

**A SURVEY OF PARENTS
WHO CHOSE TO ENROLL THEIR GRADE ONE CHILDREN
IN AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL IN MANITOBA**

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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**A Survey of Parents who chose to Enroll their Grade One Children in an
Independent School in Manitoba**

BY

Robert Janzen

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree**

of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons parents have for enrolling their child(ren) in independent schools in the province of Manitoba.

An examination of studies conducted with respect to school choice provided a list of reasons parents have given for exercising choice in other jurisdictions. These findings provided the foundation for a further literature review, which examined the reasons given in greater detail. The extent to which these factors might be influential in the decision-making processes of parents in Manitoba is the focus of this study. The questionnaire used to gather information was developed from the literature review.

The methodology consisted of soliciting the cooperation of the administrators of a number of independent schools in Manitoba. Eight schools were contacted, with four agreeing to participate. Each of the administrators was asked to assist in the mailing of questionnaires to parents of the children in a single grade one classroom in the school. In each case, self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes were provided to the school. The envelope contained the questionnaire, a letter of introduction, a letter of support from the administrator, and a postage-paid return envelope.

Of the ninety-six questionnaires mailed, fifty-four were returned. An analysis was conducted on the responses.

Each of the factors considered a potential reason for choosing an independent school was, indeed, significant in the minds of the parents exercising choice. However, the factors varied in importance. Parents did claim to be looking for schools that provided a greater level of safety for their children. They also demonstrated a desire for greater opportunity for involvement in their child's education.

Parents agreed that the atmosphere of both the public school and their chosen school was a concern for them. In addition, parents felt that the influence of peers, teachers and society was a concern. Finally, and most significantly, as demonstrated by the unanimity and consistency of responses, parents in this study stated that the issues of religion and standards in education were of great concern.

The results of the study provide valuable insights into the kinds of factors influencing parents to make a choice of an independent school.

Acknowledgements

For several years, school options available to parents in Manitoba have intrigued me. The decision to undertake a study on school choice as it relates to independent schools was, therefore, not a difficult one for me.

The completion of this thesis has been something that I have anticipated for some time. I would like to thank Dr. Ed Hickcox for his continual assistance throughout the entire study. He was instrumental in enabling me to finish according to my timeline. Thankfully, he was not only willing to meet as often as I required, but also on short notice. Progress was limited only by the speed at which I was able to work. In addition, Dr. Hickcox's continued support and affirmation of my progress provided me with increased motivation.

I would also like to thank the administrators of the four schools that agreed to participate in the study. Without their cooperation, I could not have completed the study. Not only did they agree to allow me to perform the study of parents' opinions in their schools, three of them also volunteered to include a letter of endorsement for the study in the questionnaire package. Remarkably, this support all occurred in spring, possibly the busiest time of year for these administrators.

Dr. Rosemary Foster and Dr. David Jenkinson, members of my supervisory committee, were also very helpful. The fact that they were willing to discuss my initial proposal and then the thesis, itself, prior to the actual defense demonstrated to me that they were truly 'on my side.' Also, Dr. Foster's continual support of my work, both in courses instructed by her, and then of my thesis, provided much needed confidence.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons why some parents choose to enroll their children in an independent school instead of a public school. This study sought to determine the issues that parents in the province of Manitoba consider important in making these choices. These considerations include the possibility that there are conditions in public schools that parents seek to avoid. Conversely, the choice could be motivated by a conscious decision for something specific in the alternative setting, something that a public school does not, or cannot, offer.

Parents are making the choice of an independent school in increasing numbers, in spite of the additional costs associated with an education outside of the public system. In 1992, the province of Manitoba had 11,640 (or 5.1% of the school age population) students attending independent schools (Manitoba Education and Training, 1997). Seven years later, this number was 14,063 students (Federation of Independent Schools, 1999 in Dueck, 1999, p. 8), which is approximately 7% of the entire school age population of Manitoba. Table 1 shows the number of students in independent schools in other Canadian provinces and the percent this number represents out of the total population of school eligible children.

These statistics present a quick summary of the number of children enrolled in independent schools in Canadian provinces. It is significant to note that Manitoba ranks third in Canada with respect to the percentage of children attending such schools.

Table 1
Percent of students in private/ independent schools by province

Province	Students in Private School	Percent of Total Population
British Columbia	58,768	9
Alberta	20,372	4
Saskatchewan	3,533	2
Manitoba	14,063	7
Ontario	92,110	4.5
Quebec	98,115	9.5
New Brunswick	925	1
Nova Scotia	784	1
Prince Edward Island	216	.5
Newfoundland	699	1

(Source: Dueck, 1999, p. 8)

Nationally, the CBC suggested that the number of students attending independent schools has increased by 15% in the last ten years (CBC Newsmagazine, Sept. 2000).

Manitoba statistics show that the number of students not enrolled in public schools has increased 60% since 1982 (Manitoba Education and Training, 1997 in Friesen, 1998, p. 4), from 9,263 to approximately 15,000 students in 1999. This is a significant increase.

What are the reasons that parents have for choosing an alternate education?

Parents choosing an education other than public schools may choose from a variety of independent schools. An independent school is any school, other than a public school, which provides a curriculum and a standard of education equivalent to that provided by the public school, exclusive of home schooling (Section 60(5) of The Public Schools Act, p. 1). There are many types of independent schools in Manitoba. The extent to which independent schools incorporate religion and/or culture differentiates many of these schools.

Background

At some point, every parent must decide if and/or where his or her child will attend school. This choice is frequently made by default. That is, the child is sent to the local public school within whose catchment area the family lives. Occasionally the choice is made to send the child to another public school within the division. Parents also have the option to send their child to a school in another division, thereby increasing the available school options that do not carry a cost. Alternatively, parents may choose an independent school.

Choosing one school over another indicates that there are differences in schools. This choice would imply that there are better schools, at least in the minds of some. If all schools were the same, all children would simply attend the local public school, assigned by virtue of location. Some parents, however, do not choose their local public school, or any other public school for that matter.

Many studies related to school choice have been conducted in recent years. Researchers have been interested in determining what types of parents make choices, what information is used in making these decisions and from where the information is obtained. They have conducted research on the types of schools chosen, as well as the reasons given for making a choice. However, there is little known about school choice in Manitoba. The Winnipeg Free Press article "Student migration remains mystery: Why do they choose other schools? Where do they go? Educators don't know," clearly speaks to the lack of information on this topic (Martin, April 23, 2001, p. A10). The article states that "most educators admit they don't really have a clue where students have gone and why."

In addition to not being sure about the reasons parents have for choosing one public school over another, educators may not know enough about why parents choose independent schools over public schools. In fact, previous studies on school choice were conducted in jurisdictions that do not accurately reflect the choices available in Manitoba. In addition, studies on school choice have, for the most part, focussed on available choices in the public system, not specifically on alternative choices (West, 1994, p. 115). Recent research about educational choice has been in terms of families selecting particular schools for their children from the range of offerings, i.e. schools of choice and open boundaries. For most parents, this choice means expressing a preference between the various province-maintained schools in their vicinity. Families are expected to make judgements about such factors as academic success, discipline, facilities and distance to be traveled, and then act tactically to try to ensure that their child is offered a place at a school that they consider acceptable. This type of choice is referred to as 'weak' choice (Walford, 1994, p. 139).

A parent's choice of an independent school in Manitoba is an example of a demand for 'strong' choice (Walford, 1994, p. 139). This choice allows families to assist in shaping the type of education offered or to establish schools which meet their own specific requirements. Most of the studies on this type of choice utilize a voucher option (Indianapolis', Milwaukee's and San Antonio's voucher plans in Martinez & Thomas, 1994), or limit the available choices (Milwaukee's choice program, Martinez & Thomas, 1994). The educational choice to be examined in this study is unique in that any choice outside the public system (independent religious or non-religious schooling) in Manitoba

comes at some expense to the parents. There is a burden of cost, in terms of money, time and commitment, that is likely not present in a choice for the local public school.

Conceptual Framework

With the parents of over fourteen thousand students making the decision not to enroll their children in a public school in Manitoba, it could be expected that the reasons given for their choice may be quite diverse. These reasons seem to fall into two categories. In the first type of choice, parents choose an alternate education because of dissatisfaction with public schools. Parents 'exit' public schools when they "become dissatisfied with the quality of a school's product or service and seek it elsewhere" (Ogawa & Dutton, 1997, p. 334). What is it about a public school education that causes parents to be dissatisfied? What are the perceived conditions that exist within public schools that cause parents to look to alternate forms of education for their children?

The second type of choice occurs when parents choose a specific aspect of a private school. School choice is also a way for parents to choose the specific type of education that they want for their children. School choice gives voice to students and families (Cookson, 1994, p. 119), allowing them to select schools that either reinforce their traditions and values, or that best fit the educational needs of their children. What are the conditions within private schools that parents actively choose for the education of their children?

Clearly, these two types of choice overlap. Many studies (Ogawa & Dutton, 1997 and Witte, 1991 in Hetland, 1994) indicate 'frustration with public schools' as a reason for choosing an alternate choice. Unfortunately, there is little discussion as to what the

specific reasons for frustration are. However, a decision to attend a private school because of something that this choice offers is also an admission that the public school is not as effective in providing this particular aspect of an education. For example, if a parent chooses to send his or her child to a private school because of a lack of discipline in the public school, it can be assumed that the parent must believe that discipline in the independent school will be better. This study, then, will attempt to focus on:

1. factors in the public school that lead to frustration and dissatisfaction by parents, and
2. factors in the private system that parents give as reasons for making their choice.

Research done by others, in several jurisdictions other than Manitoba, provides some initial guidelines as to how these two areas might be further divided. A recent study (West et al., 1998) examined choice issues in Great Britain. A focus of the study was to determine reasons parents had for choosing particular schools (p. 47). Factors that were considered essential by 20% or more of the sample are listed in Table 2.

Table 2
Factors considered essential by parents in selecting schools

Factor	% of parents
Believe child will be happy	80
Quality of education	74
Suit child's needs	61
Atmosphere	52
Discipline/behavior of children	51
Pupils stretched	45
Reputation of school/ head	38
Small class size	30

(West, et al., 1998, p. 56)

The results of the study indicated that parents exercising choice considered several factors as more significant than others. The two most important factors were the fact that they wanted their child to be happy and that the quality of the education should

be high. Two of the factors, that the education should suit the child's needs and the pupils should be stretched, seem to overlap with the need for a good education and a happy child. In addition, parents wanted a positive atmosphere and good discipline. Johnson (1987) also examined the reasons parents in England gave for choosing private schools. This study also suggested that parents wanted quality education for their children and that the public schools did not offer an adequate education for children of high academic ability (Johnson, 1987 in West, et al., 1998, p. 46).

Another important issue for parents involved in school choice, is the opportunity to have a 'say' in the education of their child. A study on school choice, undertaken by Ogawa and Dutton (1997), found that there is definite correlation between parents' choosing and their wish to exercise voice in their children's education. Parents who are more likely to participate in choice options have more opportunities to express voice and invest more in educational quality. Parents who are more likely to use vouchers also have more opportunities to exercise voice and invest in educational quality, but they are also less satisfied.

Witte (1991) investigated factors other than academic achievement in parental choice in Milwaukee (in Hetland, 1994). The findings in this study closely mirror the one conducted by West, et al (1998). It should be noted, however, that the Milwaukee school choice program allowed students from financially disadvantaged families to choose from non-sectarian private schools. When parents were asked to assess the importance of various factors affecting their decision to participate in the choice program, they identified factors shown in Table 3 as very important or important.

Table 3
Factors considered important in choosing (% of parents)

Factor	% of parents
Educational Quality in chosen school	97%
Discipline in chosen school	98%
General atmosphere in chosen school	97%
Financial considerations	94%
Frustration with public schools	83%
Special Programs in chosen schools	89%
Location of chosen school	80%

(Witte, 1991 in Hetland, 1994, p. 186).

Other studies provide additional reasons for choosing private education. These reasons include 'getting on better in life' (Fox, 1985), 'providing an academic advantage' or 'a higher standard of education' (Fox, 1985, Edwards, Fitz & Whitty, 1989, West, 1998), 'developing character and fostering discipline' (Fox, 1985), and 'better discipline' (West, 1998).

A comprehensive study on school choice in the United States (Martinez & Thomas, 1994), examined the first year reports on five different choice programs. This study reviewed the formal evaluations of:

1. Minnesota's Open Enrollment Option (a cross district program allowing students to switch districts as long as space is available).
2. San Antonio's Independent School District's Multilingual Program (students of superior academic record are permitted to enter an intensive foreign language school-within-a-school program).
3. Milwaukee's voucher plan for low-income families to attend private schools (allows up to 980 low-income children to attend any non-religious private school).
4. Indianapolis' privately funded program (allows students with financial need to attend other schools, paid for by The Golden Rule Insurance Company).

5. San Antonio's privately funded program (allows students with financial need to attend other schools, with tuition paid for by several private corporations).
(Martinez & Thomas, 1994, p. 678-679)

Research revealed overwhelmingly that parents picked educational quality or learning climate as their number one reason for choosing an alternate to their local school (Martinez & Thomas, 1994, p. 680). Discipline and the general atmosphere in the school were also highly rated factors among most groups of parents (p. 681). In addition, the study found that the large majority of parents choosing private options are frustrated with public schools and, when asked to evaluate their children's previous schools, were likely to give average or failing grades (p. 682).

In a Master's thesis completed in Manitoba, Allan Friesen (1998) found that parents seeking 'strong' choice selected a particular private Christian school because they wanted:

1. zero tolerance for gangs at school.
2. schools to include more reference to God in the classroom.
3. teachers to model a consistently Christian lifestyle.
4. zero tolerance for spiritual, mental, emotional, social or physical abuse in schools.
5. children to be academically safe, in that they should feel safe enough to risk doing well.
6. teachers to be free to teach those who want to learn, unencumbered by disruptive students.
7. those teachers who are not able to teach effectively to be encouraged to leave the profession (pp. 238-239).

It is interesting to note that many of the findings of this study differ significantly from those discussed previously.

Given these studies on school choice, some of the possible reasons for choosing private schools have been organized into a framework from which to begin this study.

Initially the factors will be divided into the following general categories:

1. To what extent do safety issues influence parents' decisions? (Friesen, 1998)
2. To what extent do academic issues influence parents' decisions? (West, et al., 1998; Witte, 1991 in Hetland, 1994; Martinez & Thomas, 1994; Johnson, 1987)
3. To what extent do religious issues influence parents' decisions? (Friesen, 1998; Schmidt & Bergmann, 2000)
4. To what extent does the opportunity for input into the education of their child influence parents' decisions? (Ogawa & Dutton, 1997; Janzen, 2000)
5. To what extent do the impact of peers, teachers and administrators influence parents' decisions? (Friesen 1998)
6. To what extent does the atmosphere of the school influence parents' decision? (Witte, 1991 in Hetland, 1994; Martinez & Thomas, 1994; Janzen, 2000)

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons why some parents choose to send their children to independent schools in Manitoba. Borg and Gall (1989) state that specific behavior (choosing a particular school) can be predicted from measures of attitude toward the specific behavior. This study, through a survey of parental attitudes, will attempt to reveal why parents choose independent schools over public schools.

A questionnaire was sent to parents who had enrolled their child(ren) in one of four independent schools. These schools are identified in Table 4 using pseudonyms.

Table 4
Surveyed schools

School	Type
Watercrest Academy	Private Evangelical Christian.
Lakeshore Elementary	Private Mennonite.
Emily Morris	Private elite academic.
St. Francis	Private Catholic.

The choice of sending the questionnaire to parents with children in grade one, was based on the assumption that the reasons for making the educational choice would still be

relatively fresh in parents' minds. In examining choice issues in Great Britain, West, et al. (1998) found that parents who chose private schools began thinking about the school their child would attend when the child was quite young. Of significance is the fact that parents choosing independent schools initiate the decision-making process very early in their child's life. The early decision to enroll in an independent school would seem to indicate that the act of choosing was a planned event and that they had given the issue much consideration. Parents must also weigh the financial costs associated with a choice other than the public school. The fact that parents who have made alternative choices have thought much about this choice is a major reason for choosing parents of grade one children.

Choosing these parents is also important in that these parents have most likely made the independent school their initial choice. That is, parents who choose an alternative education after several years of having a child in a public school often do so because of a bad experience in the public school. It is not their first choice. Friesen (1998) found that five of the seven couples interviewed about their decision to enroll in an independent school indicated that it was a negative experience in their local school that prompted the move to the private school (p. 212).

The survey consisted of a Likert type scale of 56 items which asked for parents' perceptions of conditions within their school of choice (28 questions) and within public schools in general (28 questions). Each set of parents was asked to respond to statements relating to conditions in either the public school or the independent school of choice on a five-point scale.

The questionnaire was pre-tested to ascertain if parents would understand what they were being asked. Modifications were made according to the recommendations of this group. In addition, it was found that the questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete, a time period that was considered acceptable.

Significance of the Study

Statistics from Manitoba clearly indicate that there is an increase in the number and percentage of students enrolled in independent schools. If this move is caused by a general dissatisfaction with public schools, then it is imperative for educators to know the causes. There is little question that parents and taxpayers are increasingly concerned about the nature of public education in Canada. Wilkinson (1994) states that high school dropout rates are between 20 and 30 percent, and that illiteracy rates are as high as 20 percent (p. 9). In addition, when compared to other countries, Canada appears to be increasingly less successful in mathematics and sciences training as secondary education progresses (p. 9). The present study is significant because there is a need for an examination of the reasons why parents reject public schools, and, at personal cost (in terms of money, time and effort), choose alternatives.

If the exodus is as a result of what is offered in alternative settings, again educators need to know what it is that these parents seek. Are parents choosing independent schools because of specific programs or instruction that these schools provide? Public schools need to evaluate to what extent the students that are not enrolled in these schools, could be. Could these private school offerings be included in the public system? If parents are making these choices at an already increasing rate, what will

happen if there are changes made to funding independent schools and school choice? Whatever is in store for public schools, it is vital that they stay proactive in an effort to better meet the needs of their students. For “choice will change schools and the patterns of schools will reflect more widely the wishes and aspirations of parents” (Woods, 1994, p. 133). A better understanding of the reasons for not choosing a public school will go a long way in fulfilling this end.

Research is also required in this area because there has been little to date. Research on school choice has, for the most part, focussed on available choices in the public system, not specifically on alternative choices (West, 1994, p. 115; Walford, 1994, p. 139). Other research on choice has examined the process in the context of vouchers. Most significantly, the majority of these studies have been conducted in Great Britain and the United States. The results of research in Manitoba (Friesen, 1998) have been restricted by the choice of respondents. Friesen’s study was limited in that he only used subjects from one school who had transferred from a public school. Information on choosing alternatives over public schools, especially in Canada, is limited.

Research on independent school choice is important because other researchers have recommended further study in this area. Petronio (1996) states that hard performance data is not enough when it comes to choosing schools (p. 36), and that other information is needed. Martinez and Thomas (1994) caution that, “because of the limited size of the programs (in their study) and the peculiarities of program requirements and targeted populations, the knowledge gained from the individual evaluations must be carefully interpreted when applied to other settings” (p. 682). They recommend that further study be performed that will collect information that is comparable across

programs (p. 682). Friesen (1998) recommends that further study is required on alternative parent choices in education. He suggests that it is necessary to extend his study by including more than a single school or choice, and by involving more parents (p. 241).

Based on the recommendations and limitations of these studies, this study will attempt to provide results that are transferable to other jurisdictions, although transferring results is difficult as each jurisdiction has its own unique education system. In accommodating Petronio's recommendation that choosing schools is about more than performance scores, an extensive literature review will be undertaken to determine other reasons parents may have for choosing alternative settings. These will all be included in the questionnaire. Martinez and Thomas recommend that research must be done that can be comparable across programs. Friesen also suggests that further study must be done which would include other types of school choice, not just one Christian private school. In an effort to glean many perspectives of school choice, this study will attempt to include a greater number of choices outside the public school, namely independent schools associated with various faiths and academic non-religious independent schools.

Friesen (1998) recommends that future research widen the scope of parent perceptions. A larger sample of parents will be surveyed. By determining the reasons for choosing alternative forms of education from multiple parent groups, it is hoped that a more accurate understanding of the dissatisfaction of public schools and/or appreciation of independent schools and other options will be provided.

Finally, I believe that this study has significance because it is important to understand to what extent parents are motivated to choose alternatives based on religious

ideology. In spite of an awareness that faith and religion are important issues in school choice (Walford, 1994, p.140), much of the existing research on school satisfaction and effectiveness, Canadian (Williams & Millinoff, 1990) and American (Rose & Gallup, 1998), does not address these issues.

Summary

There are a variety of reasons why parents choose a certain type of education for their children. These reasons range from positive choices for certain aspects of the alternative education, to the conscious rejection of a specific aspect of the public school. A questionnaire sent to parents of children enrolled in private independent schools and asking for reasons for choosing an alternative education will add to the existing knowledge of why parents choose a private education for their children. This information should be of great interest to parents, educators (private and public), and those interested in the education of our children and the future of public education.

