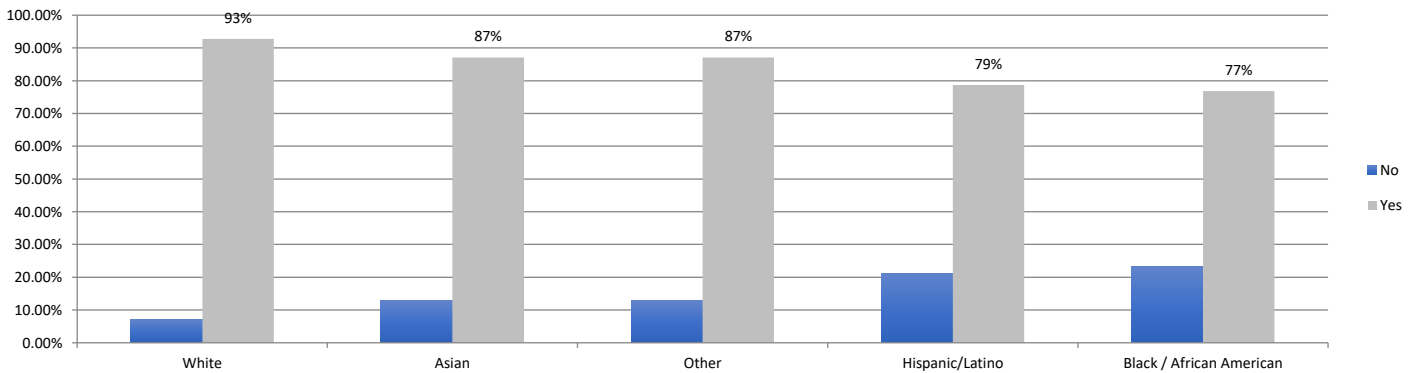
However, 28.5% of parents/guardians reported that their child applied to at least one school where they did not meet the school's criteria. This rate was slightly higher for non-District parents/guardians (36.2%). Also, there is a statistically significant relationship between this occurrence and race/ethnicity. 42.3% of Black/African American parents/guardians and 35.8% of Hispanic/Latino parents/guardians reported higher rates of this occurrence.

Q36. My child applied to at least one school where they did not meet that school's criteria.

	Count	Percent
Yes	345	28.5
No	680	56.1
I don't know	187	15.4
Total	1210	100

Q36. My child applied to at least one school where they did not meet that school's criteria. [External vs Internal]

	Non-District	District
Yes	36.2	23.7
No	46.7	62.0
I don't know	17.0	14.3
Total	100	100

Q36. My child applied to at least one school where they did not meet that school's criteria. [By race/ethnicity]

	Yes	No	I don't Know	Total
Asian	27.5	52.0	20.6	100
Black/African American	42.3	40.0	17.7	100
Hispanic/Latino	35.8	35.8	28.4	100
Multi-racial/Other*	32.8	55.0	12.2	100
White	14.5	74.8	10.7	100

67.3% of parents/guardians agreed that it was easy for them to view their position on the waitlist.

Q32. It was easy for me to view my position on the waitlist.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	6.1%	9.7%	16.9%	49.1%	18.2%
Count (#)	53	85	147	428	159

60.4% of parents/guardians knew how to accept a waitlist offer from a school.

Q33. I understood how to accept a waitlist offer from a school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	9.0%	12.2%	18.4%	43.4%	17.0%
Count (#)	78	106	160	377	148

For criteria-based schools, satisfaction with the following evaluation criteria (grades, attendance, and PSSA scores) varied.

- For **grades**, 67.8% of parents/guardians agreed in using it as an evaluation criterion.
- 62.4% of parents/guardians agreed in using **attendance** as an evaluation criterion.
- 47.7% of parents/guardians were dissatisfied in using the PSSA as an admissions criterion.
- 29.4% of non-District parents/guardians were dissatisfied with using the **PSSA** as an admissions criterion, compared to 25.6% of District parents/guardians (p-value: < 0.00001, chi-square: 40.2).
- 38.4% of Black / African American parents/guardians and 30.5% of other/multiracial parents/guardians were dissatisfied with using the **PSSA** as an admissions criterion (p-value: < 0.0000135, chi-square: 58.2).

Q27_1. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Grades

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Percent (%)	8.5%	6.3%	17.5%	37.5%	30.3%	100
Count (#)	97	72	200	430	347	100

Q27_2. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – Attendance

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Percent (%)	7.5%	6.9%	23.1	36.4%	26.0%	100
Count (#)	90	82	276	435	311	100

Q27_3. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – PSSA

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Percent (%)	18.4%	11.0%	27.0%	25.7%	17.9	100
Count (#)	221	132	324	308	215	100

Q27_3. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – PSSA [External vs Internal]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
External	23.7%	11.5%	21.1%	7.3%	24.8%	100
Internal	14.9%	10.7%	22.8%	3.1%	26.6%	100

Q27_3. I am satisfied with the following evaluation criteria – PSSA [By race/ethnicity]

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	12.7%	5.9%	17.6%	34.3%	29.4%	100
Black/African American	25.1%	13.3%	28.6%	21.9%	11.1%	100
Hispanic / Latino	12.8%	10.6%	29.8%	27.7%	19.1%	100
Multi-racial / Other*	18.8%	11.7%	25.0%	28.1%	16.4%	100
White	14.4%	9.9%	28.4%	25.6%	21.7%	100

District's Communication on the Selection Process

For 90.3% (1,176 out of 1,303) of respondents, English is the primary language spoken at home. In 51.7% Asian households, English is not the primary language spoken.

Q11. Is English the primary language spoken at home?

|	No (%)	Yes (%)	Total
Asian	51.7	48.3	100
Black/African American	1.1	98.9	100
Hispanic/Latino	25.9	74.1	100
Multi-racial/Other*	3.5	96.5	100
White	5.7	94.3	100

87.5% of parents/guardians received communication about the process in the language they understood. Hispanic/Latino households expressed a higher rate of not receiving communication in a language they understood (10%).
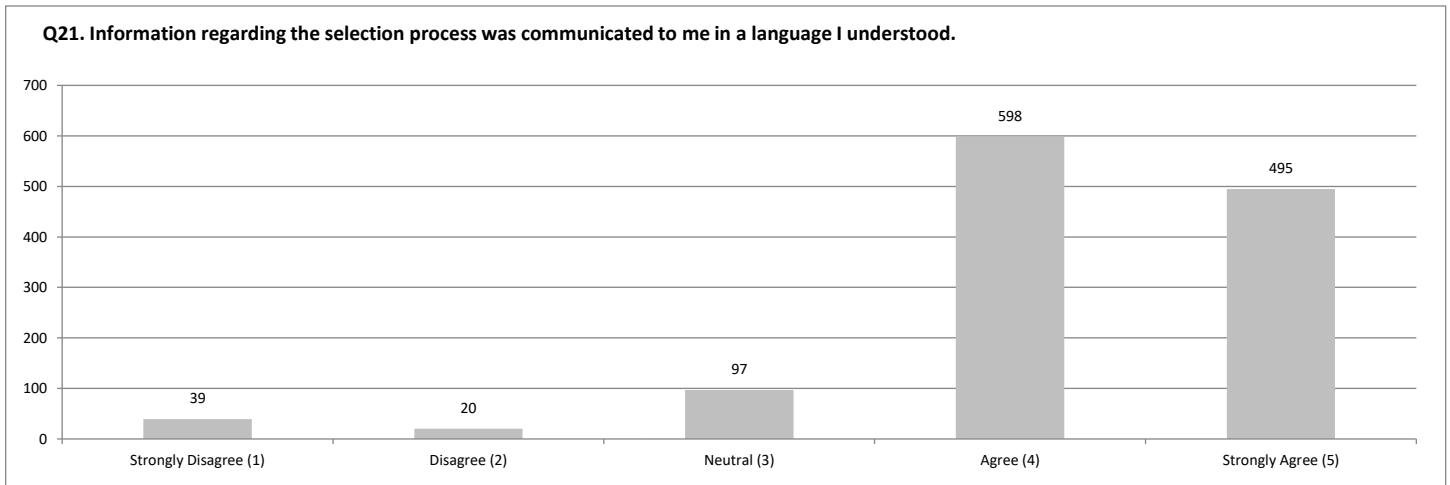
Q21. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood.

Q21. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood. [By race/ethnicity]

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	3.8%	2.8%	17.9%	47.2%	28.3%	100
Black/African American	5.0%	1.4%	7.2%	52.5%	33.8%	100
Hispanic / Latino	6.0%	4.0%	12.0%	44.0%	34.0%	100
Multi-racial / Other*	2.2%	1.5%	6.6%	51.1%	38.7%	100
White	1.1%	0.8%	5.3%	43.8%	49.1%	100

Most parents/guardians learned about the school selection process through their school counselor.