The results of this study should provide a better understanding of both the perceived inadequacies of the public school system, as well as the specific factors that lead parents to choose various independent schools. This information should allow educators, parents and other interested parties to partake in meaningful dialogue towards deciding how education can improve in the Province of Manitoba.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review the relevant literature with respect to conditions that may influence individual families to choose an independent school. Respondents in an assortment of studies, in various jurisdictions, present an abundance of reasons for choosing a school other than their local public school (West, et al., 1998; Friesen, 1998; Witte, 1991 in Hetland, 1994; Martinez & Thomas, 1994; Johnson, 1987; Schmidt & Bergmann, 2000. & Ogawa & Dutton, 1997). The reasons for choosing an independent school, as discussed in these studies, are grouped in the conceptual framework outlined previously. The six categories of factors influencing choice include: the school's atmosphere, behavioral and academic standards, religion and religious instruction, the opportunity for parental input and involvement, the influence of others, and safety. The extent to which each of these factors might influence a particular family's choice is dependent upon the family's perception of conditions within the public schools and, likewise, those of the independent school. This chapter will discuss the potential significance of these factors as they relate to parental choice in other jurisdictions, as presented in other studies and relevant literature.

Many parents choose private education as a result of their dissatisfaction with the public school system. In a telephone study on school choice in the Poudre School District of Fort Collins, Colorado, Bomotti (1998) found that 76% of parents whose children attend neighborhood schools believe that the neighborhood schools are not the best place for all students and parents (p. 318). The study consisted of a 'large' sample of the parents of 22,500 elementary school-age children enrolled in either choice schools, or the

traditional neighborhood school (p. 314). This fact is also presented by Witte (1991), who found that 83% of parents exercising choice claimed that frustration with public schools was a significant factor in their choice (in Hetland, 1994, p. 186).

The Canadian Education Association's report on Canada's schools summarizes the findings of a national opinion poll on education, conducted by Decima Research. The highlights of the study provide an interesting insight into the state of education in Canada today. In the summary, the authors state that "there was a relatively high degree of satisfaction with schools" (Williams & Millinoff, 1990, p. 3). Yet the actual figures explaining satisfaction show that more than 50% of respondents gave schools in their community a grade of C or less (p. 9). In fact, more respondents gave their school a grade of D (7.1%) than A (6.2%).

The National Post/ Global Poll of nearly 800 respondents conducted by COMPAS, Inc., found support for public schools in Ontario has reached an all-time low, with 59% of parents stating that schools were getting worse (Smyth, 2001, p. E9). Parents in Manitoba felt that schools were generally getting better (56%), but this "may be due to the fact that parents are receiving limited information about performance in Manitoba" (Smyth, 2001, p. E9).

American statistics are remarkably similar. When polled in 1999, only half of all parents stated that they would continue to send their children to their local school if the government would pay tuition at a school of choice (Rose and Gallup, 1999, p. 42). Simply put, if there were no added costs associated with a private school education, one in two parents would prefer it. In fact, 30% of parents also believed that only in searching for an alternative system could the problems in the public system be solved (p. 44). In

addition, 72% of parents gave the schools of the nation as a whole a grade of 'C' or less (Rose & Gallup, 1999, p. 45).

Clearly, there is a level of discontent with respect to public schools. What are the conditions in schools preventing respondents from giving their local school a grade of A or B? What are the conditions within these schools that lead parents to believe that they must look for alternate systems to best educate their children?

Alternately, many parents seek an independent school because the school has something in particular to offer in the education of their child that they believe to be superior to that of a public school. Parents choosing an independent school may be making the choice because they believe that the chosen school is able to deliver a level of education that a public school is not delivering.

It is possible, then, that a choice for an independent school is either a rejection of the public school, a positive choice for the chosen school, or some combination of the two. It must be noted that, while the factors to be discussed in this chapter may be areas of concern for many parents, the factors may not be an issue for others. In addition, some factors may be of greater concern than others. The extent to which they are significant in Manitoba independent school choices is the focus of this study. A discussion of the potential factors relating to these choices is discussed in the following pages.

Religion

Religious instruction

The first potential factor that may influence choice for independent schools is religion and religious instruction. Religion refers to any effort made towards educating

children about religion. Religious instruction, on the other hand, is education in a particular religion, even indoctrination into that specific faith. What should be included in the education of children has always been a controversial subject. Aristotle explained the uncertainty in this way.

It is clear then that there should be laws laid down about education, and that education itself must be made a public concern. But we must not forget the question of what that education is to be, and how one ought to be educated. For in modern times there are opposing views about the tasks to be set. For there are no generally accepted assumptions about what the young should learn, either for virtue or for the best life; nor yet is it clear whether their education ought to be conducted with more concern for the intellect than for the character of the soul. The problem has been complicated by the education we see actually given; and it is by no means certain whether training would be directed at things useful in life, or at those conducive to virtue, or at exceptional accomplishments (all of these answers have been judged correct by somebody). For men do not all prize the same virtue, so naturally they differ also about the training for it (Brown & Strikeman, 1999, p. 12).

The controversy over religion in schools is clearly not new. As far back as Aristotle, educators have debated how much of a student's education should consist of religious training. In addition, what kind of religious instruction that should be has also been under scrutiny. Education in North America, and specifically Manitoba, has often contained a large spiritual component. In recent years, however, it has become unacceptable to include religion in the regular school day. This author recalls as recently as 15 years ago that the recital of the Lord's prayer was common practice in many schools in Manitoba. On August 13, 1992, the Court of Queen's Bench in Manitoba ruled that mandatory religious exercises were an infringement of Sections 2 and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and ordered an end to the practice (Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties v. Minister of Education, Manitoba, 1992).

Sweet states “surely, holding the continuity of the faith as an educational objective isn’t a legitimate social goal worthy of public support” (1997, p. 173). Abstaining from ‘holding the continuity of faith’ has become the position of the public school. Since our society has become increasingly diverse, public schools have, out of necessity, attempted to maintain a neutral position in terms of religion and religious instruction. This is an understandable position. To maintain harmony among children of different faiths, religious instruction of any kind is omitted altogether. Many argue that public schools have the common good of students in mind. While the school environment may not suit everybody perfectly, it is the best compromise available. Sweet (1997) explains that successful public policy is not designed to meet the extreme positions but to accommodate the moderate majority (p. 124).

A secular school system may suit the majority of people, but it may also be extremely offensive to members of many belief systems. “If we ignore the deeply held religious beliefs of others, we do so at our own peril. Few things are as motivating in life as religious belief” (Sweet, 1997, p. 7). For those families that consider faith to be a critical component of education, instruction on spiritual matters is likely lacking. “The public schools today treat children as having only two dimensions: physical and intellectual. They have chosen not to recognize the third capacity of the child: the spiritual” (Brown & Strikeman, 1999, p. 11). As a result, some families might be disappointed by a public school. Just as some parents may be offended by subjecting their children to the Biblical account of creation, so too many parents may be offended by teaching that contradicts such Biblical accounts (Duker, 1966, p. 81).

A National Post/ Global poll (2001) found that “there is too little religious instruction in public schools: 86% of respondents, regardless of their faith, feel schools should offer courses encouraging respect between different religious groups. A strong majority (63%) also want history classes on how the Christian religion has evolved, and 50% want public schools to offer courses on the Bible and the basic principles of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism” (Smyth, 2001, p. E1). These statistics seem to indicate that the majority of parents may actually desire some level of instruction in or on religion. This possibility is further supported by the results of a school choice program in San Antonio. In it, 95% of parents indicated that religious training was an important or very important factor in choosing a school (Martinez & Thomas, 1994, p. 681). However, although there are exceptions, most public schools do not offer any type of religious education.

Many parents also want religious training for their child. These parents do not want to learn about religions. They want their children to be exposed, even engrossed, in their religion of choice. For the deeply committed ‘religious’ parent, one for whom religion is more than what one does but is a deeply held set of beliefs, education is not about searching for and discovering some ‘truth’. Rather, they hope that their children accept their truth. These parents believe that it is not only imperative to teach their children about faith and religion, but to educate them *in* this faith.

The reality is that public schools cannot educate religiously, nor do they teach religion. Independent schools, on the other hand, are able to do both. They are able to add a religious component to education in three ways: “as an attitude that influences the total

mood of the school; as an integral part of a wide range of curricular subjects; and as specific courses in the program of studies” (Lakeshore Elementary Handbook, p. 6).

Religion is a significant issue in the lives of many families. Do these families consider an education incomplete without a religious component? Justice McLachlin, commenting on the state of education in Ontario public schools, said: “the public system is not in fact accessible to all children. There exists a minority of students whose parents, out of religious conviction, cannot send their children to public schools” (Brown & Strikeman, 1999, p. 13). The dissonance created by the gap between an education that satisfies the parents living by religious convictions such as these, and a public school education, must be great. For how many parents choosing an independent school education in Manitoba has religion been an issue? Do parents want a school that imparts the spiritual convictions of the parents, and one where at the same time, the secular and sacred are not separated but are interwoven together?

Religious Intolerance

Undoubtedly, some parents will exercise choice because of a desire to include religion and religious instruction in their child’s education. But do parents feel this is enough reason to choose an independent school? Religious instruction about one’s faith could be completed in the home and church. However, some parents may be concerned that, in attempting to remain neutral, schools are actually biased against religion. Glanzer explains it this way:

The underlying world view of modern education divorces humankind from its dependence on God; it replaces religious answers to many of the ultimate questions of human existence with secular answers; and, most striking, public education conveys its secular understanding of reality

essentially as a matter of faith. Indeed, at least in its textbooks and formal curriculum students are indoctrinated into the modern (secular) world-view and against religion (1998, p. 221).

Advocates of the 'religiously neutral' school claim that any religious instruction will take the form of indoctrination. Indoctrinating and other terms, such as conditioning and brainwashing, refers to influencing unduly (Weeren, 1986, p. 21). Common to all forms of undue influence by educators is an unjustifiable curtailment of the students' freedom to develop. Some parents may feel that schools have gone too far in their attempt to remain neutral in terms of religion and religious instruction. Those who believe that schools must be religiously neutral argue that they must, therefore, be secular because secularism is neutral. But activities and ideas that we commonly consider 'secular' are not necessarily neutral. They compete for the hearts and minds of children with other ideas and activities, including those commonly considered religious (Glanzer, 1998, p. 219).

A neutral position within the schools would suggest that each religion would be given equal respect and validity. But secularism is defined in the dictionary as "the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from the belief in God or in the future state" (New Webster's Dictionary, 1980). "The point that seems to be lost in so much of this debate is that the current public education system in Canada- a secular system- is, in fact a value system, and a value system that competes with those of the religious" (Sweet, 1997, p. 113).

Some consider this value system intolerant of religions. The intolerance takes the form of ignoring, even prohibiting, religion in the schools. An example in an American school demonstrates this unequal treatment.

A class was given the opportunity to choose its own topic for a research paper, as long as the topic was interesting, researchable, and decent. While subjects such as 'Spiritualism', 'Reincarnation', and 'Magic throughout history' were approved, a student who asked to write about 'The life of Jesus Christ' was not allowed to do so. The girl received a zero for the assignment. In defense of this action, the teacher went so far as to say, 'We don't deal with personal religion-personal religious beliefs. It is just not an appropriate thing to do in a public school' (Glanzer, 1998, p. 219).

Ironically, each of the topics of spiritualism, reincarnation and magic are personal religious beliefs. While this scenario is not likely a reflection of every public school, there are more common examples of this unequal treatment of religious versus secular perspectives. Halloween versus Christmas is a prime example. While the 'celebration' of Halloween is practised and accepted in public schools, the mere inclusion of the word Christmas in Christmas concerts is not acceptable in many schools. Even though we live in the year 2002 A.D., which, at the very least, acknowledges the birth of Christ, public schools are discouraged from mentioning the fact that Christmas is His recognized birthday. Alternately, the school is permitted to recognize witches, jack'o'lanterns, and ghosts, which are symbols of pagan religions.

A local example of religious intolerance centers on the efforts of one man, Dr. Terry Lewis, to have the book Of Mice and Men banned. He felt that the book was unacceptable in that it took the Lord's name in vain. Since it was a compulsory part of the school curriculum, his argument was that this was a discriminatory position and, therefore, children should not be *required* to read it. Requiring children to read a book that was clearly an affront to the religious views of many families in the division was

upsetting to many parents, he claimed. Proponents of the book argued that the language was appropriate, because it was language used in the context of the situation (Lewis, 2000, p. A11).

Much disagreement followed. Dr. Lewis responded with this commentary in the Winnipeg Free Press:

It is often the same people who are opposed to banning books, that do not hesitate to ban the Bible from school, or require the signatures of 60 parents (in Manitoba) to have the Bible taught in a special class at the end of the school day (at no cost to the taxpayer). Some of the old readers that I grew up with had Biblical passages in them to be studied for their literary contribution. Those days are no longer tolerated as the secular fundamentalist doctrine states that the Christian religion has no place in school and should be relegated to churches and private opinions only. On what basis is that secular doctrine of intolerance and exclusivity imposed with evangelistic zeal upon a free and democratic society contrary to the beliefs of many within that pluralistic society? (Lewis, 2000, p. A11).

In this case, the book in question was offensive to a group of parents, represented by Dr. Lewis. Gary Duthler of the Federation of Independent Schools says that “over the past ten years, more and more Christians from every part of the country have contacted him.” They tell him that “they’re disenchanted with the way that public schools have been transformed from purveyors of Christian values to agents of secularism” (Sweet, 1997, p. 240). To what extent are parents concerned about the intolerance of public schools towards religion, specifically Christianity? Has this issue motivated parents to look for alternative forms of education? Is this an important issue for those parents exercising the choice of independent schools in Manitoba?

Morals and Values

Moral education concerns learning about conduct, including manners and thoughtfulness. It is about the development of character, the stable qualities of a person that are revealed in actions. Frequently, people adopt a simplistic view of morality. They

think it concerns only lying, cheating, or sexual misbehavior, whereas, in fact, it encompasses as well positive duties toward one's self and others (Sewall, 1999, p. 15).

Parents want what is best for their children. Since their values are important to them, obviously parents wish to maximize the chances that their children will embrace their values (Holtrop, 1996, p. 75). These morals and values may or may not be tied to a particular religious affiliation. Wilkinson (1994) states that a main reason that parents choose to send their children to private schools is because of the failure of public schools to impart values to the children that will help them to become citizens with high moral-ethical standards. These include self-discipline, solid work habits, a sense of responsibility to and compassion for their families, work associates and those in society at large, and the capability to settle differences without violence.

This is not to say that public schools do not teach values. They do. In fact, many would argue that the main objective of public schools is to teach values. It would be difficult to find a teacher who does not believe in the value of hard work, for example. However, public schools do not have the reputation for excelling in this area (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 136; Dahm, 1996, p. 69). The problem is likely due to the fact that public schools must teach morals and values from a neutral position. The reality is that often one reasonable objective conflicts with another. Given this conflict of goals, between competitiveness and cooperation, between independence and friendship, between the selection of one's own values and attitudes and a willingness to suspend one's own judgement in the company of others, it would be surprising if typical schools, which reflect this confusion of values, play a very strong role in the development of a child's morality (Holmes & Wynne, 1989, p. 25). Teachers are not permitted to make

judgements as to what are acceptable morals and values, other than those that are acceptable to all. Do not steal and work hard, for example, would likely be two values that all would accept.

The underlying assumption of many of the approaches to teaching on moral-ethical questions is that there are no moral-ethical absolutes and consequently no child's view is, therefore, wrong. Tolerance is the key word. Students are encouraged to accept all individual views and to avoid judging right and wrong. This position of tolerance can lead to some difficulties. For example,

If the preservation of human life is a utilitarian good, why is it not clearly right to sacrifice the life of one innocent hostage to save the lives of others? Something insists on the sanctity of human life in a sense beyond its unit value, that reminds us we are not meant to play God with the lives of others (Freund, 1966, p. 19-21).

Schools are able to teach the value of human life in that most would agree not to kill. But they are not able to provide the answer to questions about the type of sacrifice described in the above example. A discussion on the topic of abortion, for example, would be both difficult and controversial.

How can the school maintain a neutral position on the topic of the sanctity of life? As was just explained, the majority might agree that to take another human life is unacceptable. It is not likely that any teacher would allow a student to maintain the position that to take another's life in normal situations (excepting war, for example) is acceptable. Within this same classroom, some students might consider abortion to be infanticide, and, therefore, it should not be tolerated. Accordingly, this position would be agreed on as it is taking a human life. However, if there are students who believe that

abortion is a woman's choice, this value must also be tolerated. How can this issue be adequately concluded without dismissing or diminishing another's value?

The concept of right and wrong must be based on some type of belief system. Many parents contend that true morality needs the support of religious convictions (Ulich, 1966, p. 47). Virtues, such as mercy, charity, forgiveness, humility, and modesty, are deeply rooted in religious teachings of right and wrong (Sewall, 1999, p. 15). What seems difficult for opponents of religion in the classroom to understand is that education is never value-less. Not only what is taught and not taught, but how it is taught, and by whom, conveys a set of values. Public schools, because they attempt to socialize children in particular ways, are not neutral (Biggs & Porter, 1994, p. 37). To argue that all morals and values are tolerable, is, in itself, a value. But this position is in direct conflict with the values of many parents. Wilkinson claims that the only unacceptable value is the one of intolerance towards another's values. The exception to this position is that it is "apparently acceptable to be intolerant of those who believe in moral-ethical absolutes" (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 23).

So, while public schools may attempt to instill a set of morals and values in children, it is not unusual to hear teachers and educational leaders specifically deny the school's responsibility for the inculcation of virtue. They argue that pupils must choose for themselves from an array of possible choices. However, given the frequently powerful pressure of family, friends and media, it seems improbable on the surface, that a delicate helping hand toward choice, which schools attempt to provide, will have much influence on the decision. Indeed, if there is any effect at all, it is likely to be the undermining of any definite choice made by the student earlier under the influence of the family or

church. After all, the implication of permitting students to make a free choice from an array of possibilities is that it really does not matter which choice is made (Holmes & Wynne, 1989, p. 23).

Independent schools, on the other hand, have the advantage of being able to plainly state their mission, including their position in terms of values. Without excuse, they may state their beliefs and convictions. Could this fact affect the decision of parents choosing independent schools? Is the choice for an independent school motivated by the desire to perpetuate one's own morals and values within the lives of one's children?

David Elkind (1995) states "the school is the mirror of society and of the family. As society and the family change, so too must the school" (p. 8). As society shifts its morals and values, schools must, as well, to maintain and promote tolerance. In fact, public schools cannot be expected to inculcate and enforce ideals of character that are at variance with the dominant values of the community or in a spiritually fragmented culture (Sewall, 1999, p. 15). Consequently, many parents believe that independent schools have higher moral and spiritual standards (Friesen, 1998, p. 212). Is it possible that parents do not want a school that simply reflects the values of society? Do parents choose independent schools because of their position on moral education and the values they espouse?

Safety

Physical violence

School violence is a growing concern for the general public. On November 20, 2000, two separate stabbing incidents occurred in Canadian high schools. One of the

students died (CBC News). The Winnipeg Free Press reported on September 5, 2001, that a Winnipeg teacher has received irreparable damage as a result of a head butt from a teenager. This incident occurred at an urban middle school during recess (Martin, Sept. 2001, p. A1). Undeniably, the issue of violence in schools has increased in prominence as of late. Extreme incidents, like Columbine, Colorado, Tabor, Alberta, and the ones mentioned above make headlines and may add to the perception that violence in schools is increasing (Skiba & Peterson, 1999, p. 373).

In 1998, based on written 'Incident Reporting Forms', the St. Vital Teachers Association reported on the state of violence in St. Vital schools. These were to be completed by an employee when an incident of violence deemed worthy of documentation (by the employee) occurred. From September 1995 to December of 1997, 64 forms were completed (SVTA, 1998, pp. 1-7). These incidents ranged from fighting among students to verbal and physical attacks on teachers (p. 6). The SVTA also reported that the number of teachers who were distressed with their situation was increasing (1998, p. 3). The Manitoba Teachers Society conducted a study of its membership, surveying 3143 teachers from every area of the province. Of the 73% who returned the survey, 10% of teachers had experienced physical attacks (M.T.S., 1993, p. 15). The fact is that physical violence against teachers in Manitoba is too common.

With violence towards teachers occurring with this frequency, how much more are students experiencing violence? Teachers are in the position of authority, and, as adults, they have means, such as suspensions and other adults' support, at their disposal for dealing with the violent incidents (suspensions, other adults' support). Violence among students is also quite common. As part of the 1996 National Assessment of

Educational Progress mathematics assessment, 13,626 eighth graders were asked how safe they felt at school. Nearly one out of 10 students indicated feeling either unsafe or very unsafe at school (Barton, et. al. 1998, p. 20). Of the 50,000 teachers surveyed in a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education, 34% rated physical conflict among students as the most serious issue in schools (Shen, 1998, p.19). This perception has been steadily increasing, as it was only rated by 24% of teachers as being serious in 1988, by 29% in 1991, and 34% in 1998 (Shen, 1998, p.20).