Q9. How did you learn about the school selection process? [Select all that apply]
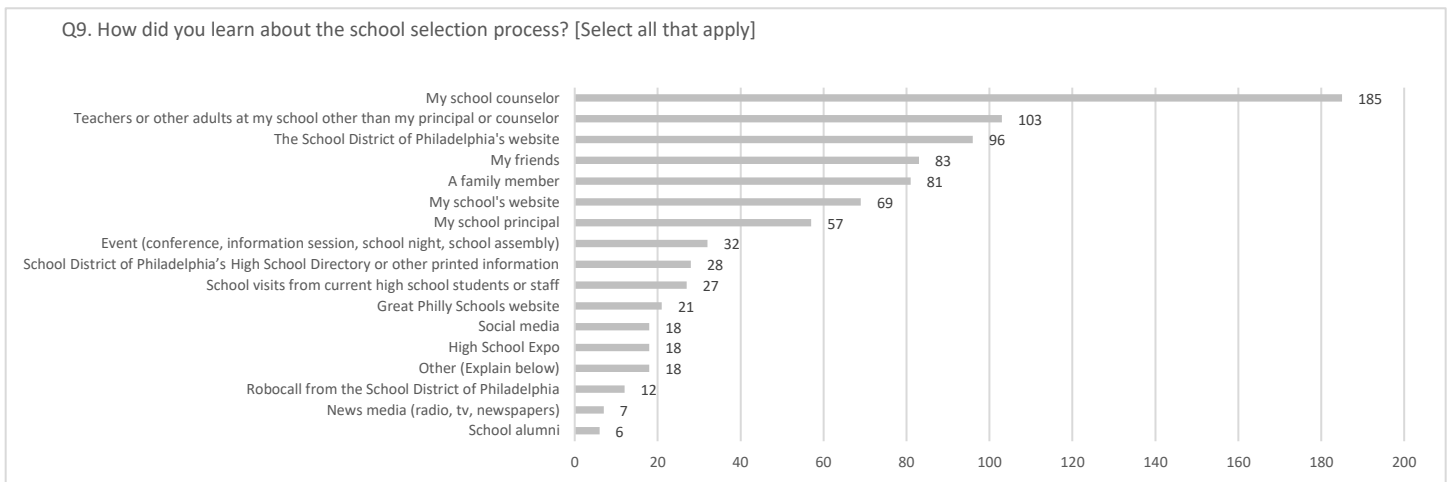
79.5% of families felt that they had enough resources to confidently make a decision about the schools they wanted their children to apply to.

Q19. My family had enough resources to confidently make a decision about the schools we wanted to apply for (e.g., school fair, open house, webinar).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	11.3%	15.4%	19.7%	36.3%	17.3%
Count (#)	145	197	252	464	221

51.2% of families felt that they were provided with sufficient communication about the application process. There was not a statistically significant relationship between District and non-District families regarding sentiment on sufficient communication.

Q20. My family was provided sufficient communication about the application process. (i.e., updates/process changes, deadlines, missing documents, etc.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	15.0%	16.3%	17.5%	36.3%	14.9%
Count (#)	187	204	219	454	186

Q20. My family was provided sufficient communication about the application process. (i.e., updates/process changes, deadlines, missing documents, etc.) [External vs Internal]

|	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
External	17.8%	18.0%	16.1%	35.2%	12.9%	100
Internal	13.1%	15.4%	18.2%	37.5%	15.8%	100

Most parents/guardians felt as if they had enough information to complete their application. 62.4% of respondents agreed.

Q18. My family had enough information to complete the application.
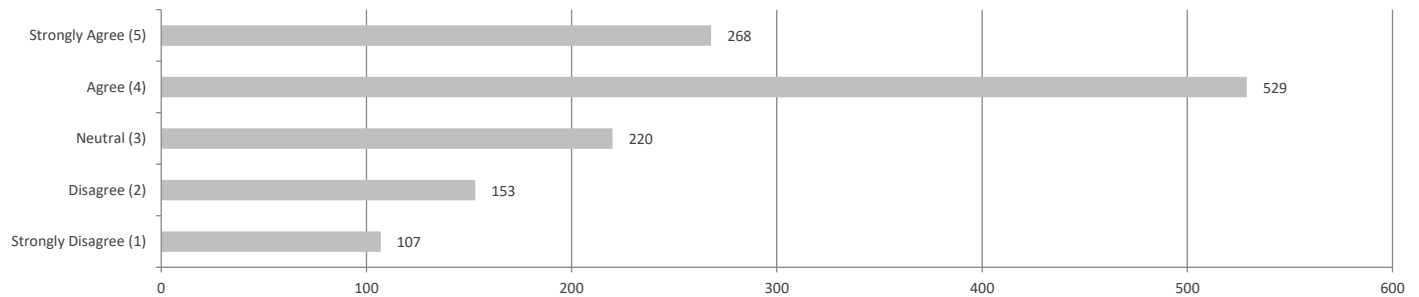
79.5% of parents/guardians felt that they had enough time to complete the application.

Q.17 - My family had enough time to complete the application.
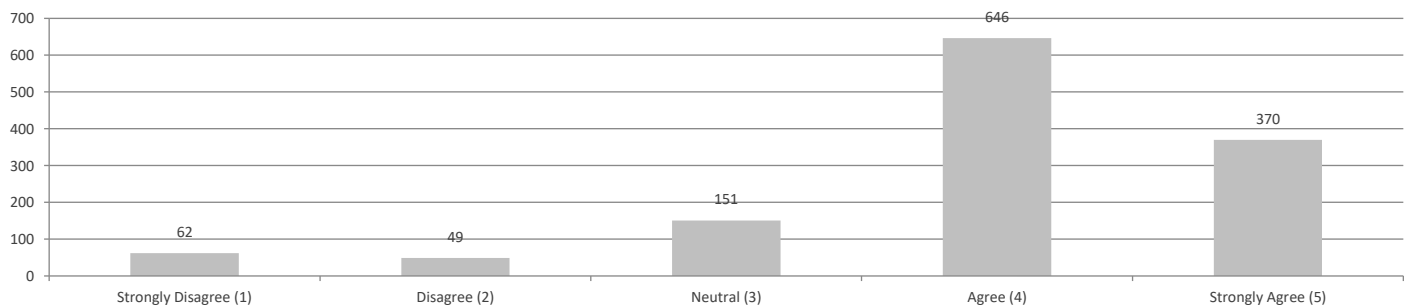
Overall Perception of the School Selection Process

White parents/guardians had the highest rate of dissatisfaction with the school selection process. There was a higher representation of Asian parents/guardians for those who agreed or strongly agreed to feeling satisfied with the school selection process, at 23.9% and 13.3% respectively. There is a statistically significant relationship between race/ethnicity of one's child and dissatisfaction with the school selection process (p–value: 0.00474, chi-square: 34.4).

Q16. Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	36.2%	19.5%	16.7%	18.9%	8.6%
Count (#)	463	250	214	242	110

Q16. Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	30.1%	13.3%	19.5%	23.9%	13.3%	100
Black/African American	32.4%	18.1%	18.5%	21.6%	9.4%	100
Hispanic / Latino	29.1%	21.4%	19.4%	17.5%	12.6%	100
Multi-racial / Other*	41.0%	15.8%	18.0%	15.1%	10.1%	100
White	40.8%	23.0%	14.1%	16.4%	5.8%	100

61.5% of parents and guardians reported dissatisfaction with the lottery process. Parents/guardians of white and black children expressed higher rates of dissatisfaction (70.9% and 55.8%, respectively). There is a statistically significant relationship between race/ethnicity and dissatisfaction with the lottery process (p–value: < 0.00001, chi-square: 55.8).

Q29. I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	43.3%	18.2%	17.3%	14.8%	6.4%
Count (#)	530	223	212	181	79

Q29. I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process. [By race/ethnicity]

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Asian	32.4%	11.4%	29.5%	18.1%	8.6%	100
Black/African American	40.0%	15.8%	16.5%	20.0%	7.7%	100
Hispanic / Latino	33.0%	18.6%	21.6%	18.6%	8.2%	100
Multi-racial / Other*	43.7%	21.5%	14.1%	15.6%	5.2%	100
White	50.0%	20.9%	15.7%	8.3%	5.1%	100

Roughly just as many parents/guardians were satisfied as they were dissatisfied with the offer(s) their children received. 50.5% of non-District parents/guardians were not satisfied with the offers their child received, compared to 39.9% of District parents/guardians. There is a statistically significant relationship between non-District and District affiliation and offer satisfaction (p-value: 0.00318, chi square: 15.9).

Q30. I am satisfied with the offer(s) my child received.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Percent (%)	31.3%	12.7%	12.7%	25.3%	18.1%
Count (#)	383	155	155	310	222

Q30. I am satisfied with the offer(s) my child received. [External vs Internal]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
External	37.3%	13.2%	10.8%	23.9%	14.8%	100
Internal	27.7%	12.2%	13.7%	26.2%	20.2%	100

Parents/guardians would like the District to remove the lottery (32.9%) or allow students to rank school choices if the lottery remained (27.6%). 22.2% of parents/guardians would also like to remove the zip code preference. Parents/guardians least approved adding more time to complete the application (2.2%) or offering resources in more languages (1.2%).

Q30. What should the School District of Philadelphia consider to improve the annual school selection process? [Select up to 3]

Choice	Percent	Count
Removing the lottery	32.9%	570
Allow students to rank their school choices	27.6%	479
Removing the zip code preference	22.2%	386
Changing the eligibility criteria	19.4%	336
Better communications on the process and evaluation criteria	16.9%	293
Other (Explain below)	15.3%	265
More resources on navigating and comparing school offerings	11.5%	200
More support from counselors and teachers with the application	8.6%	149
Make the online application (School Mint) more user-friendly	6.3%	110
Communicate changes with more advanced time	6.1%	106
Additional ways to alert me of deadlines and changes (text, phone, banners, intercom announcements)	5.8%	100
Providing more time to complete the application	2.2%	39
Offering resources in more languages	1.2%	20

Correlation Matrix

A correlation matrix was developed to evaluate the relationship between parent survey questions. Correlations closer to one indicate a strong relationship (green), while correlations closer to zero indicate a weak relationship (orange/red). Key insights include:

- Parents/guardians who were satisfied with the selection process were also satisfied with the lottery process (0.815).
- Parents/guardians who were satisfied with the selection process faced fewer technology barriers (0.138).
- Although parents/guardians felt satisfied with the selection process, they felt that the selection criteria were unfair. (PSSA – 0.332; attendance – 0.217; grades – 0.234).
- Parents/guardians who received information in a language they understood felt more confident in making school choice decisions (0.289).