Parents may share the perception that violence in schools is a serious issue.

Parents, in many cases, do not trust the schools to keep their children safe in a society that they see becoming increasingly violent and unhealthy (Dahm, 1996, p. 69). For many parents, the concern over violence in schools is about more than just death as a result of guns and knives. They feel their children are not safe from physical violence, such as bullying. In a recent study by Friesen, five out of seven families who chose a particular independent school in Winnipeg, did so because of fear of the safety of their children in the public school they attended (Friesen, 1998, p. 236). In fact, the seven families unanimously claimed that it is the perceived lack of safety in the public schools and the teachers' and principals' lack of the wherewithal to deal with major issues like this that was at the core of their dissatisfaction (p.212).

As the perception that public schools may not always be safe for children grows in prominence, so, too, does the belief that it is imperative to look to independent schools. Families want a good education for their children in a values-oriented, violence free atmosphere (Chandler, 1992, p. 110). Do parents make their choice because they feel that

their child would be physically unsafe in a public school? Is it possible that parents choosing independent schools believe that they are safer places for their children? To what extent is this a factor for parents in Manitoba when choosing an independent school?

Emotional safety

Some parents do not believe that their children are emotionally safe in a public school (Burrton, 1995, p. 93). Emotional safety refers to learning environments in which all students are able to complete courses without having their values or beliefs assailed or ridiculed, either explicitly or implicitly. Regardless of their family's ethnic or religious identity, students will not be physically assaulted, emotionally or intellectually accosted, or spiritually molested.

For some students, emotional safety could be about more than the acceptance of religious views. It could mean the validation and acceptance of a desire to excel academically. Some students perceive the need for schools to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning. This notion will be discussed further under the heading of academic standards.

To what extent is the concern over emotional safety, or safe passage, an issue with parents choosing not to send their children to a public school? Is this an issue for all parents who choose an independent school in Manitoba, or is it an issue for a small percentage of families?

External Influences

Societal Influences

Choosing an alternative to a public school does not always indicate that parents are leveling blame at the public schools. In fact, they may believe that the schools are doing the best that they can under the given conditions. The problem is that, in many cases, schools are being asked to perform a nearly impossible task. Classes are too large, and teachers are required to spend too much time on disciplining a few students (Lloyd, 1999, p. 3). "Even education's strongest supporters sometimes assume that we're in today's crisis because schools have gotten worse and the job is simply to restore quality. Wrong! Schools are coping remarkably well; society needs the fix!" (Spillane, 1990, p. 97). Schools today, in addition to performing the task of educating children as they always have, are expected to teach much more. In addition, many of the students in today's schools are not ready to learn as other problems are weighing on their minds. "Many educators insist that their biggest obstacles are neither technological nor pedagogical—but social and cultural" (Dwyer, 1994, p. 48).

The evidence is overwhelming that a perceived crisis in education relates not just to school governance but to pathologies that surround schools. The harsh truth is that, in many communities, the family is a far more imperiled institution than the school, and teachers are being asked to do what parents have not been able to accomplish. Today, the nation's public schools are called upon to stop drugs, reduce teenage pregnancy, feed students, improve health, and eliminate gang violence, while still meeting academic standards (Boyer in Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994, p. 138). For schools to become more effective, it is crucial for the family to become a more effective influence in the lives of their children (Fuller, 1996, p. 40).

It is not uncommon to hear educators claim that socio-economic background is a good predictor of academic performance. However, in an extensive study of public and private education in the U.S., Coleman and Hoffer (1987) observed that the condition of the family unit may have an even greater effect on school performance. While children going to private Roman Catholic schools outperformed their public school counterparts in verbal and mathematical skills, students in non-Catholic private schools did not compare as favorably with public school students (p. 20). These results led Coleman and Hoffer to look for other significant influences on student performance. They identified the importance of a "well-functioning and structurally intact family and of a closely-knit supportive adult community such as one often has in a religious community (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p. 74).

The conclusions of Coleman and Hoffer suggest that a key reason for academic difficulties may be that many children lack "social capital" (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 74) not financial capital. Children that are at greatest risk in schools today are from structurally deficient (single parent homes, or where the mother worked before the child entered elementary school), and functionally deficient families (where there may be two parents, but no close bonds between parents and children exist because parents are too busy with their own affairs or are disinterested in, or spend little time with their children) (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 74). Schools are required to do increasingly more since children coming to public schools do not have the support that they may once have had.

David Elkind, a professor of child study at Tufts University, claims that the traditional family is fast disappearing. In explaining his view, he states, "For example, couples used to believe in romantic love- that there was just one person in the whole

world for you and once you found that person you would live happily ever after, without having to work on the relationship. Our divorce rate contradicts the notion” (Scherer, 1996, p. 6). He continues by saying that autonomy has replaced togetherness. That is, that the individual is more important than the family (p. 6-7). As a result, more children are coming to school from functionally or structurally deficient homes.

Statistics support these claims. For example:

- the percent of married women in the workforce has increased from 18.6% in 1960 to 57.1% in 1988,
- the percent of births to unwed mothers has increased from 5.3% in 1960 to over 25% in 1988,
- the proportion of children whose parents divorced during the year increased 2.5 times over this time period,
- the proportion of children living in households with a single adult has risen from 5.5% to 14.2%, and
- the percent of homes with no adult male has increased from 7% to 19% (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 77).

This change in the family has had a profound effect on the performance of children in schools, academically and behaviorally. “No other factor in life will have more of an impact on a child than family background. Every teacher knows that a student having problems at home most likely will not produce in class and that students with wholesome, functional families are usually the exceptional students” (Jeub, 1994, p. 52).

In spite of the adverse and well-documented consequences of the breakdown of the traditional family, there remains a popular desire to believe otherwise. In fact, Hollywood, the advertising media and the news media generally extol the personal pleasures and supposed virtues of pursuing lifestyles other than that of the traditional family. Part of this belief apparently stems from a much more self-centered attitude on the part of adults. “Their own greater freedom and choice are seen as more important than fidelity and personal sacrifice for the benefit of their children or others. Simultaneously,

they ridicule the accepted family values of past decades, even to the extent of trying to make them seem deviant – thereby hoping to portray behaviors at odds with the traditional values in a more socially acceptable light” (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 78). This disruption to the traditional family has had a profound effect on the school and school children.

Many children are failing in school, not because they are intellectually or physically impaired, but because they are emotionally incapacitated. In schools across the United States, principals report a dramatic rise in the aggressive, acting-out behavior characteristics of children, especially boys, who are living in single-parent families. The discipline problems in today’s suburban schools – assaults on teachers, unprovoked attacks on other students, screaming outbursts in class – outstrip the problems that were evident in the toughest city schools a generation ago (Barton, P. et. al, 1998, p.5). These are the stress symptoms of children who are expected to be more competent in handling all sorts of experiences than they really are (Elkind, 1995, p. 7).

In response, many schools have turned to therapeutic remediation. A growing proportion of many school budgets is devoted to counseling and other psychological services. The curriculum has children taking courses in self-esteem, conflict resolution, and aggression management.

Parental advisory groups are conscientiously debating alternative approaches to traditional school discipline, ranging from teacher training in mediation to the introduction of metal detectors and security guards in the schools. Schools are becoming emergency rooms for the emotions, devoted not only to developing minds but also to repairing hearts. As a result, the mission of the school, along with the culture of the classroom, is slowly changing. What we are seeing, largely as a result of the new burdens of family disruption, is the psychologization of education (White, 1994, p. 77).

Is it reasonable to suggest that schools in general have taken on too much? Should schools attempt to compensate fully for the deficiencies in parenting and society in general, while adults are pursuing their own interests and desires and give little attention to their children? "This environment essentially ensures that public schools reflect the very problems that they are attempting to ameliorate" (Cookson, 1994, p. 110).

Teachers in the public school must be becoming increasingly frustrated. The job of educating children is becoming more difficult as they are forced to deal with problems not specifically related to learning.

"I don't know how they teach at all, because there are so many other, non-academic, problems that they have to deal with. These well-meaning teachers are losing their energy for the wrong reasons. They don't have a choice. They have to help so many kids survive. So someone in class, who is there to gain academically, may even become a loser as well, because the teacher is using energy to calm down the students, and to keep order" (Friesen, 1998, p. 222).

Do parents choose independent schools because of the perception that societal influences have handicapped schools in their effort to educate children? Do parents believe that, in choosing an alternative to a public school, their children will be free from these influences?

The influence of teachers

Parents are concerned over the influence teachers have over their children. Petronio (1996) interviewed 42 parents of a choice program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, using stratified random sampling to determine her sample. She found that one of the two most important questions parents asked prior to exercising a choice option, was, "Are the teachers good?" (p. 33). Teachers are inextricably linked to the integrity of

the school system. They occupy positions of trust and confidence, and exert considerable influence over their students as a result of their positions, a situation which leads parents to be concerned about the characteristics of the teacher(s) to whom they entrust their children. "Why would a parent send his/ her child to a school where they do not know the people, who hold values they may reject, but who are still extremely influential in shaping the world view of their child?" (Sweet, 1997, p. 82-83).

The best person, considering the influence they have over children, should be one of high moral standards, since the conduct of a teacher also bears directly upon the community's perception of the ability of the teacher to fulfil such a position of trust and influence. By their conduct, teachers as 'medium' must be perceived to uphold the values, beliefs and knowledge sought to be transmitted by the school system" (Brown & Strikeman, 1999, p. 23). Education in the public system, however, is often compromised by educators who do not assume that they ought consistently to model a particular set of ethical values in their teaching and general lifestyle (Redekop, 1999, p. 24).

In addition, it is even unlikely that all parents could agree on what particular ethical values a teacher should possess. In a similar fashion to the debate over whose values should be taught in schools, the debate over whose values should the 'best candidate' for a teaching position have, is also confusing. Specifying a clear set of traditional expectations is becoming increasingly difficult in a contemporary, multicultural and postmodern world, in addition to falling under discrimination in the human rights code (section 9-2). School districts usually avoid codifying issues referring to personal life for good reason. But, to exclude such expectations expressly and contractually strikes at the core of many parents' sense of what education is (Holmes &

Wynne, 1989, p. 273). Teachers are an enormous influence in the lives of the children with whom they come in contact. As a result, the personal lives of a teacher and principal are especially important to many families (Holmes and Wynne, 1989, p. 273). Are teachers failing to meet the expectations of their local community, and more specifically, those parents who choose educational alternatives to the public school? Is the influence of teachers a significant issue for parents making this choice?

Teachers from independent schools must conform to the institution's particular guidelines. Public schools cannot require this conformity. Chapter H175 of the Human Rights Code states in subsection 14(1) that "no person shall discriminate with respect to any aspect of an employment or occupation, unless the discrimination is based upon bona fide and reasonable requirements or qualifications for the employment or occupation" (p. 11). It is the reference to 'bona fide' requirements for employment that allows independent schools to discriminate based on religion, among other things.

The case of *Schroen v. Steinbach Bible College*, where Esther Schroen was fired from her position of secretary because she was not of Mennonite faith, is an example of this discrimination. In the ruling, the adjudicator found that the dismissal was based solely on Schroen's religious beliefs and association, and, as a result, was discriminatory. However, the complaint was dismissed since, as a faith-based institution, the requirement that all staff be of Mennonite faith constituted a bona fide and reasonable requirement (*Schroen v. Steinbach Bible College*). Paragraph 61 of the document on this case reads:

The subject nature of the College, and both the external and internal forces that the students were subject to, would impinge on their consciousness, should not be jeopardized in the close, tight, focussed and interactive community that exists at SBC. Considering the unique role of an accounting clerk at SBC and that the unique culture of SBC including its philosophy, mission, faith, beliefs, ethics and the acceptance and

observance of the Statement of Faith are reasonable and necessary to assure achievement of the religious objectives of the College. As a result, and under the circumstances of this case, the requirement that the accounting clerk be of Mennonite Faith to work at SBC constitutes a bona fide and reasonable requirement or qualification for that employment or occupation at SBC (*Schroen v. Steinbach Bible College*, July 26, 1999, p. 12).

Teachers at independent schools, specifically religious schools, are imbued with a sense of positive mission. One administrator explained this sense of mission by stating that teachers within his school "express the belief that they are called to do this work" (Personal conversation with administrator from Watercrest Academy, 2001). This statement is not meant to deny the fact that many secular-school teachers are also imbued with a sense of mission. But adding the religious ingredient to the educational mission makes a very powerful combination. "At religious schools people have a highly developed commitment to an ideal. The best of them aren't simply on a religious mission, but also have high educational objectives. When those energies are harnessed, they can create very good schools" (Sweet, 1997, p. 77).

Not only is it possible that teachers may feel they are at independent schools for a reason bigger than themselves, parents may also believe this. Since education is not neutral, that is, all education teaches some aspect of right and wrong or good and bad, parents are concerned about the type of person teaching their children. Parents understand that, in choosing a particular independent school, they are choosing teachers who subscribe to the culture, the norms and values of that institution. To what extent do parents choose an independent school education because they desire that their children be influenced by teachers who hold a similar world view and who must conform to the school's particular standards?

The Influence of Peers

Peers have a significant influence on a child's life. Frequently, peer influence leads to undesirable social behavior. One student explained it this way. "In public school, kids are more like kids, fighting and doing things adults wouldn't do...you're more likely to do something and not tell your parents. You act differently at school (than you do at home)" (McLean, 1998, p. 38).

Advocates for public schools argue that it is necessary to socialize with peers from different backgrounds (social, cultural, religious, economic, racial, etc.) to acquire a tolerance for others. The positive side of socialization - sharing, respect, communication, getting along, and relating to others - is undoubtedly a necessary goal of a child's education. However, not all socialization is good for a child. Some parents are increasingly concerned that this socialization with peers is leading to experiences with drugs, alcohol, tobacco, harassment, premarital sex, guns, and violence (Jeub, 1994, p. 52; Garza, 1999, p. 12 & Coggins, 1999, p. 4). The draft report on substance abuse and gambling among students, published by the Addiction Foundation of Manitoba, found that 86% of 4680 high school students surveyed have reported using drugs and/or alcohol (Patton, Brown & Dhaliwal, 2001, p. 9). In fact, 50% of students claimed to have used both alcohol and drugs (p.9), and 38% have used marijuana (p.10). In addition, 80% of students surveyed believed that there was nothing wrong with alcohol use while a similar percentage felt that their friends were 'okay' with their choice to use it (p. 14).

A recent letter by a teacher to the editor in Newsweek articulates some of the concerns around the influence of peers. This teacher was explaining her choice to remove her child from the local public school. "I was saddened and disillusioned by the lack of

morals among my fifth-grade students. I was surprised that students this young were dealing with the issues of drugs and the pressure to become sexually active. My colleagues were excellent teachers, but even excellent teachers can do only so much” (Tompkins et al, 1998, p. 22). Is it possible that parents exercising independent school choice do so to escape the influence of peers whom they consider undesirable?

On the other hand, attendance at an independent school with a common culture will also increase the likelihood that students will accept the beliefs and values of this culture. It is also more likely that one’s child will become part of a peer group with similar values, faith, and beliefs. Increasing the likelihood that one’s child will accept the beliefs and values that the parents have may be a significant issue for many parents. Schmidt & Bergmann (2000) in a survey of approximately 100 families that had removed their children from public schools in Manitoba in order to home school them found that 73% indicated that social issues were important factors in making the choice (p. 6). Parents who know in advance exactly what the school stands for and the values that the school will present may be more comfortable in having their child educated in this atmosphere, especially when they believe that other parents may have chosen the school for the same reason.

Parents may be comforted with a knowledge that their children are spending time with peers who come from families with similar values and religious perspectives. The result is that students are far less likely to adopt the attitudes of their secular peers, or peers from other faiths, if they spend all their time with children of the same faith (Sweet, 1997, p. 74). Is the likelihood that a child will not adopt the attitudes of peers that do not share the child’s faith a significant factor causing parents to choose an independent

school? Are parents concerned about peer influences within the local public school? To what extent do parents choose an independent school education because of the desire to ensure that their child is influenced by peers who share similar values?

Parental Input

If there is one common thread among independent schools, it is the fact that the schools are a very clear reflection of the parents who support them, and vice-versa. Brown and Strikeman (1999) claim that parents seek out an independent school education for their children "because it allows them to find an education that is more accountable to them. Such schools reflect a parental activism, in the sense of a keen desire by parents to participate in and supervise the schooling of their children" (p. 10).

The purpose, ideally, of a public school education is to assist in the integration of individuals into society at large (Sweet, 1997, p. 135). Sweet explains that integration is "a basic set of rules which are valid for everyone." However, this basic set of rules does become a controversial issue when these 'rules' conflict with the beliefs of parents. "There is no deeper division of people than that which proceeds from the provocation from finding it necessary to choose what doctrine and whose program public educational officials shall compel youth to unite in embracing" (Duker, 1966, p. 72). When parents do not feel they are included in making decisions about the content of their child's education, they become increasingly frustrated (Wilkinson, 1994, pp. 25-26). Some parents want to be heard. They wish to have a voice in the education of their children, and believe that parental input is more than merely having the opportunity to be involved

in school activities, such as fundraising. It means helping to determine what is actually taught, and how it is taught.

When parents are dissatisfied with conditions in the local school, they may air their displeasure. If this voice is not heard, then it is often those parents who most value the quality of their child's education who will be the first to exit, that is, to opt for involvement in choice programs (Ogawa & Dutton, 1997, p. 334). Parents realize that, because of the huge political and logistical constraints on the public system, these schools do not have the flexibility and options that independent schools have (Holtrop, 1996, p. 74). As a result, parents may choose other educational options because it may be the only way possible to 'get what they want.' The basic idea behind school choice is to transfer responsibilities from school boards that are detached from teachers and parents to the latter two groups" (Hakin, Seidenstat & Bowman, 1994, p. 8). The increased responsibility provides parents with a sense of shared ownership in what they have chosen. For example, some parents do not want their children denied religious education in school, just as they do not want every religion presented as 'equally important.' They want their children taught their particular brand of religion with conviction (Sweet, 1997, p. 82).

The case of Chamberlain vs. the Surrey School Board demonstrates an instance where parents attempted to influence the content of their children's education. In this case, the B.C. Supreme Court decided not to allow the Surrey school board to ban three books depicting same-sex parents from kindergarten and grade 1 classrooms (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2000, p. 2). In this case, there were enough parents who supported

the banning to cause the local school board to initiate this action. In spite of the wishes of these parents to have control in the education of their children, the action was disallowed.

These parents were not permitted to control the education of their children in a manner that they might have wanted. With a curriculum determined by provincial ministries of education, the very nature of a public school system is such that individual parents have little say in what is taught to their children or in how it is taught. Many school decisions are made by large, centralized bureaucracies which are immersed in political, rather than educational processes (Beers & Ellig in Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994, p. 20).

In an effort to alleviate some of society's difficulties, some public schools have created numerous personal development courses and prevention and treatment programs to try to combat bad or self-destructive behavior. Such curricula almost always contain a hidden moral component or subtext. Pre-marital sex, abstinence, self-esteem, anti-racism, anti-sexual harassment, anti-drug, and conflict resolution education are just some of the prevention and treatment programs that have crowded into today's schools. They are part of the expanding affective domain of contemporary education. "All are freighted with suppositions about ideal behavior and what is good and bad. Given a broad range of moral sensitivities among parents and school boards, these courses are among the most incendiary parts of the curriculum" (Sewall, 1999, p. 13).

With parental input limited with respect to educational content, it becomes more likely that individual parents would become displeased with the content of their child's education. As was previously discussed, conflict over educational content is not restricted to religion and religious instruction. Many parents choose to take their children out of

public schools because of the school's teachings on sensitive issues like premarital sex, abortion, same-sex relationships, evolution, questioning of authority, and secular religion (Jeub, 1994, p. 52 & Dahm, 1996, p. 69). They find that, not infrequently, the approach taken in schools is inconsistent with what they teach at home and what they want their children taught at school. Rather than being an extension of their home,

they see the schools working against them in a wide variety of ways. Such people have qualms regarding whether their beliefs are appropriately reflected in the public school system, whether their children are receiving teaching consistent with the values that are being imparted in the home, and whether there is discrimination or even persecution of their children by other children in the public schools (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 24).

Quite logically, parents may not want to be a part of an educational environment in which schools and parents are in opposition. Not only does this environment undermine what is taught, but the parent who taught it.

Controversial issues will vary from school to school and parent to parent. One such controversial issue is sex education. "Sex education includes discussions of the details of intercourse and the use of condoms and other such things. Where this is accompanied by the placing of condoms in the schools as a supposed means of preventing pregnancy on the one hand and the transmission of sexual diseases on the other, parental dissatisfaction is often heightened" (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 22).

The decision of Manitoba's Interlake School Division to allow public health nurses to distribute various forms of contraception to students, without parental consent, is an example of this controversy. One Stonewall parent articulated the concern of many parents by stating: "We feel it is our right to make decisions with our kids. This should not be happening in school" (Janzen, 2000, p. 3). The concern of these parents is so pronounced that these parents have grouped together and threatened to withhold their tax

dollars, saying it is a health issue and a safety issue, as well as a parental rights issue (Landry, 2000, p. 3).

A student in Brockville, Ontario, recently dropped out of school because of her objections to watching violent movies in her English class. Maria Chattillion stated that “she’d rather quit school than be subjected to onscreen violence, sex and foul language” (Gardiner, May 30, p. B1). Incidents such as this might cause concern for parents. The fact is that parents are likely more concerned about the influences facing their children, than are their children. If the Brockville high school student believes the content within her classroom is not appropriate, how bad might it be?

To what extent is the inability to have input in the education of one’s child an influence in choosing an independent school? Do parents choose independent schools in an effort to influence the type of education that their child receives? Is the public schools’ position on controversial issues, such as the ones mentioned, a factor in school choice? That is, do parents who choose an alternate education consider controversial teachings in making their decision?

Standards

Academic

According to Gary Duthler, Edmonton-based executive director of the Federation of Independent schools in Canada, parents are currently focussing more on academics than in the past, and this is influencing their choice of independent schools (Canada and the World Backgrounder, 1998, p. 15). The search for a better education, he claims, is fuelled largely by the growing demands on the public system. As the Fraser Forum

pointed out in 1996, Canadian schools are being asked to turn their attention to social problems, to teach new skills of technology, collaboration, and teamwork, to deliver new curriculum on environmental concerns and issues of violence, racism, and equity (Canada and the World Background, 1998, p. 15). For some parents, the increasing responsibilities public schools are facing may be a concern. "When public schools try to be all things to all people, they fail in their core mission, good teaching and high student achievement" (Holle, 2001, p. A15). Bloom (1996) concurs that there are excessive social concerns for today's public schools make it difficult to meet academic expectations (p. 83).

It may be of no surprise that independent schools tend to post among the largest achievement gains. Whether or not it is factual, there is a perception that independent schools accept only the 'cream of the crop.' There must be some truth to this statement as independent schools do have entrance requirements. In addition, the ability to expel students based on performance and behavior must assist in improving the caliber of students.

Statistics support the perception that independent schools' academic performance is superior. Beers & Ellig (1993) examined the scores of an assortment of schools. Of the schools who performed in the top quartile of their sample, 38 percent were private, while only 2 percent of the low performance schools were private. Statistically speaking, knowing whether a particular school chosen at random was private or public predicts its performance better than any other variable tested (Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994, p. 34).

Wilkinson (1994) states that, in a recent survey of people aged 25 to 34, over 20% could not comprehend a relatively straightforward newspaper article and nearly 30 % could not make the necessary calculations to total a bill from a restaurant or for a catalogue mail order. In addition, "for young people aged 16 to 24, 28% were found to be functionally illiterate and 44% functionally innumerate" (p. 19). The general public often blames schools for their perceived failure in educating children.

For many parents, this knowledge might influence their decision to enroll their child in an independent school. Witte (1991) asked parents to assess the importance of various factors affecting their decision to participate in a choice program and found that educational quality in the chosen school was an important factor 97% of the time (Hetland, 1994, p. 186). In another American study on school choice, Martinez and Thomas (1994) found a large majority of parents choosing independent schools are frustrated with public schools and, when asked to evaluate their children's previous public school, were likely to give average or failing grades (p. 672).

A recent letter to the editor in the Winnipeg Free Press explains the concern about academic standards in the public school is not isolated to American jurisdictions.

It had come to our attention that our daughter was learning her basic grade skills at a level below that of the national average. According to that school (a public school) she was an excellent student, her skill level in Grade 3 was on average a level 5. According to the provincial test, her level in math was that for a Grade 1 student. So off to Sylvan Learning Centers, at a cost of \$45 per hour. I must admit she caught on very quick and it only took about ten lessons.

The following school year we sent her to a private school. With the help of the school, we worked with her all winter long and her marks improved to a B+.

This year we had relocated to Transcona. The trip to the private school proved to be a long journey for a ten year old so we enrolled her in the local public school. On the day we met the teacher we had expressed our concerns from the past public school. 'I wouldn't worry about her' was his

basic response. Well, he didn't worry about her: The math was at a Grade 4 level, and with that she started to struggle again. The spelling was at a Grade 3 level and that's just what we saw. There was no homework, even though we requested it. Their assignments consisted of home reading for 20 minutes a night, which our daughter does every night without fail. Her first weekend assignment came home. How exciting it was to hear that we had a project to help our daughter with. I opened the book with great anticipation and read 'count the seeds on a sesame seed bun'. I can see now how important this is. There is no wrong answer, easy to mark, can't fail, no accountability (Stefanyshyn, Nov. 1999, p. A13).

The sarcasm of this parent aside, it is apparent that there was a distinct dissatisfaction with the academic standard at the two public schools of this experience. On the other hand, the private schools were considered academically more effective, having distinctly higher standards.

This is a view that is not uncommon. Dissatisfaction with schools, based on the belief that students are not learning what they should, is pervasive (Cook, 1999, p. 14). Even teachers may believe that independent schools have higher academic standards. The Phi Delta Kappan's Fifth Poll of Teacher's attitudes towards public schools, found that 79% of teachers felt that it was the high achieving students who were more likely to switch to a private school. Even more startling was the fact that 41% believed that the students would then increase their achievement (Langdon, 1999, p. 615).

Martinez & Thomas found that more than half of parents who exercise choice expect their children will attend a graduate or professional school, while only 17% of non-choosing families expect their children to do so (1994, p. 681). Could it be that these parents are choosing independent schools because they believe that the academic standards are higher, and, therefore, their children will have a better opportunity to succeed? To what extent are parents in Manitoba choosing independent schools because of the belief that their child will receive a better education, one that will prepare them for

future education? Are academic standards a significant motivator for parents exercising choice?

Discipline

Educational quality, however, is about more than academic standards and achievement. It includes behavioral standards. Many parents today are looking for a 'back to the basics' education which includes a more disciplined approach. Parents do not want their child to be prevented from learning by disruptive students. In fact, Witte (1991) found that 98% of parents believed that discipline was an important factor in school choice (Hetland, 1994, p. 186).

One of the few unqualified findings in educational research is the positive correlation between time on task and student learning – the more time, the more learning (Spillane, 1990, p. 97). Parents who want their children to learn are concerned with the amount of time teachers must spend on non-educational issues. The reality is that too much of a public school teacher's time is spent on dealing with disruptive students. In a 1994 poll of American Federation of Teacher members, 49 percent of all teachers and 58 percent of middle school teachers said they currently had a student who "really should not be in their classroom" because of disciplinary problems (Bradley, 1995, p. 2). Private schools do not tolerate that.

In examining one Manitoba independent school's handbook, it was found that the issue of behavior and discipline was extensively discussed. The handbook explains that "the developing of Christ-like character is the foundational goal throughout the school day and throughout every school function" (Watercrest Christian Academy handbook,

2000, p. 11). The handbook continues to explain that characteristics that should be developed in all students include, among 58 characteristics in all, "obedience, respect, self-control, commitment." The handbook also outlines other expectations with respect to conduct. It states that "it is important that students be obedient to authorities for instruction, safety and learning. Discipline also provides training for the student to be immediately obedient to the voice and leading of God. Self-control and order are very important in leading a Godly-life and proper discipline will train the students in these areas" (p. 13). Conduct and behavior, and its related disciplinary guidelines, are addressed for seven pages. Clearly, a high standard of behavior is expected at this school.

Similarly, other independent schools have strict behavioral standards. Lakeshore Elementary also outlines in its handbook, in words remarkably similar to Watercrest Christian Academy, the route to be taken should behavior be a problem.

Lakeshore is a place where students should be able to learn in an atmosphere that is safe, happy and secure. Staff members are chosen for expertise in their area of instruction and in classroom management. Teachers will be assertive in providing for a well-disciplined classroom and general school environment. In most situations, an explanation of expected standard of conduct and a consistent pattern of adherence to the guidelines is sufficient incentive for students to practice acceptable behavior. Positive behavioral attitudes and habits will be reinforced by the staff. Isolated incidents of misbehavior will be dealt with by reprimands, personal counsel, withholding a privilege or the assignment of an appropriate task that will help a child to understand the behavior is not acceptable. Parents will be called in at the early stages if a pattern of misconduct emerges. In situations of persistent misbehavior or gross misconduct, the principal, teacher and parent will be involved in determining an appropriate course of action. *Students who have a long-term negative influence on the school, thereby deteriorating the quality of education for other children, may be required to withdraw from the school* (p. 14) [emphasis added].

It is the last section in italics that gives the independent school the ability to effectively control behavior. Public schools, for the most part, are restricted in their

ability to deal with extreme disciplinary problems. Parents may move their children to private schools because teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn when a handful of disruptive, or even violent students, is allowed to disrupt the school community.

Parents may not believe public schools give their children the individual time and attention necessary to ensure the learning of basic skills under these conditions. In addition to the discipline problems, many public school classroom populations are quite large. This condition may exacerbate the potential for disciplinary difficulties. As a result, too much of a teacher's time must be spent on controlling students, rather than teaching. In contrast, Emily Morris restricts elementary enrollment in classes to 20 students. The advantage this gives is immeasurable, both in terms of the teacher's ability to control the class and provide individual instruction to students.

To what extent do parents who choose independent schools believe that public schools fail to discipline students effectively? Is the choice motivated by the fact that parents believe that their child will not receive the necessary individual attention necessary to develop to their full academic potential?

School atmosphere

When a school does not effectively discipline students, one result is an atmosphere that is not conducive to learning. The tendency is for students to conform to the acceptable standard of the school in which they are enrolled. On the other hand, an environment wherein children understand that it is acceptable to do well will lead to more students doing well academically. The culture of a school is, therefore, an important factor in a child's development, both academically and behaviorally.

One factor relating to school atmosphere is class size. An article in The Manitoba Teacher, citing 'a broad array of research,' points out that smaller class sizes are not necessarily a benefit just because a teacher might have more time to work with each student. The benefits are farther-reaching, encompassing the change in the whole atmosphere of the classroom (Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2001, p. 8). The article explains that in smaller classrooms there are fewer behavior problems, including both the aggressive disruptions and the emotional withdrawal of other students that may be precipitated by noise and stress. "With this reduction in the number of disturbing incidents and the number of disengaged students, there is a change in the affective atmosphere of the classroom, which yields better student outcomes, at least partly due to heightened teacher attitudes and morale" (p. 8). Many private schools limit the number of students in a classroom while public schools are not able to turn students away. Is school atmosphere, and specifically, small class sizes, a reason why parents choose an independent school, instead of their local public school?

Some parents seek to find a particular atmosphere in which to educate their children. In one study, Witte (1991) found that 97% of parents believed that the general atmosphere of the school is an important factor when choosing a school (in Hetland, 1994, p. 186). The particular atmosphere that parents may be seeking could be academically, behaviorally, or even spiritually based. Independent schools can be characterized by a distinct 'telos' (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 145), such as the schooling of children in accordance with a particular pedagogical method or philosophy; the creation of a specific cultural environment in which to educate children, or the development of a

community to satisfy the spiritual and intellectual needs of children (Brown & Strikeman, 1999, p. 19).

Creating a particular environment or atmosphere occurs because of several influences. The first factor influencing the atmosphere is as a result of the hiring process independent schools are able to follow. Teachers, for example, are all expected to pass 'minimum qualifications' which would be in addition to the requirements expected by a typical public school. The private Christian school, for example, requires the presentation of a 'personal statement of faith' on the application form, a statement which must coincide with the school's statement of faith. If the statements of faith are not congruent, the hiring process is terminated. The fact that candidates must agree to a statement of faith that the school presents allows private Christian Schools to select candidates that all decisively share common attitudes and philosophies. Christian schools are able to discriminate on the basis of religion and lifestyle, allowing these schools to hire teachers that have similar morals and values. What results from the hiring process is a school that already possesses the "covenantal community" with a "cause beyond oneself" which Sergiovanni (2001, p. 145) presents as prerequisites of effective schools. Similarly, other independent schools are able to discriminate based on specific requirements of that particular educational philosophy. Independent schools have the advantage of recruiting and selecting teachers that already have shared values and opinions with respect to the goals of the institution.

The ability to ensure that its teachers will exemplify and implement the school's goals also increases the likelihood that an independent school starts with an advantage. A positive culture and climate allow staff to work cooperatively towards common goals. A

real difficulty in achieving consensus in most schools stems from the fact that teachers have very different values, and, as a result, their goals may not be the same. As this lack of consensus about the actual goals of the school becomes more and more manifest, even more detailed and explicit objectives become necessary, which leads to a vicious circle. As consensus disintegrates, it is even more important for schools to codify their goals and responsibilities. As codification becomes more detailed, more frequent argument about the details erupt. Nothing creates dissatisfaction with the job like conflict among colleagues. This conflict is escalated in the community for, if school citizens hold discrepant values, then it becomes more likely that tension, not unity, will occur (Holmes & Wynne, 1989, p. 289).

Schools that effectively achieve a culture conducive to success have been the subject of a vast number of studies. Every major research study on effective (or successful) schools has noted the organizational phenomenon of collective action, agreed-on purpose, and a belief in attainment (Pratzner, 1984; Rozenholtz, 1985). Glickman et. al state: "Clearly, one characteristic of successful schools is that each teacher has 'a cause beyond oneself.' Teachers do not view their work as simply what they carry out within their own four walls. In successful schools, teachers see themselves as part of the larger enterprise of complementing and working with each other to educate students. For successful schools, education is a collective rather than an individual enterprise" (1998, p. 45). Effective schools have strong cultures exhibited in the general atmosphere of the school. Gary Duthler explains that independent schools generally scored higher than the public and separate boards on 1995 provincial tests in Alberta

because independent schools have a “common set of values” among students, parents, and teachers, which does not exist in larger systems (Jenkinson, 1996, p. 38).

The atmosphere of a school has a profound effect on the effectiveness of that institution. Holmes and Wynne (1989) state that it is the long-term goal of schools to gradually form a school staff and a pool of students (and families) with generally congruent values. Such a process can provide a variety of benefits to the school: in particular, it creates the base for the symbolic and intellectual expression of these collective values (p. 249). This resulting community of common culture reflects the values and morals of the home.

Independent schools may have the advantage of beginning with a common purpose whereas the public school must come together with a diverse clientele to determine what it should be. It is possible that many parents may appreciate this reality and decide to choose an independent school for this reason. Is the ability to choose a specific culture, or environment, a significant issue for parents exercising choice?

Summary

The review of literature has shown that there are many potential reasons for parents’ choosing an independent school. The review of school choice literature in jurisdictions other than Manitoba has suggested a basic framework from which to begin. This framework provided the basis for the six categories presented in this chapter. Factors that may influence the choice of an independent school include the desire to have religious instruction as part of a student’s education. Alternately, this choice may stem from a perception that there is an attitude of intolerance towards religion within public

schools. In addition, parents may believe that independent schools are more effective at instilling a strong sense of morality because of a more definite vision.

Parents may choose independent schools because they believe that such schools are better able to provide an emotionally and physically safe environment. Parents may also believe that their child(ren) will not be negatively influenced by peers and teachers in independent schools. In addition, the independent school may not be negatively influenced by some of the societal problems affecting public schools.

Another potential factor influencing parental choice for an independent school is the desire to have greater input into the education of their child(ren). Some parents may want greater control over what is taught and by whom. Many parents may also believe that independent schools have higher standards, both academically and behaviorally.

Finally, parental choice of an independent school may be influenced by a belief that these schools have a more positive atmosphere because of common goals, like-minded clientele and employees, smaller class sizes and better discipline.

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the extent to which these factors have influenced independent school choice in the province of Manitoba. The methodology used to determine this information is explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the process of data gathering and analysis utilized for this study. A brief discussion of the instrument will begin the chapter, and that will be followed by the process undertaken to distribute it. A description of each of the participating schools then follows. A presentation of response rates concludes the chapter.

Questionnaire

Data for the study has been obtained from a questionnaire sent out to parents of grade one children who were attending independent schools. The questionnaire was constructed using the questions presented in chapter 2 which were considered to be possible factors influencing choice. The instrument was divided into four parts. Part A included four background questions relating to the parents' decision-making process. Parts B and C were made up of lists of twenty-eight statements relating to questions in public schools (Part B) and the school of choice (Part C). Each of the statements was to be responded to via a five point Likert-type scale which asked parents to rate their perception of conditions within schools (see Appendix 1 for the complete questionnaire). Part D requested parents to rank order their five most significant reasons for choosing an independent school.

Pre-testing of the questionnaire was performed to minimize any possible confusion or misunderstanding. Suggestions made by the four individuals who responded to the pilot questionnaire led to several adjustments to the final questionnaire. The

suggestions related to the length of the questionnaire and the format. Data from the responses were not used in the study.

The use of a questionnaire has the benefit of magnifying the scope of perspectives while concurrently limiting the potential responses. Alternately, limiting the potential responses may not allow every parent to present his or her perspective accurately.

However, every effort was made to allow for the diversity of responses from subjects that would accurately reflect their bases for making the choice that they did. In addition, the statements were phrased so as not to present bias for/against the public school or private school. To encourage subjects to depict themselves in an honest manner, all participating parents were assured that their responses would remain confidential. As well, all questionnaires were completed anonymously.

The Schools

It was the objective of this study to determine the reasons parents had for choosing an independent school over a public school. Acknowledging that there are a variety of independent schools in Manitoba, an effort was made to represent a cross-section of them. There are 56 independent funded schools and 29 non-funded independent schools listed in Schools in Manitoba (Manitoba Education and Training, 2001, p. 48-52). Some interesting observations can be made from this list. One observation is that the majority of independent schools in the province of Manitoba are religiously affiliated. For example, only seven of those listed in the directory have no religious affiliation whatsoever. Of the religiously affiliated schools, one is an Islamic school, three are Jewish, nine are Mennonite, 26 are Christian (that is they include the word Christian in their title), 22 are also religiously affiliated (Catholic, Lutheran,

Anglican) as indicated by names such as 'Faith Academy', and 'St. Aidan's Anglican School.' It should be noted here that by 'labeling' a school 'Christian' as opposed to Mennonite, Lutheran, Catholic, or some other religious denomination is not meant to be a way of differentiating the schools. Rather, the use of the label 'Christian' is simply identifying the school as having a religious affiliation. In fact, it is the 'label' that each of these schools uses to identify themselves, as it is included in their official name. The fact that of the four schools selected to this study, three have a religious affiliation adds significance to the findings.

In comparing the schools listed in the document Schools in Manitoba (Manitoba Education and Training) from the year 1997 to the year 2000, some other interesting facts arise. The first, is that there are eight new funded independent schools and four new non-funded independent schools in Manitoba over those three years. There is one new school for each of the Muslim, Jewish, Lutheran, Anglican, and Catholic religiously affiliations. Of the other seven, five are identified as 'Christian.' This would seem to indicate that it is the religiously affiliated schools that are growing the fastest. The fact that some Christian schools are the fastest growing schools in the province is supported, in a recent Winnipeg Free Press article. Nick Martin (May 22, 2001) states that "Linden Christian School is set to become Manitoba's largest independent school: Calvin Christian School is pondering a bid to purchase an empty public school in Transcona: and Springs Christian Academy has a lengthy waiting list based solely on word of mouth" (p. A15). Selecting religiously affiliated schools was an important consideration in selecting schools.

Originally, the administrators of six schools were contacted by letter (See appendix 2) to ascertain their willingness to participate in this study. These schools are listed using pseudonyms in Table 5 below.

Table 5
Schools asked to participate in study

School	Type
Watercrest Academy	Private Evangelical Christian.
Lakeshore Elementary	Private Mennonite.
Jordan Franklin	Private Jewish.
Emily Morris	Private elite academic.
St. Stephanie	Private Catholic.
Braestone	Private elite academic

Several days after the letters were mailed, the school administrators were contacted by phone. Of these schools, Watercrest Academy, Lakeshore Elementary and Emily Morris agreed immediately. In fact, an administrator of one of the schools made contact prior to receiving a phone call. Administrators in each of these three schools also asked if they could include a letter of support in the package that was to be sent to parents. Their willingness to be of assistance was remarkable.

The three schools that rejected the opportunity to participate in the study did so for different reasons. The administrator from Jordan Franklin stated that the school was not comfortable with the study as outlined. The administrator from Braestone curtly informed me that they were simply not interested. With regard to St. Stephanie, each of the three times that the school was contacted the secretary claimed that the administrator was unavailable. On the third attempt, I asked when a good time to call might be. The secretary explained that it was the administrator's last year before retiring and that she might not return to school this year. At this point, a letter was sent to another Catholic

school, St. Francis. Once contact was made with the administrator from this school cooperation was achieved. As a result, four schools agreed to participate in the study. Since the school year was nearing an end, it was decided that no other schools would be contacted.