Correlation Matrix

	Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.	Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.	My family had enough time to complete the application.	My family had enough information to complete the application.	My family had enough resources to confidently make a decision about the schools we wanted to apply for	My family was provided sufficient communication about the application process.	Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood.	Teachers and/or counselors offered my family support throughout the application process.	The application was easy for my family to understand and complete.	Access to technology was not a barrier to completing my application.	The following school selection criteria were fair. - Standardize Assessment Scores (e.g. PSSA)	The following school selection criteria were fair. - Attendance	The following school selection criteria were fair. - Grades	I understand how the school selection process lottery works.	I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.	I am satisfied with the offer(s) my child received.
Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.		0.486	0.436	0.526	0.431	0.514	0.376	0.319	0.525	0.324	0.255	0.203	0.224	0.596	0.404	0.413
Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.	0.486		0.324	0.435	0.361	0.526	0.252	0.293	0.435	0.138	0.322	0.217	0.234	0.435	0.815	0.648
My family had enough time to complete the application.	0.436	0.324		0.625	0.455	0.446	0.420	0.266	0.521	0.394	0.299	0.200	0.216	0.326	0.268	0.321
My family had enough information to complete the application.	0.526	0.435	0.625		0.575	0.564	0.395	0.362	0.633	0.314	0.254	0.239	0.233	0.395	0.353	0.373
My family had enough resources to confidently make a decision about the schools we wanted to apply for (e.g., school fair, open house, webinar).	0.431	0.361	0.455	0.575		0.438	0.289	0.397	0.447	0.270	0.247	0.180	0.234	0.344	0.327	0.335
My family was provided sufficient communication about the application process. (i.e. updates/process changes, deadlines, missing documents, etc.)	0.514	0.526	0.446	0.564	0.438		0.394	0.408	0.568	0.243	0.261	0.233	0.219	0.416	0.445	0.405
Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood.	0.376	0.252	0.420	0.395	0.289	0.394		0.233	0.406	0.440	0.192	0.214	0.199	0.352	0.224	0.244
Teachers and/or counselors offered my family support throughout the application process.	0.319	0.293	0.266	0.362	0.397	0.408	0.233		0.363	0.166	0.150	0.130	0.160	0.298	0.273	0.317
The application was easy for my family to understand and complete.	0.525	0.435	0.521	0.633	0.447	0.568	0.406	0.363		0.383	0.227	0.218	0.223	0.393	0.354	0.332
Access to technology was not a barrier to completing my application.	0.324	0.138	0.394	0.314	0.270	0.243	0.440	0.166	0.383		0.160	0.132	0.185	0.243	0.105	0.172
The following school selection criteria were fair. - Standardize Assessment Scores (e.g. PSSA)	0.255	0.322	0.299	0.254	0.247	0.261	0.192	0.150	0.227	0.160		0.455	0.505	0.244	0.302	0.301
The following school selection criteria were fair. - Attendance	0.203	0.217	0.200	0.239	0.180	0.233	0.214	0.130	0.218	0.132	0.455		0.606	0.210	0.209	0.215
The following school selection criteria were fair. - Grades	0.224	0.234	0.216	0.233	0.234	0.219	0.199	0.160	0.223	0.185	0.505	0.606		0.203	0.229	0.239
I understand how the school selection process lottery works.	0.596	0.435	0.326	0.395	0.344	0.416	0.352	0.298	0.393	0.243	0.244	0.210	0.203		0.471	0.398
I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.	0.404	0.815	0.268	0.353	0.327	0.445	0.224	0.273	0.354	0.105	0.302	0.209	0.229	0.471		0.651
I am satisfied with the offer(s) my child received.	0.413	0.648	0.321	0.373	0.335	0.405	0.244	0.317	0.332	0.172	0.301	0.215	0.239	0.398	0.651	

Considerations

The following considerations were developed by Accenture based on the feedback received from parents/guardians on the survey. Accenture reviewed emerging themes from ~280 comments. Below are the top themes that parents/guardians provided.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Theme 1: Enhanced and more timely communication throughout stages of the application process.
- The district did not inform schools and parents/guardians that they would be using standardized test scores until the end of the summer, providing little time for sufficient preparation.
- After applications were submitted, parents/guardians were not notified as to why applications were marked ineligible.
- Parents/guardians felt as if they did not receive adequate communication to prepare for project and performance-based schools.
- Some parents/guardians found it difficult to navigate the SDP website.
- Multiple modes of communication needed beyond email – including text and voicemail to ensure parents/guardians receive time-sensitive information.
- Once a child is accepted to a school, there is not standardized process for communicating next steps (e.g., open house, shadow day, registration).

Theme 2: Siblings should be given priority in placement.
- Without priority placement for siblings, parents/guardians are required to arrange different pick-ups and drop-offs for their children.
- Twins with similar profiles and test scores end up with different school selections due to the randomization of the lottery.

Theme 3: Glitches with SchoolMint made the process frustrating for parents/guardians.
- When students were deemed eligible due to SchoolMint errors, parents/guardians had to undergo another process to rectify the situation.
- Notifications from the same school would mark a student rejected, then later accepted.
- Parents/guardians of kindergartners submitted a non-District application, which prompted parents/guardians to upload PSSA scores and attendance records.
- The system does not have the capability to review missing items and communicate those to parents/guardians.

Theme 4: Provide a clear understanding of the lottery's underlying mechanics.
- It is unclear for parents/guardians how the lottery works and how applicants who meet the eligibility criteria are randomized.
- Parents/guardians would like more information on how each criterion is weighted, especially if one of the three criteria are waived during the LeGare process.

Theme 5: Need for next steps for students who do not have school placement.
- For students who have been waitlisted but met criteria at the schools in which they applied for, parents/guardians do not know how to proceed with other options.

Theme 6: Parents/guardians will benefit from an avenue to provide supporting documentation regarding extenuating circumstances.
- Some students' attendance records were marked "excused" for medical reasons – the eligibility evaluation does not always take hospitalization into account.
- Given that the continuous waitlist, parents/guardians don't have adequate time to make alternate plans as needed.

Parent Questions

These questions help us know if parents or guardians with different characteristics have the same or different answers to questions on the survey. This first set of questions will provide us the information we need to do that.

Please complete the following questions thinking about the experience of one of your children submitting a school selection application.

If you have multiple children who participated in the school selection process this year, please submit a separate survey for each child. For instance, if two of your children participated in this year's school selection process, take the survey once with the first child in mind, and then take the survey again with the second child in mind.

1. Are you a parent or guardian?
    - Yes
    - No
2. What is your child's current grade?
    - [Dropdown for choices of 3 through 11]
3. Did your family participate in the school selection process this year?
    - Yes
    - No
4. What is your child's race/ethnicity?
    - American Indian/Alaska Native
    - Asian
    - Black/African American
    - Hispanic/Latinx
    - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
    - White
    - Multi Racial / Other
5. Does your child identify as:
    - Male
    - Female
    - Non-binary
    - Prefer not to say
6. What zip code do you live in? *[Five digits allowed]*
    - [Text Entry]
7. How many children in your household are currently enrolled in the School District of Philadelphia?
    - 1-10 [drop-down]
8. What type of school does your child attend this year?
    - Neighborhood School (Catchment School)
    - Charter School
    - Private School

- o Citywide School
- o Criteria-based School
- o Homeschool
- o Public School Outside of Philadelphia
- o I don't know
9. Does your child receive any of these services? Select all that apply.
    - o Individual Education Plan (IEP)
    - o 504 Plan
    - o English Learner Services
10. Is English the primary language spoken at home?
    - o Yes
    - o No
11. **Grid:** How did you learn about this year's school selection process? [Select all that apply]
    - o My child's school website
    - o School principal at my child's school
    - o School counselor at my child's school
    - o The School District of Philadelphia's website
    - o A family member
    - o Robocall from the School District of Philadelphia
    - o My friends
    - o Teachers or other adults at my child's school other than their principal or counselor
    - o Great Philly Schools website
    - o Social media
    - o News media (radio, tv, newspapers)
    - o School District of Philadelphia's High School Directory or other printed information
    - o School alumni
    - o High School Expo
    - o Event (conference, information session, school night, school assembly)
    - o Other (Explain below)
        1. [Text Entry]

12. Who completed your child's school selection application? [Select all that apply]
    - o My child
    - o Myself or another parent or guardian
    - o My child's school counselor
    - o Other (Explain below)
        1. [Text Entry]

Our next set of questions will explore your opinions of the current school selection process. For each question, select your response, on a scale of 1-5 from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

13. Overall, I understood how the school selection process worked.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
14. Overall, I was satisfied with the school selection process.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
15. My family had enough time to complete the application.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
16. My family had enough information to complete the application.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
17. My family had enough resources to confidently make a decision about the schools we wanted to apply for (e.g., school fair, open house, webinar).
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
18. My family was provided sufficient communication about the application process. (i.e. updates/process changes, deadlines, missing documents, etc.)
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
19. Information regarding the selection process was communicated to me in a language I understood.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
20. Teachers and/or counselors offered my family support throughout the application process.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
21. The application was easy for my family to understand and complete.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
22. Access to technology was not a barrier to completing my child's application.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]