Each of the schools was quite comfortable with distributing the questionnaire packages to parents. The administrators agreed to place the names and addresses of the parents of one grade one classroom on the packages provided. Each package contained the questionnaire, a letter of consent, and a self-addressed postage-paid return envelope, and in the case of three of the schools, a letter of support from the administrator.

Packages were numbered in the event that an insufficient number of questionnaires were returned. However, since the schools kept record of the number and corresponding names, confidentiality was maintained.

The questionnaire was sent to the parents of grade one children on the assumption that the reasons for parents' making their educational choice were still relatively fresh in their minds. In examining choice issues in Great Britain, West, et al. (1998) found that parents who chose private schools began thinking about the school their child would attend when the child was quite young. The fact that parents who have made alternative choices have thought much about this choice is a major reason for choosing parents of grade one children.

Choosing parents of grade one children is also important in that these parents have most likely made the independent school their initial choice. That is, parents who choose an alternative education after several years in a public school often do so because of a bad experience in the public school. It is not their first choice. Friesen (1998) found

that five of seven cases indicated that it was a negative experience in their local school that prompted the move to the private school (p. 212). Limiting subjects to those who chose an independent school originally is considered significant for these reasons. A description of each of the schools follows.

Watercrest Academy

Watercrest Academy is a Nursery to Senior 4 independent school, with 576 students distributed relatively uniformly throughout the grades. The school has experienced recent rapid growth, as demonstrated by the increase in the number of graduates from senior 4 (grade 12) over the past few years. In 1998, the school graduated 9 students; in 2001, 25 students graduated. The projection for 2003 is two classes, approximately 50 students. In addition, the school is adding another kindergarten class next year. At present, these students are housed in two different locations. In the future, the intention is to have one central educational campus.

Watercrest Academy is considered an Evangelical Christian independent school. The school's handbook explains how this religious ideology is reflected in the school's educational philosophy:

Watercrest Academy's philosophy is based on the Word of God. The primary objective and purpose of the school is to work together with the parents in training the students in the way of life presented in the Scriptures while giving them a high quality education. The students will also be instructed in right thinking, good conduct, and clean living in the light of the principles of God's Word. Emphasis is placed upon the acquisition of facts and concepts in the areas of school study, leading to the students' developing and exercising thinking processes. Methods of teaching proven to be effective are utilized with a constant search for better methods. Realizing differences in innate ability, we encourage and expect each student to do his/her best. We believe the traditional system of education educates the mind and builds character. We believe in training

the child in righteousness (their relationship with others) and in godliness (their relationship with God).

Character training is an important element in Watercrest Academy. We believe that the heart of character training is obedience (deciding to do right), which will eventually cultivate an inner self-discipline and is essential to the emotional, physical, social, and spiritual well-being of the student. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. Discipline is administered firmly but fairly. To obey, to do right, to love God and family, and to always measure one's attitudes according to the principles laid out in the Scriptures are characteristics we strive to instill in each student, thus equipping him/her for their role in God's plan for their lives and for their proper place in society (p. 4).

It is explained that the school follows the Manitoba Curriculum in all subject areas but 'presents each concept from a Biblical perspective (p. 27). All teachers must have a Bachelor of Education degree.

The handbook further explains the atmosphere within the school by including the school's 'statement of faith' and its educational goals. Teachers wishing to be employed at the school must agree to both of these. In addition, the admissions procedure explains that "it is important that at least one parent and the student(s) must give clear testimony of Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior and must be involved in a Christian Church" (p. 8).

Tuition ranges from \$1025 for Kindergarten to \$2125 for Senior 1 to Senior 4. Bussing is provided for annual fees ranging from a minimum of \$325 for Kindergarten to a maximum of \$1050 for three or more children (p.59).

Lakeshore Elementary

Lakeshore elementary, founded in 1981, is a Kindergarten to grade 6 school affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren Church. That is, the curriculum is "designed to lead students to a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith

interpreted in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition” (Lakeshore Elementary Handbook, p. 3).

The Mennonite Church began as a branch of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Its roots are in the Anabaptist movement or the radical reformation. The term ‘anabaptist’ was at first a nick-name given by persecutors to the group because membership in this new movement was gained by re (ana)-baptism on the basis of a conscious decision of faith in Christ during youth or adulthood. The name Mennonite is derived from an early leader of the movement, Menno Simons (p. 3).

The school operates under three guiding principles. These are

- 1) The centrality of Jesus Christ as a key to an understanding of the Scriptures and of Christian faith and life. “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11)
- 2) The Bible is the authoritative guide for faith and life.
- 3) In the education process, all truth is God’s truth (p. 7).

The school strives to provide a high standard of instruction in all prescribed courses of the Department of Education in Manitoba, as well as courses designed to lead the student to a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith interpreted by the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition (p. 5). Also, the school ensures that areas of study of particular interest to the school’s Mennonite constituency, such as the German language and church music, receive due attention. All of this is done in the context of the guiding principles cited earlier. There are approximately 175 students at the Lakeshore campus.

Tuition costs range from \$1115 for Kindergarten to \$2105 for grade 6. Bussing costs \$475 per student or \$700 for a family. In addition, the school charges a \$35 registration fee, an annual \$20 society fee (to allow families to become voting members), and a \$125 capital replenishment fee (to replace and update computer, bus and other equipment).

Emily Morris

Emily Morris, founded in 1820, is a university-preparatory independent school committed to students in their pursuit of academic excellence. The school attempts to develop confidence, compassion, integrity, and self-discipline through the exceptional academic, athletic, and cultural programs. The culture of the school is further explained through the outline of 'ideals' in the school's code of conduct:

"The academic standards are extremely high. We expect our students to have equally high standards of behavior and to commit themselves to the ideals of the school. We want a vital, healthy, open community in which we can all best learn and grow. The specific ideals in our community are:

- 1) the willingness to risk failure in the pursuit of excellence
- 2) the dignity provided by all forms of hard work
- 3) respect for the rights of others
- 4) the commitment of service both in the school community and to the broader community outside the school
- 5) the willingness to accept the responsibility for the consequences of our actions
- 6) the moral and intellectual commitment to openness in all aspects" (p. 32).

The school is focused on a disciplined approach to studies and behavior. In fact, the entire handbook has a distinctly different flavor from the previous two schools. While the two Christian schools focus on the beliefs and values that may separate them from other schools, Emily Morris boasts of its proud traditions and standards. Much of the handbook is dedicated to outlining the school's structures and heritage.

Emily Morris has students from Kindergarten to Senior 4 (grade 12), but only boys may attend in the elementary years (Kindergarten to grade six). At present, approximately 700 students are enrolled. Tuition is high (approaching \$10,000), but bursaries and scholarships are available. In fact, the endowment funds provide annual tuition aid of \$442,000. However, the objective of the assistance programs is to "attract gifted and talented young scholars and athletes to the school; to provide aid to qualified

students who could not otherwise afford to attend the school; to provide aid to worthy students enrolled in the school whose parents encounter unforeseen financial difficulties; and to promote academic excellence in the school” (p. 10).

St. Francis

St. Francis, founded in 1960, is a Catholic school and is guided by its affiliation to this Christian denomination. Up until 1986, the school was operated by the Oblate Sisters. The school “strives to provide a rich educational environment that fosters the spiritual academic, social and emotional growth of its students. It is a Christian community of learners dedicated to nurturing independent, disciplined and successful students. To help promote Christian values, religious instruction is compulsory for all who attend” (p.1).

Students are expected to strive:

- work to the best of their ability.
- respect the cultural and religious differences that exist.
- to use courteous, respectful and sensitive language to communicate with peers and teachers.
- to obey rules.
- follow the guidelines of the dress code.

Tuition ranges from \$600 for Kindergarten, to \$1100 for other grades. The school has students enrolled from pre-kindergarten to grade 8. Enrollment is approximately 225 students, with one class per grade. Tuition may be offset by parents’ participation in a school organized Bingo.

Responses

Palys (1997) states that a return rate of 40% is considered good, but a rate of somewhere between 10 and 40 percent is more likely with impersonal mail-out questionnaires (146). This study originally sent out 96 questionnaires. Of these, 54 or 56.25% were returned. This return rate is considered excellent. Interestingly, the administrator of Emily Morris explained to me that the school had just completed a questionnaire with its parent population. He stated that the response rate was 38%. For these reasons, a second mailing was not conducted. Table 6 outlines the response rates of each of the four schools.

Table 6
Questionnaire response rates by school

School	Number mailed out	Number returned (% in brackets)
Watercress Academy	25	16 (64%)
Lakeshore Elementary	25	18 (72%)
Emily Morris	20	12 (60%)
St. Francis	26	8 (31%)
Total	96	54 (56%)

The low response rate from St. Francis may be attributed to the fact that this was the only school where the administrator did not include a letter of support for the study in the package mailed to parents. Incidentally, only one of the parents who responded asked for a copy of the study results.

CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS OF DATA

As explained earlier, potential factors for choosing an independent school have been grouped into six categories. Each of these categories could relate to a positive choice for an independent school or the negative choice away from a public school. Clearly, there is overlap for each of these categories. For example, parents may choose to remove their child from a particular public school because they feel that their child is not being challenged academically. On the other hand, parents may choose a particular independent school because of a belief that this school will challenge their child academically. The reality, however, is that in choosing an independent school for academic reasons, one is both rejecting the public school and choosing the independent school. For this reason, the analysis will look at each category from both perspectives.

Each of the statements in the questionnaire has been grouped to match one of the categories. This breakdown is outlined in table 7, below. It should be noted that the instrument is broken into two parts, each with 28 statements. These 28 statements are related, in that in one part of the questionnaire, the statement refers to the school of choice, and in the second part of the questionnaire the statement refers to public schools in general. The breakdown, then, is identical for both parts of the questionnaire.

Table 7
Questionnaire statement grouping

Category	Questionnaire Number
Religion	4, 12, 14, 18
Safety	1, 5, 15
External Influences	11, 15, 21, 23, 25, 27
Parental Input	3, 9, 10, 22, 28
Standards	2, 6, 7, 8, 17, 19, 26, 28
School Atmosphere	13, 16, 20, 22, 24, 28

Every effort was made to include all possible reasons parents might have for choosing an independent school. Based on the qualitative responses submitted, there is a good likelihood that this has been accomplished. This claim is made for three reasons. First of all, the factors were gleaned from extensive literature examination. Secondly, when given the opportunity to submit "any other conditions not included in the lists" that "played a significant part" in the decision to enroll their children in an independent school, very few parents did. Of those who did, many only rephrased reasons given in the questionnaire. For example, several parents from one school stated that the most significant reason for choosing this particular school was "teaching a personal relationship with Jesus Christ" and "having a school where God's word is in all the work." These reasons are very similar to opinion statement number 18 "Instruction about the Bible and God are important" or number 4 "Religious instruction is an important part of the curriculum". In fact, several respondents made statements such as, "You hit the nail on the head" or "right on" when asked if there were other conditions. The third reason for the claim is that, almost without exception, parents listed the top five most significant reasons for making a choice from the questionnaire itself.

One difficulty in examining the data is, as might be expected, that parents from a particular independent school each had specific factors that were important to them. As a result, factors considered important for parents may vary from school to school. For example, the most obvious factor that is more important for some parents than others is religion. Parents choosing a Christian school are likely to consider this factor to be more important than parents choosing an elite academic school. The researcher's opinion is confirmed by the data.

Another aspect of the analysis that should be noted is that statements were phrased both in the positive and the negative. In order to maintain a consistent breakdown for these tables, some responses were reversed. For example, a response of 'strongly agree' that there are too many disruptive and unruly students was interpreted to mean that the parent(s) 'strongly disagree' that there are not too many disruptive and unruly students. Adjusting the response scale in such a way made grouping within tables more efficient and effective.

The analysis that follows will draw heavily from tables displayed in this chapter. There are three groups of tables. The first type of table could be called average responses (Tables 8 & 9). These data were obtained by averaging the responses from each statement on the questionnaire. For example, if there were 12 respondents for a particular question, with 2 strongly agreeing, 3 agreeing, 4 remaining neutral, and 3 disagreeing, the average would be 2.7 $\{(1+1+2+2+2+3+3+3+3+4+4+4)/12\}$. Therefore, an average response approaching 1.0 would indicate a near unanimous 'strongly agree', while an average response approaching 5.0 would indicate a near unanimous 'strongly disagree.'

The second group of tables (Tables 10-17) follows the breakdown of the questionnaire as outlined earlier in this chapter. That is, each statement on the questionnaire was grouped into one of the six categories (religion, standards, atmosphere, parental involvement, safety and external influences). The results are reported separately for each school. The third group of tables (Tables 18-29) presents the information from the second group of tables, reporting the percentage totals for the entire number of respondents in the study.

The last table (Table 30) lists the number of anecdotal responses in each category, i.e. the number of parents who gave a particular reason for choosing their school as being in the top five most significant. For example, the number 4 in column one of the row corresponding to the factor “seeking improved physical safety,” indicates that four families felt that this was the number one reason for choosing their particular independent school.

An analysis of the data follows.

Individual Responses

In examining individual responses with respect to conditions in the public schools (Tables 8&9), there are several statements that elicited the most extreme opinions. Taken collectively, the most unanimous opinion was that parents disagreed that class sizes in public schools were small. Interestingly, as suggested by anecdotal responses in the questionnaire, this was not a significant reason for parents to choose an independent school.

Taken individually, the most consistent response with respect to conditions in the public schools given by Watercrest Academy parents, was that they were unanimous in strongly disagreeing with the statement that public schools provide adequate religious instruction. With near unanimity, Lakeshore Elementary also responded most consistently to this statement. The most unanimous response for Emily Morris, with nearly all respondents strongly agreeing, came for the statement that public schools are overburdened. Consensus among St. Francis respondents was a bit elusive. The most consistent responses came for the statements, “public schools provide adequate religious instruction” and “public schools teach morals and values,” with a large majority strongly

disagreeing with each of these statements. A closer examination of the individual schools will follow later.

Table 8
Conditions in the public school
Average Responses (1 indicating 'strongly agree' and 5 indicating 'strongly disagree')

	Watercrest	Lakeshore	Emily Morris	St. Francis	Average
1. Children are physically safe in public schools.	3.4	3.0	2.7	3.0	3.0
2. Public school teachers are effective.	2.8	2.4	2.7	2.3	2.6
3. Instructional content often conflicts with teachings of the home.	1.4	2.8	3.9	3.6	2.9
4. Public schools provide adequate religious instruction.	4.9	4.7	2.6	4.1	3.9
5. Children are emotionally safe in public schools.	4.3	3.6	3.1	3.4	3.6
6. Public schools have effective discipline policies.	4.4	3.8	3.5	3.5	3.8
7. Public schools provide quality education.	3.3	2.5	3.0	3.3	3.0
8. Public schools challenge students intellectually.	3.3	2.7	3.6	2.9	3.1
9. There are opportunities for parental involvement in public schools.	2.3	2.4	1.8	2.9	2.4
10. There is opportunity for parental input in public schools.	2.7	2.8	2.2	2.9	2.7
11. Professionals in public schools are good role models.	3.3	2.8	2.1	3.1	2.8
12. Public schools teach morals and values.	4.1	3.4	3.0	4.1	3.7
13. Public schools are an enjoyable place to be for students.	3.3	2.8	2.5	3.0	2.9
14. Public schools accept religious perspectives.	4.2	3.6	2.9	3.8	3.6
15. There are too many disruptive and unruly students in public schools.	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3
16. Public schools provide an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.	3.3	2.8	3.3	3.1	3.1
17. Academic expectations are high in public schools.	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.5
18. Instruction about the Bible and God is important in public schools.	4.1	3.6	4.2	3.6	3.9
19. Public schools effectively control disruptive and unruly students.	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.9
20. Students feel a sense of belonging in public schools.	3.3	2.7	2.8	3.1	3.0
21. Illicit drugs are prevalent in public schools.	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.4
22. Parents feel a sense of belonging in public schools.	3.1	3.1	2.7	2.9	3.0
23. Alcohol consumption is prevalent among students in public schools	2.1	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.7
24. Public schools are communities of people sharing a common goal.	3.6	3.1	2.7	2.9	3.1
25. Public schools are overburdened.	2.3	1.9	1.6	2.6	2.1
26. Behavioral expectations of students are high in public schools.	4.0	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.5
27. Students in public schools are strongly influenced by a culture of sexual promiscuity.	2.1	2.4	3.0	2.9	2.6
28. Class sizes are small in public schools.	3.9	4.3	4.2	4.0	4.1

Table 9
Conditions in chosen school
Average Responses (1 indicating 'strongly agree' and 5 indicating 'strongly disagree')

	Watercrest	Lakeshore	Emily Morris	St. Francis	Average
1. Children are physically safe.	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.8
2. Teachers are effective.	1.6	1.7	1.6	2.0	1.7
3. Instructional content often conflicts with teachings of the home.	4.9	4.3	4.2	3.8	4.3
4. Religious instruction is an important part of the curriculum.	1.0	1.4	3.8	1.9	2.0
5. Children are emotionally safe.	1.5	1.7	2.2	2.0	1.9
6. The school has an effective discipline policy.	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.6
7. The school provides a quality education.	1.4	1.7	1.3	1.8	1.6
8. The school adequately challenges students intellectually.	1.6	1.7	1.2	2.0	1.4
9. There is opportunity for parental involvement.	1.3	1.1	2.4	1.1	1.5
10. There is opportunity for parental input.	1.5	1.3	2.2	1.8	1.7
11. Teachers are good role models.	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.6
12. The school teaches morals and values.	1.1	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.4
13. The school is an enjoyable place to be for children.	1.3	1.4	1.8	1.3	1.5
14. The school accepts religious perspectives.	1.9	1.9	2.1	1.5	1.9
15. There are few disruptive and unruly students in the school.	2.4	2.4	2.1	2.9	2.5
16. The school provides an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.	1.5	1.7	1.3	1.8	1.6
17. Academic expectations are high.	1.6	1.7	1.1	1.8	1.6
18. Instruction about the Bible and God is important in the school.	1.0	1.6	4.0	1.8	2.1
19. The school effectively controls disruptive and unruly students.	1.8	2.1	1.8	2.1	2.0
20. The school provides a sense of belonging for students.	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.6
21. The use of illicit drugs is prevalent.	4.8	4.1	3.0	4.4	4.1
22. The school provides a sense of belonging for the parents.	1.7	1.7	2.1	1.8	1.8
23. The use of alcohol is prevalent.	4.9	4.1	3.2	4.3	4.1
24. The school is a community of people sharing a common goal.	1.6	1.5	2.1	1.9	1.8
25. The school's philosophy mirrors that of the home.	1.6	1.5	1.7	2.1	1.7
26. Behavioral expectations of students are high.	1.3	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.6
27. Students are strongly influenced by a culture of sexual promiscuity.	4.8	4.1	2.9	3.9	3.9
28. Class sizes are small.	3.0	2.7	2.3	3.0	2.8

Returning to an examination of the collective responses with respect to conditions in the public school, the following conclusions seem appropriate. Firstly, the responses

are neither as extreme nor as unanimous as the responses with respect to conditions in the school of choice. Most of the opinions, when averaged for all four schools, approach neutrality. For example, average responses to the statement that instructional content often conflicts with teachings of the home ranged from 1.4 (strongly agreeing) to 3.9 (disagreeing), while the collective average was 2.9, indicating a general position of neutrality on this issue. However, there are several statements that did result in a more unanimous and extreme average score.

Again, following the apparent trend indicating the importance of religion as a factor in choice for these parents, the four statements relating to this issue were all relatively unanimous. The statement that public schools provide adequate religious instruction had a score of 3.9, indicating an 'average' response of disagree. Also the statement that instruction about the Bible and God is important in public schools had a score of 3.9. The other two statements relating to religion had scores of 3.7 and 3.6. These scores indicate that parents disagree that public schools provide adequate religious instruction.

Another trend in the average collective response is that the parents in this study do not believe that public schools are able to provide a disciplined, safe environment. The relatively strong consensus on the statements, "children are emotionally safe in public schools" (3.9), "public schools effectively control disruptive and unruly students" (3.9), and "public schools have effective discipline policies" (3.8), indicates that collectively, parents disagree with these statements. In other words, it is the opinion of these parents that the public school is ineffective in administering discipline. Add to this the fact that parents agree that "there are too many disruptive and unruly students in public schools"

(2.3), and “public schools are overburdened” (2.1). In addition to the fact that parents indicate a concern with respect to the schools’ ability to control the environment in the classroom, the parents also express a concern that the environment is becoming more difficult to control.

An examination of responses with respect to conditions in the school of choice produced much more unanimous opinions. While responses for 17 out of the 28 questions relating to public schools had an average response approaching neutrality (scores ranging from 2.5 to 3.5), only 2 questions relating to the school of choice elicited a neutral average response.

When averaging the responses for all four schools, the two most consistent individual responses were to the statements “the school adequately challenges students intellectually” (1.4) and “the school teaches morals and values” (1.4). The general category that provided the most unanimous average responses was standards. It is clear that parents are very satisfied with the academic standards of their chosen school. All of the statements relating to academic standards elicited strong agreement as indicated by the fact that all had average scores in the 1.5 range, which is an average of strongly agree and agree. Parents felt that “teachers are effective” (1.7), “the school has an effective discipline policy” (1.6), “the school provides a quality education” (1.6), “the school adequately challenges students intellectually” (1.4), “academic expectations are high” (1.6), and “behavioral expectations are high” (1.6).

Religion, as discussed earlier, was a significant issue for three of the schools. It was not significant for Emily Morris School. As a result, on average, the responses

relating to religion were not as unanimous. This fact also affected the responses relating to public schools.

Considering that only one average response approached neutrality, parents appear to be satisfied with all aspects of their chosen school. Interestingly, the one response approaching neutrality (2.8) was for class size. Collective support for the chosen schools is quite convincing, but this is not an unexpected finding since the National Post/ Global poll found that, when compared to every other aspect of Canadian education, private schools have earned the greatest public trust. They are most likely to be singled out as doing the best job and the least likely to be singled out for doing the worst job (Smyth, 2001, p. E9). Not surprisingly, then, an analysis of individual responses also showed overwhelming satisfaction with the chosen school. The analysis of each school's responses gives a clearer picture of why respondents from a particular school make that choice. The analysis of responses for each school follows.

Individual School Responses

Watercrest Academy

Of all of the possible factors influencing choice for parents of Watercrest Academy, religion was clearly the most significant. No other group of factors elicited similarly extreme responses. In general, 85% of parents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that religious instruction was sufficient in public schools. In examining individual questionnaire statements, the single one that gave the most extreme response was "public schools provide adequate religious instruction." Parents unanimously 'strongly disagreed' with this statement. Alternately, parents unanimously 'strongly agreed' that their school of choice considered religious instruction as important.

In addition to the responses from this statement, parents also felt strongly about related factors. When responses were averaged, those that rated most consistently included the statements “instructional content often conflicts with teachings of the home” (1.4), “public schools teach morals and values” (4.1), “public schools accept religious perspectives” (4.2), and “instruction about the Bible and God is important in public schools” (4.1). On average, parents from Watercrest Academy responded consistently to these statements:

Responses in Section D also strongly indicate a desire on the part of parents to have instruction for their children that coincides with that of the home. One part of this is religious instruction, but not simply instruction about religion. These parents want a Christian education. One parent explained it this way: “The school’s teachings are consistent with what is learned at home and in church. There are no outside pressures from what is acceptable in today’s society. i.e. media attitudes, etc.” The parent continued “We chose the school because of teaching which included

- knowing who you are in Jesus Christ
- acceptance of all people as what they are...God’s creations
- learning to be the best you can be... as God meant for you to be”.

Several other parents believed the most significant factor in choosing this school was that the school taught about “a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” Clearly, the religious component is one that is especially significant for these parents.

In addition, parents continually stated that their most important reason for choosing the school was that the school’s philosophy mirrored that of the home and the school’s teachings were consistent with that of the home. One questionnaire stated that the “school promotes the same morals/ values and worldview that we instill at home

(Bible-based education)” as being the most important reason. Parents also wanted teachers and peers to have the same (Christian) values. These responses would seem to indicate that the most significant reason parents chose Watercrest Academy was related to religious instruction and corresponding Christian atmosphere.

The other most consistent trend in parental responses relates to student behavior. These parents clearly express concern over the level of safety in the school. Next to the previously mentioned religious theme, the four statements from the questionnaires that drew the most extreme responses were: “children are emotionally safe in public schools” (4.3), “public schools have effective discipline policies” (4.4), “public schools effectively control disruptive and unruly students” (4.1), and “behavioral expectations are high in public schools” (4.0). Parents disagreed fairly strongly with each of these statements.

Generally, parents from Watercrest Academy responded more strongly about all factors than did parents from other schools. This group of parents was most dissatisfied with every aspect of a public school education. That is, a greater percentage of parents felt strongly about opinion statements than did parents from other schools.

For example, while parents from all schools felt that external influences were a concern, parents from Watercrest Academy responded most strongly. Also, while the opportunity for parental input did not seem to be as crucial a factor for parents collectively, the parents of Watercrest Academy responded most negatively about the perceived opportunities for involvement, with 38% believing it to be insufficient.

Safety is one of the more significant issues for parents of all schools, but parents of Watercrest most consistently expressed this concern, since only 8% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that public schools were adequate in this area. One parent explained

that “my other child, if he would have gone to this school never would have been teased as much, he would not have been bullied in the washroom, etc.”

Standards, both academically and behaviorally, are a significant issue for parents of all schools, but again, parents of Watercrest Academy are the most opinionated on the issue, with only 13% believing standards are high enough. Finally, these parents are the most critical of the atmospheres of public schools, with 12% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that public schools have positive atmospheres.

Support for Watercrest Academy is quite remarkable. Only two statements on the questionnaire resulted in opinions that were not nearly unanimously supportive. Parents were quite neutral on “class sizes are small” and “there are few disruptive and unruly students in the school.” As mentioned earlier, the most significant issue for parents of the Academy was religion. These parents felt that their school was doing an exceptional job in this area, with 84% strongly agreeing. Parents also were quite pleased with the school’s position in terms of safety, with 92% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that safety was sufficient. Ninety-five percent of parents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that external influences were a concern in their chosen school. Satisfaction was also high in the area of parental input, with 83% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had enough opportunity to be involved. However, satisfaction in this area was greater in two of the other schools, possibly due to the fact that both are smaller schools.

Somewhat surprising were the responses related to standards and school atmosphere. Support was strong, as in the other areas. In fact, 86% agreed or strongly agreed that standards were high. Remarkably, this was the lowest level of satisfaction of any of the four schools. Similarly, Watercrest parents agreed or strongly agreed that the

school had a positive atmosphere at a rate of 84%. Again, however, this is the lowest level of satisfaction of any of the four schools. In other words, the other schools showed a higher level of satisfaction in these two areas.

When one takes into consideration the entire set of responses from parents of Watercrest Academy students, it would seem that religion and external influences are the key issues. Support and satisfaction for the school are consistently high. Due to the lack of neutral opinions and the high degree of support in every category, more so than any other of the schools in the study, parent responses seem to indicate nearly complete satisfaction with their school of choice. Tables 10 and 11 show the responses for Watercrest Academy.

Table 10
Responses of parents from Watercrest Academy (in %)
Opinions about Public Schools

Statement	Number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Religion in public school is sufficient	64	2	8	6	27	58	0
Safety in public school is sufficient	48	2	6	27	40	25	0
External influences are a concern in public schools	96	23	36	27	8	5	0
There is sufficient opportunity for parental 'say'	80	4	24	35	14	24	0
Standards are high in public schools	127	0	13	27	40	20	0
Public schools have positive atmospheres	96	2	10	45	31	11	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 11
Responses of parents from Watercrest Academy (in %)
Opinions about Chosen School

Statement	Number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Religion is sufficient	63	84	6	3	0	2	5
Safety is sufficient	48	38	54	2	2	4	0
External influences are a concern	96	1	1	3	32	63	0
There is sufficient opportunity for parental 'say'	79	50	33	14	2	0	0
Standards are high	125	48	38	12	2	0	0
The school has a positive atmosphere	92	41	43	13	2	0	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Lakeshore Elementary

Based on the responses to opinion statements in the questionnaire, the most significant factor in school choice for parents of Lakeshore Elementary is the opportunity for parental input and involvement in a small community of like-minded people. These parents clearly feel the strongest about the atmosphere of their chosen school, with 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the school has a positive one. Also, parents felt more strongly than the parents of any of the other schools with respect to the opportunity for parental input in their chosen school, with 88% agreeing or strongly agreeing that there was sufficient opportunity to do so.

In general, parents of students in Lakeshore Elementary were less critical of public schools, with very few statements eliciting extreme responses. In each category,

parents had similar opinions as those of Watercrest Academy, but not as extreme. For example, while 85% of Watercrest disagreed or strongly disagreed that religion was sufficient in public schools, only 68% of Lakeshore's parents disagreed or strongly disagreed. For the most part, parents' responses mirror those of Watercrest Academy, but with less unanimity. That is, dissatisfaction is less pronounced for each of the categories. Only 52% of parents disagree or strongly disagree that safety is sufficient in public schools, compared to 65% of Watercrest parents. Fifty-five percent of Lakeshore parents agree or strongly agree that external influences are a concern, compared to 59% at Watercrest. Parents are quite neutral at both schools on the topic of the sufficiency of opportunity for parental input in public schools. Sixty percent of Watercrest parents do not feel standards are high in public schools, while only 46% of Lakeshore parents are of this opinion. In fact, of all the schools, Lakeshore parents are the least condemning with respect to standards. Similarly, Lakeshore parents do not have strong feelings about the condition of the public schools' atmosphere.

The most unanimous response came to the statement, "public schools provide adequate religious instruction," with the vast majority of parents strongly disagreeing. Following this, only two statements caused strong responses. The first, "public schools are overburdened," had an average response of agree. The second, "class sizes are small in public schools," elicited an average response of 4.3, indicating most parents either disagree or strongly disagree.

In responding to statements about the conditions within their chosen school, Lakeshore Elementary parents were much more definite about their opinions. The strongest responses came to the statements, "there is opportunity for parental

involvement,” and “there is opportunity for parental input.” Other statements that were close to unanimously ‘strongly agree’ were “the school is an enjoyable place for students” and “the school is a community of people sharing a common goal.” The responses to this group of statements would seem to indicate an appreciation for a school that allows for parents to be involved in their child’s education. It would seem that parents appreciate a community of like-minded people, with the opportunity to be involved. One parent explained “attendance of cousins going to the school in the past enabled us to see the community /school spirit which inspired our son’s enrollment.” Several parents stated that “we felt that the overall small size of the school (i.e. one class per grade) was important.” Other parents wanted “a Christian environment with the opportunity for volunteering.”

Several parents attempted to explain their reasoning in a paragraph. One wrote that “small classes, was a big issue. A school small enough so a feeling of community is present, and also having input as a parent. I believe selective students are enrolled, parents that are concerned about education and want the best.” Another parent took the time to write a brief explanation of his/her viewpoint. He/she wrote, “The problem as I see it with public schools is that they no longer have the tools to control disruptive students. The nature of private schools is the concern parents have for their child’s education; they are willing to pay for it, and the good private schools demand their participation as well. My parents rarely had the opportunity to become involved in my education.”

Religion is also a significant issue for Lakeshore parents. Ninety-one percent of parents agree or strongly agree that religion is sufficient in their school while 68%

disagree or strongly disagree that it is sufficient in public schools. Another noteworthy trend for Lakeshore parents is their appreciation of some of the programs offered by the school. Several parents give “the music program” and the “German language program” as reasons for choosing the school. Data for Lakeshore Elementary is shown in Table 12 and 13.

Table 12
Responses of parents from Lakeshore Elementary (in %)
Opinion about Public Schools

Statement	Number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Religion in public school is sufficient	72	7	7	17	32	36	1
Safety in public school is sufficient	54	2	24	22	39	13	0
External influences are a concern in public schools	106	12	43	20	17	4	4
There is sufficient opportunity for parental ‘say’	88	6	23	36	22	13	3
Standards are high in public schools	144	0	26	28	31	15	1
Public schools have positive atmospheres	108	0	30	41	16	12	2

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 13
Responses of parents from Lakeshore Elementary (in %)
Opinion about Chosen School

Statement	Number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Religion is sufficient	72	58	33	3	4	1	0
Safety is sufficient	54	31	54	7	6	2	0
External influences are a concern	108	5	5	11	31	48	1
There is sufficient opportunity for parental 'say'	88	53	35	7	3	2	0
Standards are high	144	35	51	9	3	1	0
The school has a positive atmosphere	108	39	51	6	3	1	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Emily Morris

Not surprisingly, academic standards are of primary concern to parents of students enrolled at Emily Morris. Without exception, parents stated that their top reasons for choosing Emily Morris were "high academic standards/ expectations" and "disciplined environment."

One parent outlined his/her concern, explaining that "after several meetings with public schools, our impression was that their efforts/ budgets were focussed on 'special needs' children (as they defined them) and that these children formed a substantial portion of the school population. As our children do not fall into this category, we looked for a school that would focus on their needs." The parent then gave the number one reason for choosing Emily Morris as being "academic expectations."

Another parent explained that it was more than just academic expectations and standards, but it was more specifically an atmosphere “conducive to doing well...most significantly, peer pressure to achieve high grades.” Another parent explained that the school’s small class sizes allowed for one on one instruction, combined with “uniformity of academic standards” that allowed the school to achieve academic excellence.

Another parent stated, “It is our personal belief that;

- A. public schools teach to the lowest common denominator in the class,
- B. public schools involve special needs kids in an extreme mainstreaming situation, which can and does disrupt class time,
- C. school boards and parents do not support the teachers when given a child who is disruptive on a continual basis,
- D. the public school system has become a glorified babysitting service,
- E. good students will still find a way to be good students and that the private school is not for everyone but the structure and environment provide more experience and opportunities to the average student – an unfair advantage.”

In general, parents of Emily Morris students did not have a negative opinion of public schools. Most statements on the questionnaire elicited responses that approached neutrality, on average. There were only four statements that resulted in strong opinions. The most extreme came from the statement “public schools are overburdened,” with an average response of 1.6, meaning that parents collectively agreed or strongly agreed.

Other statements that were relatively extreme included: “there are opportunities for parental involvement in public schools” (1.8); “instruction about the Bible and God are important in public schools” (4.2); and “class sizes are small in public schools” (4.2).

When asked to respond to statements about public schools, the only category of statements that resulted in opinions that were generally negative was in regards to standards. That is, 50% disagreed or strongly disagreed that standards were high, with

28% having a neutral opinion. Otherwise, these parents judged conditions in public schools to be satisfactory.

When asked about their chosen school, the statements that elicited the most extreme responses were “academic expectations are high,” “the school provides a quality education,” “the school adequately challenges students intellectually,” and “the school provides an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.” All of these statements resulted in near unanimous ‘strongly agree’ opinions. Other strong opinions (an average score of 1.5 or less, indicating nearly as many strongly agree responses as agree) were for the statements “the school has an effective discipline policy,” “the school teaches morals and values,” and “the school provides a sense of belonging for students.” Clearly, the focus for these parents is academics.

When asked about their chosen school, parents felt strongly about the opportunities for parental involvement, the positive atmosphere, the level of safety, and the high standards within the school. Seventy-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed that there was sufficient opportunity for parental involvement; 86% agreed or strongly agreed that safety was sufficient; 89% agreed or strongly agreed that the school had a positive atmosphere; and 98% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school had high standards. The other two categories elicited neutral reactions. These results are shown in Table 14 and 15.

Table 14
Responses of parents from Emily Morris (in %)
Opinion about Public School

Statement	Number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Religion in public school is sufficient	48	4	19	27	15	15	21
Safety in public school is sufficient	36	0	47	44	6	0	2
External influences are a concern in public schools	72	8	31	39	17	0	6
There is sufficient opportunity for parental 'say'	60	12	42	17	10	12	5
Standards are high in public schools	96	1	18	28	39	11	3
Public schools have positive atmospheres	72	1	35	32	19	11	1

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 15
Responses of parents from Emily Morris (in %)
Opinion about Chosen School

Statement	Number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Religion is sufficient	47	21	28	21	2	23	4
Safety is sufficient	36	11	75	14	0	0	0
External influences are a concern	71	6	21	25	32	11	4
There is sufficient opportunity for parental 'say'	60	20	59	11	11	0	1
Standards are high	98	52	46	0	2	0	1
The school has a positive atmosphere	73	34	55	8	3	0	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

St. Francis

Parents of St. Francis children do not appear to have significantly negative opinions of public schools. Responses to most of the statements in the questionnaire were relatively neutral. The statements that elicited the strongest response with respect to public schools were “public schools provide adequate religious instruction” and “public schools teach morals and values.” Parents disagreed (4.1), on average, with both of these statements.

The next most decisive opinions came for the statements “public school teachers are effective (2.3),” “class sizes are small (4.0),” “behavioral expectations of students are high in public schools (3.8),” “there are too many disruptive and unruly students in public schools (2.3),” and “public schools accept religious perspectives (3.8).” Of note, is the fact that parents actually endorse public school teachers as indicated by a score of 2.3. This average response means that parents, in general, agree with the statement.

The responding parents of St. Francis are generally less enthralled with their school, based on their opinions to the statements, than are parents of other schools. While they are clearly pleased with most aspects of their chosen school, the average response is not as unanimous or decisive. For example, Watercrest Academy parents felt strongly about 14 of the 28 statements on the second part of the questionnaire (A strong response is indicated by an average score within .5 of being unanimous. That is either 1.5 or less, or 4.5 or more). St. Francis parents felt strongly about only 4 statements concerning their school.

The most extreme response was for the statement “there is sufficient opportunity for parental involvement.” The score of 1.1 indicates a nearly unanimous ‘strongly

agree'. The other strong responses came for the statements "the school is an enjoyable place to be for children" (1.3), "the school teaches morals and values" (1.5), and "the school accepts religious perspectives" (1.5).

Surprisingly, opinions for some of the statements about public schools were quite similar to opinions about the same statement with respect to the chosen school. For example, parents mostly agreed that teachers in public schools were effective (score 2.3). Teachers in the chosen school scored only marginally better (2.0). Also, parents disagreed or strongly disagreed (average score of 3.6) that instructional content often conflicts with teachings of the home in public schools. Parents disagreed only slightly more strongly (3.8) that instructional content of the chosen school often conflicted with teachings of the home.

External factors were not a concern for parents of St. Francis. An examination of the table reveals a collectively neutral opinion, with as many agreeing as disagreeing with statements about whether these influences were a concern. Similarly parents on average are neutral on whether there is sufficient opportunity for parental input in public schools. Parents are generally neutral, as well, about the atmosphere of public schools being positive.

The strongest opinion parents from St. Francis have is with respect to whether religion is sufficiently addressed in public schools, with 62% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This percentage, however, is less than the other two religiously affiliated independent schools.

In general, parents of St. Francis children are not aggressively against public schools. Forty-two percent of parents either disagree or strongly disagree that safety is

sufficient in public schools, but 21% agree that it is, and 38% are neutral. Forty-seven percent disagree or strongly disagree that standards are high in public schools, but 21% agree that they are, and 33% are neutral.

Parents of St. Francis almost unanimously agree that religion in the chosen school is sufficient, with 97% responding as such. However, unlike the other two religiously affiliated schools, parents agreed (59%) with the statement more frequently than strongly agreeing (38%) with it. In contrast, 84% of Watercrest Academy strongly agreed, and 58% of Lakeshore parents strongly agreed.

St. Francis parents, on average, disagreed that external influences were a concern in their chosen school, with 58% disagreeing and 21% strongly disagreeing. Parents agree that safety is sufficient but not as consistently as might have been expected. Sixty-seven percent either agreed or strongly agreed, compared to over 85% in each of the other three schools. Also of note is the fact that 13% disagreed that safety was sufficient in the chosen school, which is as many as strongly agreed. Parents also agree that there is sufficient opportunity for input in the school. As with the issue of safety, a high number (85%) agree or strongly agree. But again, most of the parents only agree (58%), which is unlike the other two religiously affiliated schools. In addition, 13% disagree that there is sufficient opportunity for parental involvement.

Support is also high for standards in St. Francis, with 88% agreeing (69%) and strongly agreeing (19%) that they are high. Parents likewise feel that the atmosphere of the school is positive, with 92% agreeing (63%) and strongly agreeing (29%) with this statement. Again, however, the majority of parents agree with the statement, rather than

strongly agreeing. This trend is further supported in that, generally, an examination of individual statements reveals mostly neutral scores.

One parent explained the reason for choosing St. Francis was that “the public school in our area had a large contingent of political refugees, whose children we found to be a bit too rough, both in the use of coarse language and in rough play.” Another parent reiterates this perspective in a slightly different tone.

“Our oldest daughter (was) beat up 2 times in grade 1 in a public school. (The) principal passed it off (grade 5 bully). (Our) child came out of grade 1 public school barely able to write the ABC’s...mostly due to split classes. My younger [child] coming out of grade 1 this year at St. Francis can read beautifully.”

One of the questionnaires explained the perspective of the parent in this way: In the 1960’s I attended a public school. Morning prayer and a verse read from the Bible started out the day. That is no longer a part of public school teachings. Primarily, that is why we enroll our children in an independent school. Another of the parents repeats this concern when he/she explains his/her reason for choosing the school. “Religious beliefs, reinforcement of home values... working with parish, school and home and the development of the child in the light of those beliefs” are the reasons given. A summary of the results is shown in Table 16 and 17.

Other reasons given in the anecdotal section of the questionnaire emphasize a desire to have an education that includes religion as each of the returned questionnaires mentioned religion in the list of five most important reasons. Parents are also concerned about the atmosphere of the school, stating that safety, enjoyment and general climate are

significant issues. Academic standards are also mentioned in a few of the returned questionnaires.