23. **[Logic: If English is NOT primary language]** I am satisfied with the support I received for interpretation and translation throughout the school selection process.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
24. **[Logic: If IEP, 504, and/or English Learner]** I am satisfied with the assistance I received as the parent or guardian of a child with an IEP, a 504 Plan, or receiving English Learner Services.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
25. **Grid:** The following school selection criteria were fair.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
        1. Standardized Assessment Scores (e.g., PSSA)
        2. Attendance
        3. Grades
26. I understand how the school selection process lottery works.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
27. I am satisfied with the school selection lottery process.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
28. I am satisfied with the offer(s) my child received.
    - o [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
29. My child was placed on the waitlist for one or more schools they applied to.
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o **[Branching**: **if placed on the waitlist]**
        1. It was easy for me to view my child's position on the waitlist.
            1. [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
        2. My child and I understood how to accept a waitlist offer from a school.
            1. [Strongly Disagree – 1, Agree – 2, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 4, Strongly Agree – 5]
30. I was aware that different schools have different admission criteria.
    - o Yes
    - o No
31. I was aware of the policy that if I did not meet a school's criteria, I would not be eligible for the lottery at that school.
    - o Yes
    - o No
32. I applied to at least 1 school where I did not meet that school's criteria.
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o I don't know
33. What should the School District of Philadelphia consider to improve the annual school selection process? [Select up to 3]
    - o Allowing students to rank school choices
    - o More resources on navigating and comparing school offerings
    - o Better communications on understanding the application and evaluation criteria
    - o Make the online application (School Mint) more user-friendly
    - o Additional ways to alert me of deadlines and changes (text, phone, banners, intercom announcements)
    - o More support from the school with the application
    - o Changing the eligibility criteria
    - o Removing the lottery
    - o Removing the zip code preference
    - o Providing more time to complete the application
    - o Communicate changes with more advanced time
    - o Offering resources in more languages
    - o Other (Explain below)
        1. [Text Entry]

Appendix F. Benchmarking

Philadelphia, PA – School District of Philadelphia

Number of students: 197,288
Number of faculty: 12,330
Student to faculty ratio: 16 to 1
Student demographics: 51% Black/African American, 23% Hispanic/Latino, 13% White, 7% Asian, and 5% Multiracial/Other
Number of schools: 329
School types: 217 District Operated, 83 Charter Operated, and 29 Alternative Education.
School selection process: SDP uses a centralized lottery and waitlist system through the PhilaSD portal, a SchoolMint platform. Students apply to schools in which they meet eligibility. For criteria-based schools, students are entered into the lottery if they have sufficient grades in the two previous years, 95% attendance, and meet PSSA percentile cut offs.[50]
School selection process team: There is not a full-time team member solely dedicated to the school selection process. Today, school selection is a joint effort between the Office of Student Enrollment and Placement and the Office of Student Support Services, amongst others.
Priorities: There are six zip codes that are prioritized (19140, 19134, 19132, 19121, 19133, and 19139) at four criteria-based schools, plus sibling priority at selected schools.
Students with accommodations: Students with accommodations can waive one (1) criterion, and then their application goes through a LeGare Impartial Review to determine if the necessary supports and resources are available at the schools in which they applied to.

Boston, Massachusetts – Boston Public Schools

Number of students: 46,001
Number of faculty: 4,256
Student to faculty ratio: 10.8 to 1
Student demographics: 28.4% African American; 8.7% Asian; 43.8% Hispanic; 15.1% White; 3.6% Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic; 0.3% Native American; and 0.2% Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander
Number of schools: 119
School types: Traditional district schools, exam schools, pilot (teacher-led public) schools, Horace Mann charter schools, and innovation (in-district, autonomous) schools.
School selection process: For the three exam schools, each student applies and registers for school selection through the student information system and ranks at least five schools based on personal preference. Parents/guardians without technology access can apply in-person at the welcome center and work directly with a registration specialist. All exam school applicants are required to sit for the NWEA MAP Growth test as part of the application process – the test accounts for 30 points toward a total score of 100. The rest of the composite score is made up of GPA only. Additional points are added to composite scores for students experiencing homelessness or if they identify as economically disadvantaged. Students with the highest grades and test scores are rewarded – in rank order – to their preferred school(s).
Priorities: The lowest socioeconomic tier of applicants will be considered first.[51]

Chicago, Illinois – Chicago Public Schools

Number of students: 322,106
Number of faculty: 21,981
Student to faculty ratio: 14.6 to 1
Student demographics: 11% White; 35.8% Black; 46.5% Hispanic; 1.5% Multi-Racial; 4.4% Asian; 0.1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 0.4% Unavailable
Number of schools: 635
School types: 514 District Run, 111 Charter, 9 Contract (operated as a public school under contract with the Board of Education), 11 selective enrollment, and 1 Safe school (safe and supportive environment).
School selection process: For selective enrollment high schools, a student's eligibility is determined by a point system, and they are assigned points for: 7th grade final grades; NWEA MAP Growth test; and an admissions test. After the top 30 percent of selective enrollment students are admitted, the remaining 70 percent are placed into geographic tiers, to ensure equal representation throughout Chicago. Students apply within the GoCPS online platform and are considered based on the following factors: admissions screenings (testing, auditions, essays, etc.), whether any priority preferences are considered, the order that they ranked each program on application, the number of seats available in each program, and each program's selection process (lottery or point system).[52]

School selection process team: Office of Access and Enrollment, a team of about 15, solely manages the end-to-end school selection process and enrollment management system.

Priorities: First 30% of seats filled by top scoring based on rank score. Remaining seats are equally distributed among the four socio-economic tiers and filled by the top scoring students in each tier.

Students with accommodations: Instead of waiving criteria, students with accommodations are compared with their peers (other students with accommodations), while general education students are evaluated in comparison to their own peer group. Up to 15% of seats at selective enrollment high schools are designated to students with IEPs, and 85% of the seats for selective schools are reserved for general education learners.

Platform: CPS runs a complex, single-best offer school selection process on a customized platform using a deferred ranking algorithm. This allows CPS to run different types of application processes, customized for each school, concurrently. Parents apply online through SchoolMint, in which their information is then fed into the system for processing.

New Orleans, Louisiana – NOLA Public Schools

Number of students: 44,000
Number of faculty: *Unavailable*
Student to faculty ratio: *Unavailable*
Student demographics: 82% African American, 7% Hispanic, 7% White, 2% Asian, Multiple Races 1%, American Indian 0.2%, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 0.1%
School types: 83 out of 86 public schools are charter schools. 3 schools are small, specialized programs operated through contracts between NOLA Public Schools and nonprofit organizations.
School selection process: Students apply through EnrollNOLA, an online enrollment system. Students receive their single best offer, based on rankings. If there are more applications than there are places in a school, the school must hold a random lottery. Ten schools have eligibility criteria, in which students must meet before proceeding with next steps. School leaders review documents and test scores, then allocate points on a matrix directly within the enrollment management platform.[53]
School selection process team: NOLA public school district has a dedicated team that solely manages the school selection process and enrollment management system.
Priorities: Zip code priority where 50% of seats reserved for applicants who live either within a half mile of the school or within the zip code zone of the school.
Platform: NOLA uses Salesforce as their enrollment management system. The District is currently transitioning to Salesforce's Education Cloud. In the future, the District hopes to offer a shorter round in which students get placement right away rather than having to wait for a round to close.

Richmond, Virginia – Richmond Public Schools

Number of students: 22,000
Number of faculty: 1,158
Student to faculty ratio: 19 to 1
Student demographics: 55.4% African American; 21% White; 1.6% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander; 18.5% Hispanic/Latino; and 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native
Number of schools: 45
School types: 25 Elementary Schools (Including 1 Charter School), 7 Middle Schools, 5 Comprehensive High Schools, 3 Specialty Schools, and 5 Preschool Centers.
School selection process: During open enrollment, students apply through Enroll RPS, a SchoolMint platform, and select up to three out-of-zone schools in which offers are determined via a random lottery. Specialty school applicants are required to complete a single common application, allowing them to submit two teacher recommendations, a long essay, and a short essay response. The selection process for specialty schools is run separately from open enrollment.[54]
School selection process team: One full time employee who manages open enrollment lottery, selective school, and regional governor's school application process. The employee is not fully dedicated to the school selection process – there are other duties within scope.
Priorities: Siblings are prioritized, whereas Richmond public school employees' children are deprioritized.

District of Columbia – DC Public Schools

Number of students: 49,035
Number of faculty: 4,025
Student to faculty ratio: 8.3 to 1
Student demographics: 57% African American; 21% Hispanic; 2% Asian; 3% Two or more races; <1% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander; <1% American Indian/Alaska Native; and 17% White
Number of schools: 118
School types: 3 Primary Schools, 70 Elementary Schools, 14 Middle Schools, 15 High Schools, 3 Opportunity Academies, 10 Education Campuses, 1 Special Education School, and 2 Youth Engagement Schools.