Table 16
Responses of parents from St. Francis (in %)
Opinion about Public Schools

Statement	Number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Religion in public school is sufficient	32	0	6	31	28	34	0
Safety in public school is sufficient	24	0	21	38	25	17	0
External influences are a concern in public schools	48	4	29	40	23	4	0
There is sufficient opportunity for parental 'say'	40	5	25	43	20	8	0
Standards are high in public schools	64	5	16	33	34	13	0
Public schools have positive atmospheres	48	0	21	48	25	6	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table17
Responses of parents from St. Francis (in %)
Opinion about Chosen School

Statement	Number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Religion is sufficient	32	38	59	3	0	0	0
Safety is sufficient	24	13	54	21	13	0	0
External influences are a concern	48	0	4	17	58	21	0
There is sufficient opportunity for parental 'say'	40	27	58	2	13	0	0
Standards are high	64	19	69	5	8	0	0
The school has a positive atmosphere	48	29	63	0	8	0	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

General conclusions

Judging from responses given by parents, both in the form of attitudinal ratings on the Likert scale questions and on the reasons for choosing an independent school in the anecdotal section, it is apparent that parents who participated in this study do chose schools for the reasons found in the literature. Very few responses indicated reasons other than the ones discussed in chapter 2. The only alternate reasons given by parents for choosing a particular school, were:

- to have instruction in a second language (German)
- to have a school that has a quality music program
- to have a school that has a quality physical education program
- to have a school that is well equipped
- to have a school that has a dress code

However, it could be argued that all but the first reason given are related to a high standard of education. Parents may be under the opinion that the offerings of the public school in each of these areas are not what they are in the school of their choice. Considering that each of these reasons was only given once, it should be understood that they are not significant for the responding parents in general.

Religion

Of all the factors given in the questionnaire, religion seems to have elicited the most emphatic responses. No other group of factors resulted in opinions that were as unanimous. Respondents felt strongly that religion and religious instruction were not a significant part of a public school education, as 64% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that religion in public schools was sufficient. On the other hand, only 14% agreed or strongly agreed.

Also of significance was that the degree of unanimity increased when one took into consideration that Emily Morris was not a religiously affiliated school. Thus, with the exception of Emily Morris, the responses for the other three schools were even more consistent. Emily Morris actually had more respondents agreeing that religion in public school was sufficient (19%), than those who disagreed (15%). On the other hand, when the totals from Emily Morris were removed, 74% parents of the religiously affiliated schools disagreed or strongly disagreed that religion was sufficient in the public schools. One school, Watercrest Academy, had the most extreme position, with 58% of respondents strongly disagreeing with the opinion that religion was sufficient and 85% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

When asked if religion in the chosen school was sufficient, 83% of respondents agreed that it was. Of the 13 respondents who felt religion was not adequate in their school, 11 were from Emily Morris, the school without a religious base. In other words, the parents who choose a religiously oriented school are satisfied with this aspect of their child's education, which is not surprising, since any parent choosing a religiously oriented school would likely choose one that had a philosophy that closely resembled the home. The chosen educational philosophy would include the approach to religious education.

From Table 18 and 19, it can be said that those parents who choose religious schools feel that the public school is insufficient in religious education, while the school that has been chosen in its place is sufficient. Of all the factors considered in this study, there was near unanimity exhibited by the religiously affiliated schools in terms of their responses to whether or not religion was adequate in public schools and their chosen schools. The unanimity would seem to indicate that it is the most significant issue for parents choosing this type of education. In fact, anecdotal responses support this thought. Of all the reasons given by parents in the anecdotal section of the questionnaire, over forty related to a religious component of their child's education (Table 31). In addition, it should be noted that the majority of the reasons were given as either the first or second most important factor in choosing the school (13-most important, and 11-second most important). The anecdotal responses included statements from the questionnaire, itself, and those given by parents. Reasons given by parents for choosing their particular school, that were not directly from the questionnaire statements, included:

- “a school that teaches a personal relationship with Jesus Christ”
- “a school where God's word is in all the work”

-“a school with a Christian attitude”

Clearly, the lack of a religious component in a public school education is a significant issue in the minds of parents choosing religiously affiliated schools. The religious component includes both instruction in and about a particular faith, and the morals and values related to living according to this faith. Results are shown in Table 18 and 19.

Table 18
Religion in public schools is sufficient (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	64	2	8	6	27	58	0
Lakeshore Elementary	72	7	7	17	32	36	1
Emily Morris	48	4	19	27	15	15	21
St. Francis	32	0	6	31	28	34	0
Totals	216	4	10	18	26	38	5

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 19
Religion in chosen school is sufficient (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	63	84	6	3	0	2	5
Lakeshore Elementary	72	58	33	3	4	1	0
Emily Morris	47	21	28	21	2	23	4
St. Francis	32	38	59	3	0	0	0
Totals	214	55	28	7	2	6	2

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even

though there were an equal number to begin with.

Safety

An examination of responses in the questionnaires indicates that safety is also a significant issue for many parents. However, the responses are not as decisive as for religion. Rather, the majority of parents responded with a neutral opinion on statements relating to physical and emotional safety in the public schools. In addition, there were a significant number of respondents who felt that safety was not a concern in public schools. While 30% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed that safety was sufficient in public schools, 24% agreed and strongly agreed that issues relating to safety were sufficient. In general, then, safety was not as significant an issue for parents choosing independent schools as might have been expected. However, it is interesting to note that there were distinct differences among schools.

First of all, the majority of Emily Morris parents were of the opinion that safety was, in fact, sufficient in the public schools, with 47% having this opinion. On the other hand, the parents of the religiously affiliated schools disagreed that safety was adequate. This opinion was felt most strongly by parents who chose Watercrest Academy, with 65% disagreeing about the adequacy of safety in public schools. The majority of Lakeshore parents also disagreed (52%). Similarly, the respondents from St. Francis also responded with dissatisfaction (42%). Alternately, only 6% of parents of Emily Morris did not feel that safety was sufficient in public schools.

When asked about the condition of safety in the chosen school, parents in this survey were very satisfied. The degree of satisfaction is exemplified in convincing fashion as 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that safety was sufficient in their

school of choice. Interestingly, only Emily Morris had no parents with the opinion that safety was not sufficient in their chosen school.

Based on the responses, it would appear that safety is not the major issue that religion is for parents choosing independent schools. However, the responses are less than an endorsement of public schools as there is a generally dissatisfied tone with respect to safety. In addition, anecdotal responses (Table 30) indicate that a high number of parents desire improved physical (15) and emotional (14) safety. On the other hand, independent school parents are extremely satisfied with their chosen school's ability to provide a safe environment. Results are shown in Table 20 and 21.

Table 20
Safety in public schools is sufficient (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	48	2	6	27	40	25	0
Lakeshore Elementary	54	2	24	22	39	13	0
Emily Morris	36	0	47	44	6	0	2
St. Francis	24	0	21	38	25	17	0
Totals	162	1	23	31	30	14	1

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 21
Safety in chosen school is sufficient (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	48	38	54	2	2	4	0
Lakeshore Elementary	54	31	54	7	6	2	0
Emily Morris	36	11	75	14	0	0	0
St. Francis	24	13	54	21	13	0	0
Totals	162	26	59	9	4	2	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

External Influences

The influence of peers, teachers, and society in general was also significant for parents choosing independent schools, with half of all respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the conditions in public schools were a concern. However, as with safety, the concern did not seem as decisive. First of all, 29% of all parents were neutral on the issue. Secondly, parents from all schools agreed (36%) and strongly agreed (13%) that external issues were a concern. The fact that parents agreed much more frequently than strongly agreed would seem to indicate a less than extreme response.

Watercrest Academy and Lakeshore Elementary were the most critical of public schools with the majority of parents responding from these schools having the opinion that external influences were a concern. Respondents from St. Francis and Emily Morris responded in the majority with a neutral opinion.

Concurrently, respondents disagreed strongly that their school of choice contained negative external influences, with 36% disagreeing and 40% strongly disagreeing.

Opinions relating to statements about the influences on their children in the school of choice were very decisive since the most frequent response was strongly disagree that the influences were a concern. Parents generally were of the feeling that their school was free from negative external influences. Of note, a resounding 95% of respondents from Watercrest Academy were of the opinion that negative external influences in their school were not a concern.

The fact that only 43% of Emily Morris parents disagreed that external influences were a concern within their school is a bit confusing. The confusion may be explained by examining the type of statement used to evaluate opinion on external influences. Of the six statements relating to external influences, three asked about the influence of sex, drugs and alcohol. The statements, “alcohol consumption is prevalent among students in public schools” and “the use of alcohol is prevalent (in the chosen school),” may not even be considered as negative for some parents. In fact, one parent qualified a response to the former statement with the comment “alcohol use is not a concern in the elementary years, but I suspect it will be in later years.” If this was a perception held by other parents, it will have affected responses.

In general, external influences are not as significant an issue as religion. Just as with safety, parents are somewhat critical of public schools with respect to this issue. Similarly, parents are very satisfied with their chosen school’s ability to limit these influences. Tables 22 and 23 display these results.

Table 22
External Influences (societal, peer and teachers) are a concern (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	96	23	36	27	8	5	0
Lakeshore Elementary	106	12	43	20	17	4	4
Emily Morris	72	8	31	39	17	0	6
St. Francis	48	4	29	40	23	4	0
Totals	322	13	36	29	15	3	2

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 23
External influences in chosen school are a concern (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	96	1	1	3	32	63	0
Lakeshore Elementary	108	5	5	11	31	48	1
Emily Morris	71	6	21	25	32	11	4
St. Francis	48	0	4	17	58	21	0
Totals	323	3	7	13	36	40	1

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Parental Input

Of all the categories of possible factors influencing choice, the opportunity for parental input may be the least important to parents in this study. Parents were almost equally divided in their opinion of the opportunities for involvement in public schools,

with 33% agreeing, 32% being neutral, and 31% disagreeing that there was sufficient opportunity for involvement in public schools. Based on these responses, it is hard to consider parental input as being a significant factor in choosing an independent school, since parents are not generally of the opinion that the opportunity for involvement is lacking in public schools.

As with every other possible factor influencing choice, parents are also very satisfied with the opportunity for input in their chosen school. Table 25 shows 84% agree or strongly agree that there is sufficient opportunity for input. However, Watercrest Academy and Lakeshore Elementary were more adamant in their opinion since, in each case, over 50% of respondents strongly agreed that there was sufficient opportunity for input. On the other hand, while the majority of St. Francis and Emily Morris parents also agreed that opportunity was sufficient, less than 30% strongly agreed.

Following the trend of satisfaction for independent schools, parents exhibit a widespread level of contentment with conditions within their chosen school. Unlike the previous three factors, the opportunity for parental input may not be the significant issue that was originally expected. These results are shown in Table 24 and 25.

Table 24
There is sufficient opportunity for parents to have a 'say' in their child's education (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	80	4	24	35	14	24	0
Lakeshore Elementary	88	6	23	36	22	13	3
Emily Morris	60	12	42	17	10	12	5
St. Francis	40	5	25	43	20	8	0
Totals	268	6	27	32	16	15	2

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 25
There is sufficient opportunity for parental input in the chosen school (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	95	50	33	14	2	0	0
Lakeshore Elementary	108	53	35	7	3	2	0
Emily Morris	75	20	59	11	11	0	1
St. Francis	48	27	58	2	13	0	0
Totals	326	41	43	9	6	1	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Standards

The standards within public schools were a definite concern for parents choosing independent schools. Next to religion, this was the most significant issue for parents.

Eighty-four respondents (Table 30) stated that academic standards were one of the five

most significant reasons for choosing an independent school. Although there were twice as many questionnaire statements relating to standards as there were for religion, there is still an indication of concern over issues relating to standards. It should also be noted that several parents included more than one reason in the top five that was related to academics and standards.

Table 26 shows 51% of parents did not believe that standards in the public school were high. Another 29% were neutral on the issue. In other words, 20% of parents felt that the standards were acceptable, with only 1% feeling strongly in this way. However, the fact that only 51% of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that standards were high in public schools would seem to indicate that standards were not as universal a concern for parents choosing independent schools as religion was.

Respondents from Emily Morris considered the standards in public schools to be the issue causing the greatest concern. In fact, 50% of these parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that standards were high in public schools. Only 19% agreed with the statement. The fact that the disagreement was so strong is especially significant because Emily Morris parents were actually quite supportive of public schools for every other category, with the possible exception of external influences (39% agreed or strongly agreed that they were a concern and 17% disagreed). Concern over standards in public school was consistent among the other schools, ranging from 46% to 60% expressing dissatisfaction. At the same time, support for public school standards ranged from 13% to 26% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were high.

Not surprisingly, support for the school of choice was decisive. Eighty-eight percent of parents agreed that standards were high in their school. As would be expected,

Emily Morris was the most emphatic on this subject with 98% of respondents stating that their school had high standards. However, the other three schools were also very supportive of the standards in their school, with over 86% agreeing or strongly agreeing in each case. All the results are shown in Tables 26 and 27.

Table 26
Standards are High in public schools (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	127	0	13	27	40	20	0
Lakeshore Elementary	144	0	26	28	31	15	1
Emily Morris	96	1	18	28	39	11	3
St. Francis	64	5	16	33	34	13	0
Totals	431	1	19	29	36	15	1

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 27
Standards are high in chosen school (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	125	48	38	12	2	0	0
Lakeshore Elementary	144	35	51	9	3	1	0
Emily Morris	98	52	46	0	2	0	1
St. Francis	64	19	69	5	8	0	0
Totals	431	40	48	7	3	0	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

School Atmosphere

The atmosphere of public schools was not of intense concern to parents choosing independent schools. In addition to 41% of respondents having a neutral opinion on statements relating to school atmosphere, there was very little difference in the number who agreed and disagreed with the opinion that public schools had positive atmospheres. Similar to opinions relating to parental input, this area did not seem to be a significant issue for the majority of parents. In fact, respondents from Lakeshore and Emily Morris agreed or strongly agreed more frequently than they disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements relating to public school's having positive atmospheres. Only parents from Watercrest Academy were of the opinion that, in general, public schools did not have positive atmospheres. However, although 42% disagreed or strongly disagreed that public schools had positive atmospheres and 12% agreed or strongly agreed that they did, 45% remained neutral on the issue. As a result, it would appear that school atmosphere was not as significant an issue as religion, standards, safety, or external influences were.

Parents were again very pleased with their chosen school. Respondents consistently stated that their school of choice had a positive atmosphere. While 88% of parents either strongly agreed or agreed that their chosen school had a positive atmosphere, only 3% disagreed. This was the most resounding area of support for the chosen school. These results are displayed in Tables 28 and 29.

Table 28
Public schools have positive atmospheres (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	96	2	10	45	31	11	0
Lakeshore Elementary	108	0	30	41	16	12	2
Emily Morris	72	1	35	32	19	11	1
St. Francis	48	0	21	48	25	6	0
Totals	324	1	24	41	23	11	1

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Table 29
The chosen school has a positive atmosphere (%)

School	Number	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Watercrest Academy	92	41	43	13	2	0	0
Lakeshore Elementary	108	39	51	6	3	1	0
Emily Morris	73	34	55	8	3	0	0
St. Francis	48	29	63	0	8	0	0
Totals	321	37	51	8	3	0	0

Note: Some of the respondents may have omitted some of the questionnaire statements. As a result, the number of responses in each category may not be identical for public schools and the chosen school, even though there were an equal number to begin with.

Summary of open ended responses

Each of the respondents was asked to list the five most significant factors influencing the choice of an independent school. These responses have been grouped

according to categories described earlier in Table 30 below. It should be noted that, for the most part, parents selected statements from the questionnaire for their top five factors.

A definite difficulty in examining these responses was the fact that wording was seldom identical. In other words, it was difficult to group the responses. It should also be noted that some of the respondents did not complete this section of the questionnaire.

Also, the fact that each of the categories of factors affecting school choice had a number of statements on the questionnaire may have caused parents to include more than one in their top five reasons. For example, parents may have included a desire for "high academic expectations" and "a school that effectively controls disruptive and unruly students" in their top five reasons. Both of these responses have been grouped in the category relating to standards. The fact that there are more statements relating to some categories than to others likely skewed the data somewhat.

Table 30
Anecdotal Responses
Grouped according to Category of Factor

Category	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	3 rd Choice	4 th Choice	5 th Choice
Religion	13	11	7	6	6
Safety	5	7	7	10	8
External Influences	8	9	5	8	12
Parental Input	5	9	7	6	8
Standards	18	19	24	14	9
School Atmosphere	8	10	17	11	5

An examination of the above table reaffirms previous claims that standards and religion are the most significant issues for making a choice of an independent school. Parents most frequently stated that their number one reason for choosing an independent

school was standards. The second most common reason was religion. In addition, not only were standards and religion given most frequently as the most important reason, they were also mentioned frequently as less important factors. It should also be noted that each of the factors was considered a significant factor by many of the respondents.

The analysis of data in this chapter has, for the most part, supported the findings discussed in the literature review in chapter two. Based on the data gleaned from questionnaires submitted for this study, parents choosing independent schools do so because of a lack of religious instruction, low standards, concern over external influences, concern about safety, limited opportunity for parental involvement, and a concern over the atmosphere in public schools. Parents also exhibit a high degree of satisfaction with their chosen school. Therefore, it should be concluded that parental choice of independent schools is based on the concerns mentioned with respect to public schools, and the contrasting contentment with the chosen school. A complete summary of the findings is presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY:
LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was undertaken to determine the reasons parents in four independent schools in Manitoba had for choosing an independent school for their child(ren). Through a study of relevant literature, potential factors were determined. These factors were used to form the statements for a questionnaire. Four independent schools, three religiously affiliated and one elite academic, agreed to participate in the study. Questionnaires were sent to the parents of one class of grade one students in each of these schools. Of the 96 questionnaires that were distributed, the 56 that were returned formed the data-base on which the previous chapter's analysis was performed. Factors influencing the choice of an independent school were determined based on parental response to statements in Part B and C of the questionnaire and the reasons given for the particular choice in the anecdotal section in Part D.

The first significant finding of this study is the overwhelming satisfaction exhibited by parents with respect to their chosen school. Parents felt much more strongly about the conditions in their chosen school than they did about public schools in general.

The conditions in public schools that did elicit strong responses related to religion and the learning environment. Parents expressed the opinion that religion is not adequate in public schools. In addition, parents indicate a concern that the classroom environment is becoming more difficult to control and the schools are doing less to control it.

The conditions in the chosen school that provided the most unanimous response related to standards. All of the statements relating to academic standards elicited strong agreement among parents with respect to whether their school was sufficient in this area.

An examination of responses for each school, taken individually, showed that in the minds of parents there were some definite differences in these schools. Parents from Watercrest Academy considered religion to be the most significant factor in choosing their school. Parents also expressed concern about possible negative influences within public schools as being significant in choice.

Responses from parents of Lakeshore Elementary School indicated that these parents chose their school because of the atmosphere of the school created by the close community and the opportunity for input and involvement that the school provided. The primary concern for parents of students enrolled at Emily Morris was academic standards. The parents felt that standards were not high enough in public schools, and alternately, they were extremely satisfied with the standards in their school of choice.

The responses from the last school, St. Francis, are not as extreme as the ones from other schools. That is, parents with students enrolled at St. Francis were not as critical of public schools in general, nor were they as satisfied with their chosen school. The areas in the chosen school with the highest level of satisfaction are standards and religion.

From the results of this study, it is apparent that parents choose independent schools for different reasons. Collectively, parents do choose independent schools for the reasons outlined in the literature review (chapter 2). However, religion and standards appear to be the most significant factors considered by parents in exercising choice.

The purpose of the remaining portion of this chapter is to provide some concluding remarks about the results of this study. Prior to doing this, it is important to discuss some of the limitations to this study and how they may have influenced the results. This chapter will also discuss any recommendations for future study.

Limitations

The first limitation to this study is that questionnaires were sent out to parents of children in only four independent schools. While every attempt was made to include independent schools with diverse philosophies (four schools rejected the opportunity to take part in the study), there are many other schools that could have been included in the study. Undoubtedly, the results of the study might have been somewhat different had different schools been chosen. For example, the inclusion of more parents of children attending non-religiously affiliated schools could have decreased the importance of religious instruction in the responses.

Another limitation to the study is that those who complete a questionnaire may be different from those who do not respond. Studies have shown that people who participate in social science research tend to be more highly educated, politically more liberal, less authoritarian, more in need of social approval, more intelligent, and more interested in the issue being addressed than those who do not (Palys, 1997, p. 147). This potential bias is a concern. However, it was anticipated that those parents who have exercised choice have already made a sacrifice of some magnitude and would, therefore, be eager to share their opinions. West et al. (1998) found that parents who chose private schools began to think

of their child(s) schooling at a much earlier age than those who did not (p. 48), and may, therefore, have strong feelings on the subject.