School selection process: My School DC is the platform that students use to rank up to twelve schools. An application is required for students who wish to attend preschool, K-12 out-of-boundary (non-catchment) schools, and selective high schools. Applying on the platform is not required for an in-boundary or feeder pattern school. For eight highly selective high schools, rising 9th graders are required to submit a combination of their GPA, attendance records, an essay, and undergo an interview (some individual, some family, some both).55

Priorities: Sibling preference, twin offer preference, proximity preference, and equitable access (student identifies as homeless, part of DC's foster care system, or whose family receives assistance).

San Francisco, California – San Francisco Public Schools

Number of students: 50,566
Number of faculty: 9,199
Student to faculty ratio: 5.5 to 1
Student demographics: 6% African American; <1% American Indian; 33% Asian; 4% Filipino; 30% Latino; 1% Pacific Islander; 14% White; and 7% Multi-Racial
Number of schools: 130
School types: 64 Elementary, 8 Alternative Configured (TK- 8), 13 Middle (6-8), 14 High (9-12), 12 Early Education, 5 County, 3 Continuation, and 11 Charters. Elementary attendance areas are geographic borders drawn around elementary schools throughout the district. Middle and high schools do not have attendance areas/geographical borders.
School selection process: There is a main round application window for all grades. If the number of requests for a school is greater than number of spaces available, tiebreakers (preferences) are used to place students in their requested school. Students will be assigned to their highest ranked request, if.56
Priorities: Sibling preference, CT1P1 (low test score area), and zip code preferences.

Denver, Colorado – Denver Public Schools (DPS)

Number of students: 88,911
Number of faculty: 6,140
Student to faculty ratio: 14.5 to 1
Student demographics: 54% White; 9% Black; 30% Hispanic or Latino; 4% Asian; and 3% Two or more races
School types: 96 District Run Traditional, 38 District Run Innovation (semi-autonomous schools) within 12 Innovation Zones (iZone), and 56 Charter schools.
School selection process: Students rank their top school preferences and submit their choice application via SchoolMint. DPS then matches students to schools based on those preferences, as well as school admission priorities and available space. For the students who did not participate in the first round, or who did but want to revisit their school options, they can participate in round two.57
Priorities: Neighborhood preference/boundary, siblings, and other considerations (children of full-time school site staff members, qualification status, socioeconomic diversity).

New York, NY – New York City Public Schools

Number of students: 1,050,649
Number of faculty: 75,000
Student to faculty ratio: 7.2 to 1
Student demographics: 41.1 Hispanic or Latino; 24.4 Black; 16.6 Asian; 14.7 White
School types: 1,859 schools, including 271 charter schools.
School selection process: Students use the mySchools (custom-built) platform to select 12 or more programs. Students use the same platform to view their children's results and waitlists. Students are automatically added to the waitlist for any program placed higher on their child's application than the program where they received an offer, with the goal of one final single-best offer. Admissions to specialized high schools is a separate process in which students take an exam to earn their seats.58
School selection process team: Five staff members manage the high school admissions process. A data, analytics, and research manager oversee data integration for middle and high schools. A data analyst focuses solely on high school admissions. Separate teams (sizes and functions unknown) focus on elementary and middle schools' admissions processes.
Priorities: Zip code priority for screened programs, sibling priority for middle schools.
Platform: Similarly, to Philadelphia, NYC has centralized their lottery process. For screened programs, which admit the top-performing applicants across each middle school and citywide school, the mySchools platform buckets students based on their performance tier. If the number of applicants in one group exceeds the available seats, students from this group will be chosen to fill the spots through a random selection process based on the individual's unique application number. If each student from group one can be taken care of at a certain school, those in group two will be evaluated next and so forth. For performance-based schools, most auditions and interviews are virtual.

Appendix G. Literature Review

Source: Barrow, Lisa, Lauren Sartain, and Marisa de la Torre. 2020. "Increasing Access to Selective High Schools through Place-Based Affirmative Action: Unintended Consequences." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12 (4): 135–63. https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20170599.

Summary: This paper investigates whether offering high-achieving, low-income Chicago* students an education at elite public high schools can improve these students' educational outcomes and high school experiences. There is no evidence to suggest that attending a selective enrollment high school (SEHS) raises test scores overall.

*In Chicago Public Schools (CPS), admission to selective high schools is determined by a combination of prior academic performance and family income as proxied by the socioeconomic status (SES) of the student's residential neighborhood (i.e., place-based affirmative action).

Insights:

- The study found a large negative effect on incoming class rank. Students admitted at the margin will have relatively higher-performing peers than the students who just miss the cutoff. Tier 1 students (lowest-SES neighborhood) admitted to a SEHS rank 17 percentile points lower in their high school than tier 1 students who are not admitted to a SEHS. For students from tier 4 neighborhoods (highest-SES neighborhood), being admitted to a SEHS lowers their incoming rank by 10 percentile points. Evidence from other studies shows students are aware of rank differences.
- Overall, being admitted to a SEHS has a –0.08 effect on grade 11 cumulative GPA that is not statistically different from 0. For tier 1 students, the estimate is –0.24, and the estimate for tier 4 students is –0.001; there is a larger impact on tier 1 students.
- Students admitted to SEHSs are no less likely to graduate from high school and are somewhat more likely to enroll in college than their counterparts who are not admitted to a SEHS.

Source: Galla, B. M., Shulman, E. P., Plummer, B. D., Gardner, M., Hutt, S. J., Goyer, J. P., D'Mello, S. K., Finn, A. S., & Duckworth, A. L. (2019). Why High School Grades Are Better Predictors of On-Time College Graduation Than Are Admissions Test Scores: The Roles of Self-Regulation and Cognitive Ability. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(6), 2077–2115. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219843292.

Summary: Longitudinal study comparing the predictive validities of high school grades and admissions test scores for college graduation. Findings suggest that report card grades provide information about self-regulation not captured by admissions test scores.

Insights:

- The incremental predictive validity of high school GPA for college graduation within four years (Odds Ratio = 1.28, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.25, 1.31]) was stronger than the incremental predictive validity of SAT/ACT scores (Odds Ratio = 1.12, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.09, 1.15]).
- For 1,622 seniors from 4 urban high schools, the incremental predictive validity of high school grades for college graduation was explained by self-regulation, whereas the incremental predictive validity of SAT scores for college graduation was explained by cognitive ability.

Source: Taylor, Jonathan. 2019. "Fairness to Gifted Girls: Admissions to New York City's Elite Public High Schools." *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering* 25 (1). https://doi.org/10.1615/jwomenminorscieneng.2019026894.

Summary: Research compares the predictive validity and gender bias of the admissions criterion, the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT), with that of seventh grade GPA, a possible additional criterion. For most students, seventh grade GPA is a much stronger predictor.

Insights:

- A hypothetical admissions index was constructed weighting SHSAT and GPA7 by coefficients from the regression of FGPA (20.243 + 0.008 *SHSAT + 0.717 *GPA7). Use of this index would also have resulted in substantially different gender and ethnic proportions.
- Students with extremely high SHSAT scores generally also had high grades. In contrast, for the portion of SHSAT scores around the cutoffs for admission (479-559), SHSAT is a much strong predictor than freshman GPAs at this crucial decision range.
- The SHSAT predicted non-STEM grades for girls that were 4.77 points lower than actually achieved, with the greatest differences in languages (5.48) and humanities (5). In STEM courses, grades were underpredicted by the SHAT, highest in math (3.47).

Source: Gershenson, Seth. 2018. "Grade Inflation in High Schools (2005-2016) Grade Inflation in High Schools (2005-2016)." Thomas B. Fordham Institute. http://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/(2018.09.19)%20Grade%20Inflation%20in%20High%20Schools%20(2005-2016).pdf.

Summary: This study compared students' course grades with end-of-course (EOC) exam scores to evaluate the extent of grade inflation (when course grades subjectively assigned by teachers do not comport with objective measures of student performance). Grade inflation occurred in schools attended by more affluent students but not in schools attended by less affluent students.

Insights:

- On average, students who score higher on the EOC exams also earn higher grades. However, a significant number of students who receive high grades also perform poorly on the EOC. Among students with top grades, just 3% of students earning a B and 21% of students earning an A reach the highest level of achievement on the EOC.
- Even after controlling for EOC scores, cumulative GPAs are rising and As are becoming more prevalent for students in affluent schools, suggesting differential grade inflation by school type.

Source: Hitt, Collin, Michael McShane, and Patrick Wolf. 2018. "Do Impacts on Test Scores Even Matter? Lessons from Long-Run Outcomes in School Choice Research." American Enterprise Institute. 2018. https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Do-Impacts-on-Test-Scores-Even-Matter.pdf.

Summary: This brief takes an analytic approach to review every known study that examines test score impacts and contains participant-effect estimates for both student achievement and attainment. According to existing literature reviewed, test score impacts of school choice programs do not serve as a reliable predictor of attainment impacts.

Insights:

- At selective enrollment high schools, students who score barely above or barely below the cutoff are essentially identical in prior achievement—their differences in

scores are more likely due to the imprecision of the tests rather than a true difference in ability.
- The meta-analysis shows that, for school choice programs, there is a weak relationship between impacts on test scores and later-life outcomes.

Source: Allensworth, Elaine M., and Kallie Clark. 2020. "High School GPAs and ACT Scores as Predictors of College Completion: Examining Assumptions about Consistency across High Schools." Educational Researcher 49 (3): 198–211. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x20902110.

    Summary: This study examines high school GPAs and ACT scores as measures of academic readiness for college. ACT scores provide less accurate predictions of college success based on students' race, ethnicity, and gender than high school GPAs.

    Insights:
- High school GPAs are not equivalent measures of readiness across high schools, but they are strongly predictive in all schools, and the signal they provide is larger than the differences across schools.
- As measures of individual students' academic readiness, ACT scores show weak relationships and even negative relationships at higher achievement levels. ACT score seems to represent factors associated with the student's school rather than the student.

Source: Cohodes, Sarah, Sean Corcoran, Jennifer Jennings, and Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj. 2022. *When Do Informational Interventions Work? Experimental Evidence from New York City High School Choice*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 29690. https://doi.org/10.3386/w29690.

    Summary: Details the impacts of communications interventions on the various stages of the high school choice process. Finally, in all cases, English learners and those that did not speak English at home benefited the most from the interventions, pointing to the need for targeted help and materials in home languages for families navigating both the school choice process and an unfamiliar language.

    Insights:
- Listing schools in alphabetical order may seem neutral but many prefer schools near the beginning of the alphabet.
- All of the treatments are particularly effective for English learners, even Fast Facts Digital, with a reduction of enrollment in a high school with a graduation rate below 75% of by 6.2 to 12.3 percentage points.
- The interventions with the largest response included "nudges" in the form of excluding other schools from lists of schools and schools presented in descending order by graduation rate. The important thing is to do something that draws students into the process, more so than the specific tool used.

Source: Glazerman, Steven, Ira Nichols-Barrer, Jon Valant, and Alyson Burnett (2018). Presenting School Choice Information to Parents: An Evidence-Based Guide (NCEE 2019-4003). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20194003/pdf/20194003.pdf.

    Summary: A research study was conducted to provide evidence-based recommendations for presenting school-choice information to parents; assessing understanding, ease of use, and satisfaction. Parents seem to make choices based on what is most prominently displayed. Parents had the ability to re-sort the list of schools by distance, academic performance, or school name, but the initial (default) sort order mattered.

    Insights:

- When the list of schools is initially sorted by academic performance instead of distance, parents choose schools with higher proficiency rates (by about five points, 67% versus 62% proficient). However, some strategies tested as part of the study led parents to choose schools that were closer to home or had better measures of school safety or resources rather than choosing academically higher-performing schools.
- Decisions about how to display information may require designers to make trade-offs between understandability, ease of use, satisfaction, and effects on parents' choices. For example, the study showed that including parents' ratings of schools and using graphs is more satisfying to parents, but both strategies make the information display harder to understand.
- Formatting strategies can influence choices by highlighting or obscuring differences. For example, the study showed three schools that appear very different in terms of safety, rated as A, B, or C, each with a different color. However, the horizontal bar graphs are presented on a 0 to 100 scale, which makes the first two schools look nearly identical in terms of safety. Therefore, the same difference of 3 percentage points (between School 1 and School 2) can appear large or small depending entirely on visual representation.

Source: Mawene, Dian, and Aydin Bal. 2018. "Factors Influencing Parents' Selection of Schools for Children with Disabilities: A Systematic Review of the Literature." *International Journal of Special Education* 33 (2): 313–27. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1185614.pdf.

Summary: A systematic literature review of research on the factors influencing the decisions of parents of children with disabilities when selecting schools or special education programs. The availability of special education programs was identified in 14 of the 15 studies (93%), which suggests that the primary factor parents consider is whether special education programs, facilities, and specialist staffs are available in the schools.

Insights:
- The review showed that parents valued highly the individual attention that teachers provided to their children. This factor is closely linked to class size and communication. 42% of caregivers in a statewide survey valued the opportunity for their children with disabilities to engage in more personalized learning with school staff.
- By means of multiple regression, Glenn-Applegate et al.'s study (2016) showed that a child's disability status, parents' educational attainment, and poverty status were not significant among preschool selection factors as predictors of parents' preference. Similarly, Ysseldyke et al. (1994) found there were little differences in decision-making across parents' income and education levels.

Source: Prieto, Lydia, Jonathan Aguero-Valverde, Gustavo Zarrate-Cardenas, and Martin Van Maarseveen. 2018. "Parental Preferences in the Choice for a Specialty School." *Journal of School Choice* 13 (2): 198–227. https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2018.1442087.

Summary: This study investigates which of the schools' attributes are valued by parents, and how these attributes are weighted depending on the type of specialty school to which they apply. For lower-income students, distance from home to school and eligibility for free or reduced-price meals were major factors in school selection.

Insights:
- The longer the distance from home to school, the less likely that school program will be chosen, as expected. Each additional mile in the distance from home to school is associated with a lower school ranking by a factor of 0.808 (19.1%).

- The results from the poverty interaction indicate that for an applicant, being—versus not being—eligible for free or reduced-price meals and applying for a school with high—versus low—student concentrations of poverty, is associated with ranking these schools higher by a factor of 1.622 (62.2%).
- For a school, having specialty in International Baccalaureate (IB), Performing Arts (ART) or Math/Sciences (MAT)—instead of an "Other specialty"—is associated with higher school ranking, by a factor of 6.323 (532.3%) for IB, by a factor of 4.243 (324.3%) for ART; and by a factor of 3.369 (236.9%) for MAT.

Source: Merry, Michael, and Richard Arum. 2018. "Can Schools Fairly Select Their Students?" *Theory and Research in Education* 16 (3): 330–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878518801752.

Summary: This article delineates, describes, and defends what the authors believe are the essential features of selection and also why we need to pay equal attention to both the outcomes and the processes leading to those outcomes. The authors argue that randomized lottery selections can be equity-promoting.

Insights:
- Lotteries are used for distributing a scarce good, where (1) the qualifications of potential beneficiaries are not relevant and where (2) the number of possible beneficiaries exceeds the quantity of the resource available. Because outcomes are completely randomized, the chances of person x receiving the scarce resource are no better than person y. If there is something unfair about a child not being selected for placement in an oversubscribed school, it is because there are simply not enough schools like it to go around and not because the selection mechanism itself is inequitable.
- Many selection decisions involve selecting from a pool of candidates, several of whom satisfy the criteria. Individuals are selected because he or she best matches the stated criteria. Decision makers may consider the relative weight of qualifications and come to a decision concerning which combination of them would best serve the needs of the institution.
- So long as the selection is consistent with the advertised criteria, and so long as any non-advertised qualifications taken into consideration do not themselves violate basic equity standards (i.e., they are intended to promote equity), then ordinarily the selection made will be deemed fair.
- A fair selection process requires that candidates be evaluated based on factors relevant to the type of educational opportunity being offered. Selection for advanced educational opportunities could therefore be appropriately based on factors, as long as these indicators themselves could be demonstrated as relevant and empirically related to success in the educational opportunity offered. A candidate portfolio might include work experience, volunteer service, as well as letters of reference where these could be used to inform more accurately the selection procedure beyond narrower measures of prior academic performance (such as course grades and test scores).

Source: Greaves, E., Wilson, D., & Nairn, A. (2023). Marketing and School Choice: A Systematic Literature Review. *Review of Educational Research*, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543221141658.

Summary: Review of existing literature on the types of marketing practices employed by schools within choice-based allocation mechanisms. This study shows that the amount of a school's marketing efforts is tied to the extent of competition within the local area.

Insights:
- Paper [75], for example, noted that the Center City District schools in their study were branded to give the symbolic distance between them and other schools in

Philadelphia using "banners and signage" such that a "signature" was created for each school. Some reported that beyond using the brand to stand out from competitors, "schools had to profile themselves and construct strong and distinct images or 'brands' in order to attract certain categories of learners" [71].

- There is evidence, across both the earlier and the later literature, that schools identify and react to key competitors [25, 39, 52, 108] and that the amount of competition in the local area is positively correlated with the amount of marketing activity [1, 5, 30, 33, 43, 72, 289, 305]. Paper [72] concludes that "the extent of competition to a principal experience, is consistently and positively associated with the likelihood of substantial marketing or recruiting efforts" [p. 66].
- High-attaining schools that are over-subscribed appear to be shielded from competitive pressures to market their school [30, 33, 202, 455], whereas the literature notes the "fight for survival" at the bottom of the hierarchy, making marketing a necessity [25, 263].
- Paper [111] notes the importance of the principal, "whose personal characteristics, leadership style, vision, morality, and even physical appearance are strongly related to his/her role in the marketing and image-building of the school". Early literature acknowledged the lack of formal marketing training and the need for professional development [111, 246] that contributed to "ad-hoc" principal and staff engagement with marketing.

Source: Radasanu, Andrea, and Gregory Barker. 2022. "Inclusive and Effective Holistic Admission Frameworks for Honors Programs: A Case Study Continued." *Honors in Practice* 18 (EJ1353669): 29–44. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1353669.pdf.

Summary: This study affirms holistic admissions practice as effective for diversifying honors-eligible students and assesses the holistic review rubric from the lens of equity and efficacy. Of students who were admitted holistically for fall 2020, 34% failed to achieve an honors-eligible GPA after one year in the program, and 59% of holistically admitted students who were flagged as "conditional" also failed to meet that goal.

Insights:

- When reviewing the holistic admissions scorecard, researchers found that the essay of interest did not offer any predictive value with respect to GPA eligibility. However, it remains a component of the rubric as it is still important that applicants provide a thoughtful account of their interest in the program.
- The engagement record component of the rubric went from 20% to 25% of the overall score to reflect the fact that it offers some predictive value of academic success and involvement. Extracurricular involvement and work responsibilities are scored separately, and the higher of the two scores is taken.

Source: Bonkoungou, Somouaoga, and Alexander Nesterov. 2021. "Comparing School Choice and College Admissions Mechanisms by Their Strategic Accessibility." *Theoretical Economics* 16 (3): 881–909. https://doi.org/10.3982/te4137.

Summary: This study outlines school choice and college admissions mechanisms through deferred acceptance and serial dictatorship algorithms.

Insights:

- Deferred acceptance algorithm:
  - Each student applies to their most preferred acceptable school (if any). If a student did not rank any school acceptable, then they are unmatched. Each school *tentatively* accepts a minimum of the highest priority applicants and rejects the remaining ones.
  - Each student who is rejected at the above step applies to their most preferred acceptable school among those they have not yet applied to (if any). If a student is rejected by all their acceptable schools, then they are unmatched.

Each school *tentatively* accepts a minimum of the highest priority applicants and rejects the remaining ones.
- The algorithm stops when every student is either *tentatively* accepted or rejected by all their acceptable schools. The tentative acceptance at this step becomes the final matching.
- Serial dictatorship mechanism:
  - With a ranking constraint of 4, each of the 1600-highest priority students is guaranteed one of their four most preferred schools. However, with a ranking constraint of 6, each of the 2400-highest priority students is guaranteed one of their six most preferred schools.
  - The student ordered first by the priority order picks their most preferred acceptable school (if any); the next student ordered picks their most preferred acceptable school among those remaining (if any), and so on.
  - Each student applies to their most preferred acceptable school (if any). If a student did not rank any school acceptable, then they are unmatched. Each school *immediately* accepts a minimum of the highest priority applicants and rejects the remaining ones.
  - Each student who is rejected at the above step applies to their most preferred acceptable school among those they have not yet applied to (if any). If a student is rejected by all of their acceptable schools, then they are unmatched. Each school *immediately* accepts a minimum of the highest priority applicants and rejects the remaining ones.
  - The algorithm stops when each student is either *immediately* accepted or rejected by all her acceptable schools. Every school is assigned to the students that it accepted at each step.

Summary: The paper surveys the experimental literature on centralized matching markets, covering school choice and college admissions models.
Insights:
- Matching game in the school choice model: The designer asks all students to report a rank-order list over schools (i.e., to submit their ordinal preferences). The designer also collects information on schools' priorities over students. The matching mechanism uses these reported preferences and priorities to produce a matching, and the agents are informed about the outcome.
- Student proposing deferred-acceptance mechanism:
  - Each student applies to the school that is ranked first in her preference list. Each school admits acceptable students up to its capacity, following its priority order. The remaining students are rejected.
  - Each student rejected in the previous step applies to the most-preferred acceptable school among those she has not yet applied to. Each school receiving applications considers the set of students it admitted in the previous step together with the set of new acceptable applicants. From this set, the school admits students up to its capacity, following its priority order. The remaining students are rejected.
  - The algorithm stops when no student is rejected, or all schools have filled their capacity. Any remaining students are unassigned.
  - Note – the allocation is temporary at each step until the final step.
    - School-proposing deferred-acceptance mechanism:
  - Each school offers seats to students with the highest priority up to its capacity. Each student accepts the best acceptable offer she has received, according to her preference list. The other schools are rejected.
  - Each school rejected in the previous step makes offers to the students with the highest priority among those that have not rejected an offer from the school yet such that the number of accepted offers from previous steps and the number of new offers does not exceed capacity. Each student receiving at least

one offer considers the school she accepted in the previous step together with the set of new offers from schools. From this set, the student accepts the school that is highest on her preference list. All other schools are rejected.

- o The algorithm stops when no school is rejected, or all students have found a seat. Any remaining students are unassigned.
- o Note – the allocation is temporary at each step until the final step.
  - Boston mechanism:
- o Each student applies to the school that is ranked first in her preference list. Each school admits acceptable students up to its capacity, following its priority order. These assignments are final. The remaining students are rejected.
- o Each student who was rejected in the previous step applies to the most-preferred acceptable school among the schools to which the student has not yet applied. Each school admits acceptable students up to its remaining capacity, following its priority order. These assignments are final. The remaining students are rejected.
- o The algorithm stops when no student is rejected, or all schools have filled the seats up to their capacity. All remaining students are unassigned.
- o Note – allocation is final at each step.

Source: Arnosti, Nick. 2022. "Lottery Design for School Choice." *Management Science* 69 (1). https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2022.4338.

Summary: The research studies the outcomes of the Deferred Acceptance Algorithm in large random matching markets where priorities are generated either by a single lottery or by independent lotteries. In contrast to prior work, the model permits students to submit lists of varying lengths, and schools to vary in their popularity and number of seats.

Insights:
- Given that students rank their school choices, a single lottery gives more students their first choice, but it also results in a lower probability of matching for students who submit the longest lists. Students with longer lists are those most likely to benefit from the use of independent lotteries, as they get the most independent draws.
- When the market is balanced and each student lists 10 schools, 6.4% of students go unassigned when using a single lottery, compared to 3.4% with independent lotteries. To reduce the number of unassigned students below 3.4% while using a single lottery, lists must be lengthened to n = 20 schools.
- Results suggest that using a single lottery will typically match fewer students; therefore, if maximizing the number of assigned students is sufficiently important, independent lotteries may be preferable. The logic underlying the results suggests that negatively correlated lotteries should match even more students, as those who are rejected from their top choices will tend to have good lottery draws at schools further down their lists.

Source: Basteck, Christian; Klaus, Bettina; Kübler, Dorothea. 2018. *How Lotteries In School Choice Help To Level The Playing Field*. WZB Discussion Paper, No. SP II 2018-205, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin. https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/184660/1/1037400836.pdf.

Summary: Study of lottery quotas embedded in the two common school choice mechanisms, namely deferred and immediate acceptance mechanisms; focusing on the effect of the lottery quota on truth-telling, the utility of students, and the student composition at schools, using theory and experiments. Lotteries have the desired effect of making schools more similar in terms of admitted students' academic achievement, both under immediate acceptance and under deferred acceptance.

Insights:
- Immediate acceptance mechanism with a lottery: one-third (33%) of the seats are matched using a single lottery.
  - Each student applies to the school he ranks first. Each school matches the first two-thirds of its school seats one by one with the highest priority applicants and the remaining one-third of its school seats one by one with the remaining highest lottery priority applicants. All matched students and school seats are removed. All remaining students are rejected and continue to the next step.
  - Each rejected student applies to his best-ranked school that has not rejected him yet. Each school matches its remaining school seats one by one with the highest priority applicants. All matched students and school seats are removed. All remaining students continue to the next step.
  - The algorithm terminates when all students are matched to school seats.
  - Note - The lottery quota is filled after allocating the seats based on academic merit, which increases the impact of the lottery on the final allocation.
    - Deferred acceptance mechanism with a lottery: one-third (33%) of school seats are matched using a lottery and a lottery ranking of students is drawn randomly.
  - Each student applies to the school he ranks first. Each school tentatively matches the first two-thirds of its school seats one by one with the highest priority applicants and the remaining one-third of its school seats one by one with the remaining highest lottery-priority applicants. All remaining students are rejected and continue to the next step.
  - Each tentatively matched student applies again to the same school. Each rejected student applies to his best-ranked school that has not rejected him yet. Each school tentatively matches the first two-thirds of its school seats one by one with the highest priority applicants and the remaining one-third of its school seats one by one with the remaining highest lottery-priority applicants. All remaining students are rejected and continue to the next step.
  - The algorithm terminates when all students are tentatively matched to school seats. Then, the current tentative matching becomes final.
  - Note - At each step, the lottery quota is filled after allocating the seats based on academic merit, which increases the impact of the lottery on the final allocation.

Source: Lievens, Filip; Sackett, Paul R.; and De Corte, Wilfried. Weighting admission scores to balance predictiveness-diversity: The Pareto-optimization approach. (2022). *Medical Education*. 56, (2), 151-158. Research Collection Lee Kong Chian School Of Business. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/lkcsb_research/6859.

Summary: This paper reviews the theory and research evidence about Pareto-optimization and explains how Pareto-optimization permits medical schools to better balance predictiveness and diversity in medical admissions systems.

Insights:
- Compared to unit-weighting and regression-based weighting, Pareto-optimal weighting reflects an approach wherein selection method scores are combined into a weighted sum that optimizes both predictiveness and diversity. The Pareto-optimal approach goes beyond the typical compensatory, top-down selection processes. It can be used across a large variety of selection processes and can deal with settings wherein applicants come from several different minority populations (Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, etc.).
- The calculation of Pareto-optimal weights and thus of such Pareto-optimal composites requires the following pieces of information as input: a set of selection methods with their respective predictiveness (expressed as correlation coefficients), intercorrelations among these selection methods, and minority-majority average score differences per selection method.
- Constrained optimization aims to show how the available scores should best be used to select the required number of candidates so that the desired goals are met. Second, the Pareto-optimization approach does not result in a single selection design and leaves still room for the designer and the organization to express their preferred valuation of the objectives.

Source: Vaughn, Michael G., and Christopher Witko. 2013. "Does the Amount of School Choice Matter for Student Engagement?" *The Social Science Journal* 50 (1): 23–33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2012.07.004.

Summary: This study considers how the amount of educational choice of different types in a local educational marketplace affects student engagement using a large national population of 8th grade students. This study observed that the amount of choice found in a child's elementary school years influences eighth grade engagement.

Insights:

- The reference category is Class 1, the most highly engaged group of students. Classes 4 and 5 are the most highly disengaged groups. High SES is significantly less likely to be associated with Classes 3–5 compared to Class 1. With respect to school characteristics, attending a magnet predicted increases risk for Class 4 (RR = 2.08, SE = 0.506, p < .01).
- The amount of competition in the public sector leads to higher levels of engagement. That is, students are less likely to be found in the relatively less engaged Class 3 and the highly disengaged Class 5, where there are more regular public schools.

Source: Wilson, Deborah. 2019. "School Choice and Equality of Opportunity: An International Systematic Review." Nuffield Foundation. https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Wilson-and-Bridge-report-April-2019.pdf.

Summary: This project systematically scoped and mapped research evidence relating to parental exercise of choice and, critically, to the outcomes of that process in terms of the resulting allocation of pupils to schools. School choice may lead to schools being more homogenous in their social composition.

Insights:

- Even though the magnet school programs are often designed and targeted to explicitly reduce segregation, the three city level studies in our dataset [Montgomery County 160; Philadelphia 78; San Diego 133] all show that this is not the end result; specifically, that any decreases in segregation for magnet schools are outweighed by greater segregation overall in neighborhood schools.
- The outcomes of any choice-based mechanism are a result of a combination of factors, including system design, constraint, lack of information, as well as any parental preference.

---

[1] "Family Letter 2022 School Selection", accessed May 15, 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hM2v-37t_JRuTsTJ6auG7j57JseRovB4/view.

[2] Eva Gold, et al., rep., *Transition to High School: School "Choice" & Freshman Year in Philadelphia* (Research for Action, 2010), https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED509014, 9.

[3] Ibid., 14.

[4] Gold, et al., "Transition to High School", 11.

[5] Philadelphia School Reform: Historical Roots and Reflections on the 2002-2003 School Year under State Takeover." Research for Action.

[6] Ibid., 12.

[7] Gold, et al. "Transition to High School", 17.

[8] Ibid., 18-20.

[9] Ibid., 20.

[10] Ibid., 21.

[11] Joy Lesnick, Jonathan Vitale, and Joy Lesnick, rep., *2021-22 School Selection: Summary of Lottery Outcomes for 8th Grade SDP Applicants to Criteria-Based Schools* (School District of Philadelphia Office of Research and Evaluation, 2022), https://www.philasd.org/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/90/2022/11/School-Selection-Lottery-Outcomes-2021-22-Research-Brief-March-2022.pdf, 5.

[12] "Annual Enrollment Cycle", accessed May 15, 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O8z1TUM5Unla5ZuV1CWy8X-cKkS-h-z2/view.

[13] "Family Letter 2022 School Selection", accessed May 15, 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hM2v-37t_JRuTsTJ6auG7j57JseRovB4/view.

[14] Interview with Office of Communications on April 17th, 2023.

[15] "School Selection – Standardized Assessment Requirement for Criteria-Based Schools." n.d. Evaluation, Research, and Accountability. Accessed June 2, 2023. https://www.philasd.org/era/assessment/schoolselection/.

[16] "School Selection: Evaluation Phase Activities for the Office of Student Enrollment and Placement", accessed May 15, 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RY92-0AWSlTVCXLOZ5d5jr8K5994MUR4/view, 6.

[17] "SchoolMint Pre-Lottery Specifications Document", School District of Philadelphia, accessed May 15, 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Omzy5g3u7yyxM61DgwhJCSO7TV8uRza8/view, 3.

[18] "School Selection", 13.

[19] "Copy of Common Transcript Message to Families", accessed May 15, 2023, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nA18gbpZuD5g12OKq9Sr7XUSL-NKf22XitYVUWKPF_Q/edit.

[20] "Copy of External Counselor School Selection Reminder", accessed May 15, 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HYRaZqllOxeJRSPjet99dYi2uNen6FHV/view.

[21] "SchoolMint Pre-Lottery", 3.

[22] Taylor, Jonathan. 2019. "Fairness to Gifted Girls: Admissions to New York City's Elite Public High Schools." Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering 25 (1). https://doi.org/10.1615/jwomenminorscieneng.2019026894.

[23] Hitt, Collin, Michael McShane, and Patrick Wolf. 2018. "Do Impacts on Test Scores Even Matter? Lessons from Long-Run Outcomes in School Choice Research." American Enterprise Institute. 2018. https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Do-Impacts-on-Test-Scores-Even-Matter.pdf.

[24] Merry, Michael, and Richard Arum. 2018. "Can Schools Fairly Select Their Students?" Theory and Research in Education 16 (3): 330–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878518801752.

[25] Lievens, Filip; Sackett, Paul R.; and De Corte, Wilfried. Weighting admission scores to balance predictiveness-diversity: The Pareto-optimization approach. (2022). Medical Education. 56, (2), 151-158. Research Collection Lee Kong Chian School Of Business. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/lkcsb_research/6859.

[26] Glazerman, Steven, Ira Nichols-Barrer, Jon Valant, and Alyson Burnett (2018). Presenting School Choice Information to Parents: An Evidence-Based Guide (NCEE 2019-4003). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20194003/pdf/20194003.pdf.

[27] Wilson, Deborah. 2019. "School Choice and Equality of Opportunity: An International Systematic Review." Nuffield Foundation. https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Wilson-and-Bridge-report-April-2019.pdf.

[28] "District Scorecard: Guardrail 1", https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/spree/district-scorecard/#1676397391495-b367ba29-bde8.

[29] "District Scorecard: Board Goals 1-3", https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/spree/district-scorecard/#1676397391495-b367ba29-bde8.

[30] Thacker, Arthur, Emily R. Dickinson, Milton E. Kroger. 2004. "Relationship Among the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and Other Commonly Administered Assessments " https://www.stateboard.education.pa.gov/Documents/Research%20Reports%20and%20Studies/Final%20PSSA%20conv.pdf.

[31] Taylor "Fairness to Gifted Girls".

[32] Cohodes, Sarah, Sean Corcoran, Jennifer Jennings, and Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj. 2022. When Do Informational Interventions Work? Experimental Evidence from New York City High School Choice. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 29690. https://doi.org/10.3386/w29690.

33 This latter strategy was submitted anonymously in a parent feedback survey.

[34] Kyle Thompson. May 2021. "Teacher Collaboration and Instructional Program Coherence Across the Transition to High School." University of Missouri.

[35] Kennelly and Monrad, 2007. "Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs With Appropriate Interventions"

[36] "New Admissions Policy Brings More Diversity – and New Challenges to Boston's Older Public School," wbur.org, https://www.wbur.org/news/2022/09/23/boston-latin-school-diversity-enrollment-admissions.

37 Reinforced by District parent and subject-matter expert Sylvie Gallier Howard of Equitable Cities Consulting Equitable Cities Consulting. https://www.equitablecitiesconsulting.com/

38 Boston Public Schools Exam Tier Map, https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/91a80d5ab92a464da30ce2ee94bbcf8d.

39 "Attend the Philly High School Fair." n.d. GreatPhillySchools. Accessed June 2, 2023. https://www.phillyhighschoolfair.com/.

[40] NYC Public Schools Specialized High School Admissions Test. https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/testing/specialized-high-school-admissions-test.

[41] MySchoolDC, https://www.myschooldc.org/faq/faqs.

[42] Mezzacappa, Dale. 2022. "Philly Forging New Bonds between Students and Jobs: 'Every Weld Is a Challenge.'" Chalkbeat Philadelphia. June 14, 2022. https://philadelphia.chalkbeat.org/2022/6/14/23167557/cte-students-philadelphia-employment-apprenticeships.

[43] Kim, Elisabeth H., Clare Buckley Flack, Katharine Parham, and Priscilla Wohlstetter. 2021. "Equity in Secondary Career and Technical Education in the United States: A Theoretical Framework and Systematic Literature Review." Review of Educational Research 91 (3): 003465432199524. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654321995243.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Yusoff, Muhamad S. Bahri. 2019. "Multiple Mini Interview as an Admission Tool in Higher Education: Insights from a Systematic Review." Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences 14 (3): 203–40. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtumed.2019.03.006.

[46] "Improving Equity in and Access to Quality CTE Programs for Students Experiencing Homelessness." 2018. https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Making-Good-on-the-Promise-CTE-Homelessness.pdf.

[47] "McKinney-Vento Homeless Policy." n.d. Hostoscharter.org. Accessed June 9, 2023. https://hostoscharter.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1407690&type=d&pREC_ID=1581700.

[48] Graham, Kristen A. 2023. "Strawberry Mansion High School Continues to Fight an Old Reputation. But Students Say the School is an Oasis". https://www.inquirer.com/news/strawberry-mansion-high-philadelphia-school-district-20230313.html.

[49] Ferrarin, Elena. 2023. "6 Ways Districts Can Embrace Marketing as an Enrollment Strategy." K-12 Dive. March 22, 2023. https://www.k12dive.com/news/6-ways-districts-can-embrace-marketing-as-enrollment-strategy/645648/.

[50] Philadelphia School District, https://www.philasd.org/.

[51] Boston Public Schools, https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/domain/17.

[52] Chicago Public Schools, https://www.cps.edu/.

[53] NOLA Public Schools, https://nolapublicschools.com/.

[54] Richmond Public Schools, https://www.rvaschools.net/.

[55] My School DC, The Public School Lottery, https://www.myschooldc.org/.

[56] Apply to San Francisco Unified School District, https://www.sfusd.edu/schools/enroll/apply.

[57] Denver Public Schools, https://schoolchoice.dpsk12.org/.

[58] New York City Public Schools, https://www.schools.nyc.gov/.