Apparently, parents did have strong feelings on the subject. A majority (56%) took the time to complete the questionnaire. In addition, all but two of the respondents in this study claimed that the decision to enroll their children was made before the child entered Kindergarten. Of these, one third made the decision before the child was born. Consequently, it would appear that the respondents in this study had given the decision to enroll in an independent school a considerable amount of thought.

An even more significant limitation of this study relates to the question: to what extent does the sample of respondents represent the entire population of parents with school age children? The fact that questionnaires were only sent to parents of children in independent schools had the effect of biasing the results against public schools. Whatever reasons parents have for choosing an independent school and / or rejecting a public school, the fact remains that they are likely not going to demonstrate the positive attitudes towards public schools that those attending them might. In fact, Rose and Gallup (1999) found that consistently "the closer people are to the public schools, the better they like them" (p. 42). They support this claim by stating that the percentage of parents who give the public school a grade of A or B rises from 49% when parents grade the schools of the community, to 66% when those parents are asked to grade the school their oldest child attends (p. 42). The inclusion of parents with children attending a public school in the study would likely improve the collective opinions of public schools.

However, the fact that only parents of independent schools were selected should not lessen the importance of these findings since it was the purpose of this study to

investigate the reasons parents have for choosing an independent school. Public school parents have not chosen an independent school education and, therefore, could not be included in this study. What should be remembered is that any negative opinion of public schools expressed by parents enrolling their children in independent schools must be taken in context. Those not choosing an independent school may have much different views than those who do. Some may be very happy with public schools in general. Some may be very satisfied with their particular public school. Others may be unhappy with all or part of the present conditions within public schools and yet have not chosen to enroll in an independent school. Further study in this area is required.

Conclusions must also be carefully considered and understood within their limitations. That three of the four schools chosen had a religious affiliation affected the context from which conclusions can be drawn. One of the most decisive findings was that the parents of this study felt that religion was an important factor in choosing an independent school. Would this finding have been constant had a greater number of non-religious affiliated independent schools been included?

Another potentially significant limitation is whether the parents of any independent school are actually representative of parents in general. There is a perception that those who enroll their children in independent schools are somewhat elite. They are the 'financially capable parents' and academically capable students. In fact, the students that are switching to private schools are too often the children that are experiencing academic success and are actively involved in school events. "Teachers in neighborhood schools voice their concern that independent schools skim off the most involved and the most motivated parents and the most motivated students, leaving the problem children

behind” (Bomotti, 1998, p. 31). Since academic standards was a significant reason for movement, this may be the case. It would be interesting to know the socio-economic status of parents choosing independent schools and how they compare to those who remain in public schools. It is also necessary to study whether it is the academically strong students who are enrolled in independent schools, or do they present as a cross-section similar to that in public schools?

Another area of potential bias in this study was that the respondents might have enrolled their children in independent schools because that is how they were educated. In fact, only 29 out of the 105 parents in this study acknowledged having attended an independent school. As a result, the majority of parents in this study must have made their choice based on their own values.

Results

One of the interesting results of this study is the overwhelming support exhibited by the parents for their chosen school as demonstrated by the consistently high degree of satisfaction in their responses. Parents, with near unanimity, strongly agreed that their schools scored high in every category. Parental satisfaction of the chosen school may not be surprising, as others have found that parents’ reasons for choosing are more often a positive choice for the independent school, rather than the avoidance of something negative in the public school. Bomotti (1998) found that parents’ self-reports indicated that their motivation to select a different school for their child was more positive than negative in nature. That is, their decisions were based more on a proactive search for

different teaching and learning environments than on negative experiences with neighborhood schools (p. 30).

Factors influencing the choice of an independent school were determined in this study by examining the opinions of parents with respect to various conditions within both public schools and the chosen school. As just mentioned, support for the chosen school was high. Parents from both Watercrest Academy and Lakeshore Elementary responded favorably to every factor at a rate of over 80%. That is, the vast majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that religion, safety, opportunity for parental input, standards, and atmosphere were sufficient in their school. Also, in similar fashion, they disagreed or strongly disagreed that external influences were a concern.

Parents from the other two schools, St. Francis and Emily Morris, responded in a nearly identical way, with the exception of three areas. The parents of Emily Morris students were neutral when asked if religion in their chosen school was sufficient and whether external influences were a concern. Also, parents of St. Francis were only mildly in agreement that safety was sufficient in their chosen school.

On the surface, this support for chosen schools makes it difficult to determine which of the factors were most influential in the decision making process. Recalling the findings of Rose and Gallup (1999) which found that parents give higher grades to the school which their child attends, it should not be unexpected that parents give high praise to their chosen school. Parental opinions of the chosen school, taken in conjunction with the opinions of the public school, give a clearer picture of possible reasons for choosing independent schools.

Based on an examination of opinions, the most dominant factors influencing parental choice are standards in education and religion. While parents felt strongly that their chosen school was meeting their expectations in all areas mentioned in this study, they are most consistent about the issue of standards in education. Eighty-eight percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that standards were sufficient. More significantly, it was the one area that received the most consistent responses. That is, the vast majority of parents from each of the schools felt standards were insufficient (51% agreeing, 29% neutral, 20% disagreeing) in public schools, while concurrently believing that they were sufficient (88% agreeing, 7% neutral, 3% disagreeing) in the chosen school. It was also the most definitively significant issue for Emily Morris parents.

When one examines the four schools collectively, religion was an even bigger issue. Overall, parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the level of religious instruction in public schools with the greatest consistency. Sixty-four percent of parents either disagreed or strongly disagreed (18% were neutral and 14% agreed) that religion in public schools was sufficient. This was the most emphatic response, with 13% more expressing concern than over standards.

Considering the neutrality exhibited by parents of Emily Morris on this topic, the fact that it is still the most significant issue, based on the percentages expressing concern, is remarkable. If one examines the opinions of only the three religiously affiliated schools, 74% of parents would feel strongly that religion is inadequate in public schools and over 90% would feel it is sufficient in their chosen school.

Conclusion

It would seem that education is constantly in the news. Recently, the media has reported a great furor in Ontario concerning school vouchers. This means parents will have the opportunity to decide where public funds for education will be spent. At the same time, a school in Calgary called the Foundation for the Future Charter Academy, an example of a school under the 'charter school' umbrella in Canada, has gained some notoriety as exemplified by an article in The Winnipeg Free Press (Holle, 2001, p. A15). The way schools operate will likely continue to change as other provinces watch closely the successes and or failures of these educational innovations.

As this thesis was undergoing final revisions, an article written by John Redekop (2001) crossed my desk. In it, he claims that there is a widespread and growing negative reaction towards public education in Canada that falls into three broad categories (p. 28).

He describes them as such:

1. Many parents are fed up, even angry, about the moral climates that have developed in many schools. Concerns exist over how schools deal with sex education, religious values, and how traditional homes and families are not always strongly endorsed.
2. The lack of educational quality is astounding. In general, many parents want higher standards, more discipline, more emphasis on basics, more teaching respect and courtesy, more modeling of high morality and open-minded teaching of creation.
3. The behavior of certain teachers and teachers' unions in more than a few public school systems has disappointed and even angered many parents. Work-to-rule and striking teachers more concerned over small pay increases, than the welfare of students are causes for disappointment (Redekop, 2001, p. 28).

It is interesting to compare the opinions of this writer with the findings of this study. Redekop does not give evidence to support his claims, nor does he present a context from which to understand his claims. However, his claims are remarkably similar

to those found in other jurisdictions. Even more interesting is that the first two of his claims are supported in the returned questionnaires of this study.

An article in Time (Cloud and Morse, 2001) reiterates these sentiments. "Home Sweet School" (August 2001) discusses the reasons a growing number of parents (4% of the entire US school population) are choosing home schooling as an alternative to public schools. Of the top reasons cited from a study by the Department of Education on home schooling in the United States, academic standards, religious reasons, developing character and morality and controversial educational content rate as the top four given (p. 47). However, the reaction of parents to the dissatisfaction they felt over public schools caused these parents to choose home schooling, not independent schools.

The issue of choice centers around quality. Whatever the instrument used by parents in measuring an independent school against public schools, those who choose an independent school must find it to be superior in some way. It would seem unlikely that anyone would pay extra for something they deem as inferior.

Coleman (1994) argues that schools of choice are inherently superior to other schools because the choosing alters the relationship between the chooser and the chosen. Further, the act of choice, itself, helps to create a better school by ensuring an affinity of interests and purposes among students, teachers and parents that helps the school to develop clear goals and to get support from all involved in attaining them (p. 19). Clearly this is the case within the schools used in this study. Parents expressed an overwhelming degree of satisfaction with their school of choice.

Ideally, parents would express this degree of satisfaction with the school that their child attends, regardless of whether it was an independent school or public school. As

outlined earlier, this is not necessarily the case. Granted, the parents of public school children within the province of Manitoba were not included in this study. As a result, it is not justifiable to assume that dissatisfaction reigns in the minds of these parents. It is possible that the majority of public school parents in Manitoba are satisfied with the educational institution their children attend. However, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the parents of 15,000 children in Manitoba do not feel that the public school is the best choice for their family.

These 15,000 children attending independent schools represent approximately 7% of all school age children in Manitoba. The reported enrollment for the four schools included in this study is recorded at approximately 1750 students (Enrollment Report, Sept. 2000, p. 6-9). Therefore, the student population from these four schools might account for approximately 10-15 % of the entire independent school population. The results of this study must be considered in this light.

These parents choose independent schools for a variety of reasons. This study found that many of the reasons for choosing an independent school in the literature were also significant for parents exercising choice in Manitoba. Based on the results of this study, the issues of religion, academic standards, parental input, external influences, school atmosphere and safety play a major role in these choices. The question that remains is, to what extent might public schools better meet the needs of the parents of these 15,000 independent school children? Also, are the concerns expressed by the parents of this study shared by parents who do not choose independent schools? Would an effort at improving these conditions within public schools be met with acceptance by the majority of parents in the public schools?

Public schools must realize that their role is to support parents in the education of children. Parental concerns are not necessarily an encroachment upon the schools' prerogatives. Schools should consider these concerns (Burrton, 1995, p. 93). The issue of religion is an example where the concerns of some parents have been ignored in favor of other parents. Many parents want religion included in education. Others do not. Public schools, today, have chosen to satisfy the concerns of those who do not want religion included. But this is intolerant of those for whom religion is not a preference but a conviction. The reality is that there is a disdain bordering on contempt for the deeply religious (Glanzer, 1998, p. 222).

Public school officials would be well advised to examine the possibility of including some aspect of religious instruction in public schools. Parents included in this study and parents in the general public feel this is a relevant issue, worthy of inclusion in a public education (Smyth, 2001, p. E1). Realistically, however, the majority of those parents choosing an independent religious school would likely not be satisfied with a general course on religion. Those who complain most about the relative absence of religion from the curriculum seem to be less interested in neutral academic study than in narrower sectarian teaching (Doerr, 1998, p. 225).

This belief is enforced by the fact that no parent in this study gave "expressing different religious perspectives" as a reason for choosing their particular school. Remarkably, it was the only statement on the questionnaire that was not given by a single parent as one of the top reasons for choosing their school (Appendix 7, Table 35). Alternately, many parents gave "instructional content that mirrors the home," "teachers are good role models," "the school teaches morals and values," "instruction about the

Bible and God,” “the school’s philosophy mirrors the home,” and “seeking a school/ community with common goals” as being the most important reasons for choosing their school (Appendix 7, Table 36). Repeatedly, in their responses to opinion statements and in their given reasons for choosing, parents in this study express a desire for religious instruction: their religion. In other words, these parents want a school that teaches from a religious perspective that reflects and supports what is taught at home. They want their particular religion or faith presented as the only option. As a result, the concept of religious education in public schools is not something that will likely even be considered, given today’s pluralistic, multicultural society.

If we accept that there are parents in the public system who also want instruction in their particular faith, should schools endeavor to change? For example, should public schools seek to include character education as part of an increased effort to teach more traditional morals and values? Some experts question whether it is the government’s place to instill character in children. Dr. Mark Genius, founder of the National Foundation for Family Research and Education, says it is a dangerous road for schools to go down. It would not be fair to push, in public education, one person’s view of character. “Things like basic respect and manners, yes, they are fine, but when you get into other areas, that is, more controversial, the question is, what is the public system’s role? Is it a place to educate or a place where children are raised?” (Smyth, 2001, p. E5).

Public schools are in a difficult position. Some children need this kind of instruction (character instruction, for example). Other parents only want their children instructed in Math and English and want the non-cognitive information left to the home. Others want an education that teaches the entire person: intellectual, emotional, and

spiritual. In the multicultural environment within which today's schools must operate, it would be impossible to arrive at the kind of consensus needed to educate the spiritual.

It has already been discussed that public schools have opted for a position of neutrality. This position has the effect of upsetting, or disappointing, many parents. At the very least, the majority of parents in three of these four school are of the opinion that choosing their particular school was the best way to get what they wanted in terms of religion. If there are any number of parents in the public school that have similar convictions, but fewer resources, thereby causing them to be unable to make this choice, it would be appropriate for options to made available to them. These parents must be given the opportunity to choose a school that fits with their philosophy of education. Governments, and those in position to influence independent school funding, must be encouraged to consider the fact that it may not be possible for some parents, based on the financial burden, to make this choice. Knowing the significance of religion in the minds of parents making a choice for an independent school may provide the impetus for examining other possible funding arrangements, such as vouchers.

In addition, those responsible for public schools should, at the very least, give some serious consideration to the inclusion of a course on religions. Knowledge of religion and the religious works like the Bible and the Koran could be considered crucial in order to understand many of today's news headlines, such as the conflicts in the Middle East and Yugoslavia, and the events of September 11, 2001. People who have little knowledge in these areas fail to understand the thinking behind the issues over which society is agonizing today.

Another example of the perceived failure of public schools to meet the needs of its clients, as exhibited in the results of this study, relates to academics and academic standards. Parents in this study felt that the public schools were inadequate in these areas and their chosen school was much better. The single reason given most often for choosing an independent school was "desire high academic expectations." The public, in general, has also lamented the standards in education for years. Some of the reasons given for declining educational quality in the public schools cannot be disputed. Many public school systems are centralized, bureaucratic monopolies. Their customers are assigned to them by virtue of geography, not choice. They must pay for public education regardless of whether they are satisfied with the product or whether they choose an alternative such as private schooling. In addition, classes move ahead whether all students have mastered skills or not since instruction meets the needs of the average student, while the needs of exceptional learners go unmet. The result is that many students are not challenged appropriately.

Should public schools raise standards? How could raising standards be accomplished? Is it possible? Would raising standards have the effect of satisfying those parents who seek greater academic challenges for their children? One attempt in Manitoba towards this end was the introduction of standards testing. The fact that these tests have met with much enmity is indicative of the variety of opinion concerning whether it is even fair to expect more from all students. Conditions within public schools will not change overnight, and the children coming through the doors will continue to have academic deficiencies. Raising expectations might better suit those capable of higher achievement, but it might fail those experiencing difficulties.

However, the fact remains that a considerable number of parents will look to independent schools to better meet the needs of their children. Governments, provincial education ministries, school boards and local schools should evaluate how these parents can be encouraged to enroll their children in public schools. Public schools need these students in their classes. The leadership and example they might provide could be valuable. If many of the best students are not in public schools because of academic standards, the quality of education will be further damaged.

Alternately, it could be considered unfair that the parents of those students who are not challenged academically must transfer their children to independent schools and bear the financial burden. Again, it is imperative that governments consider examining other educational possibilities, including vouchers and charter schools, to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Ideally, providing educational options might cause all schools to be more accountable to the parents and students they serve. Of course, this is also an area for much debate.

Parents who choose an independent school are clearly seeking an education different from the one given by public schools. They wish to have a greater emphasis placed on academic achievement, including increased academic and behavioral standards. A majority of parents also want a religious component in the education of their children, one which will perpetuate the faith of the parents. They wish to have a safe and positive atmosphere for their children, free from influences they deem as negative. Lastly, they wish to have the opportunity to be involved in the education of their children, in part, by ensuring the instruction they receive supports what is being taught at home.

Parents who choose independent schools are, in all likelihood, attempting to do what they perceive to be best for their children. Unfortunately, not all children come from homes where the environment values education in the same way. "With the generally declining role of families in educating children and youth, schools are playing an increasingly important role, especially for disadvantaged students" (Goodlad, 1994, p.43). As a result, those responsible for public schools should consider the possibility that there are many children in these schools that need good education, but who come from homes that do not even know what that is. Care needs to be taken that those in a position to influence educational content consider what should be included.

From the perspective of this author, a continuing good school needs some transcendent value, preferably beyond intellectual development, material advancement, personal success and social equality. The notion of education necessarily contains moral components; that is to say, it is concerned with good and bad. Until this becomes the actual mission of public schools, and not simply a possible outcome that may or may not be influenced by the school, they will fail in the minds of many parents, and the trend to independent schools will accelerate.

Former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett was once asked by a student how one could tell if the United States or the Soviet Union was really the better country. "Apply the gate theory," Bennet replied. "Open the gates and see which way the people flow." If the gate theory were applied to public schools, there is no question the exodus would be dramatic (Dupont, 1994, p. 134). Friesen (1998) makes the recommendation that, in order to "stop the bleeding of public school enrollments," the public schools should "ensure that their schools are more like the Castleridge Christian School" (p. 240).

If the results can be generalized to the general population within the province of Manitoba, this statement is profoundly significant for public school educators.

Choice is central to education. For the majority of Canadian parents, there are alternatives to the neighborhood school. For the moment, however, choice is somewhat restricted. Choices, other than the public schools, charge at least partial tuition. This restriction of cost has not prevented many parents from exercising choice. Choice holds the key to improving education by increasing parent, student and teacher participation and by broadening the definition of excellence to meet the wide range of talents, interests and needs of all students (Coleman, 1994, p. 20). Frequently, the argument against school choice is that it favors the wealthy and will only perpetuate the existing inequalities because these are the parents that are equipped to make and execute the choice (driving children to the school for example). But, to the contrary, overwhelming data suggests that it is the poor who have taken opportunity of any available choices, probably because the advantaged have already taken advantage of choice through their choice of residence (Coleman, Schiller and Schneider, 1993, p. 160; Fuller, 1996, p. 37).

In a democracy, parents should have the right to choose the type of education that they want for their children. Parents should have the freedom to select schools that reinforce their traditions and values. They should not be limited in their choices to the 'one size fits all' education of public schools. Parents should be able to choose schools that best fit the educational needs of their children.

It would not be in the best interests of public schools and those responsible for the education of our youth to ignore the concerns of parents choosing independent schools. Local schools are the community glue, and when people do not feel they have a stake in

the community, then things deteriorate badly (Lloyd, 1999, p. 3). Ideally, parents would all have a stake in the local school. However, Michael Farris of the Home School Legal Defense Association expresses what might be the sentiment of many parents choosing an education other than a public school. He claims that "parents do regret the loss of community, but feel that the price of their own children is too high." He explains that "ideally, public schools would improve to the point that parents would feel that it is a desirable place to enroll their children" (Lloyd, 1999, p. 3). If public school systems are intent on retaining the children of parents who find alternatives appealing, they must address the concerns that contribute to the parents' dissatisfaction. Unfortunately, they may not have much control in these areas. On the other hand, it is imperative that, when public schools fail to provide an education that satisfies a large portion of parents, education alternatives must be made accessible.

Suggestions for further study

This study has answered many of the questions it set out to examine. With the exception of the prominence of religion as a crucial factor in choice, reasons parents have for choosing an independent school education in the province of Manitoba reflect similar tendencies to studies performed in other jurisdictions. However, for those seeking to understand independent school choice, much more study is required. Some recommendations for future study are suggested here.

From the results of this study, it is clear that parents choosing independent schools are very satisfied with their performance. Parents believe that their chosen (independent) school is providing an education that includes high standards, religious education, a high degree of safety, a positive environment, the opportunity for parental involvement and the

limitation of negative external influences. This list could be taken as recommendations for public schools, in that it may be necessary for public schools to seek these aspects of a child's education. But to what extent are the public schools able to control any of these conditions?

It may not be possible, or in the best interests of schools, to attempt to give an identical education to every child. Parents do not all want the same thing. Sweet (1997) cites a parent who chose an independent Jewish school for her child:

I have to do right by my child. I see her education as essential to the survival of my people. I owe that to my history and to my people. Sending her to a Jewish School isn't about rejecting others. It's protecting a culture I see in jeopardy. The more I teach her who she is, the better she can live with others. She'll have a sense of herself, of her people, in the context of Canada and the world (pp. 111-112).

Considering that not all parents want the same thing in the education of their children, any recommendation for public schools must be made with care. Further study is required to determine to what extent parents in general share the opinions of those selected for this study. That is, do parents with children enrolled in public schools believe that the six factors included in this study are significant? It is recommended that parents of public schools be included in a study on the conditions within these schools to determine which are unsatisfactory.

It would also be helpful to know to what extent parents in the public schools have similar opinions to those choosing independent schools. How many parents share the opinions of the parents in this study but do not have the resources to make the choice? How many who share these opinions and are able to make the choice, do not? What are the reasons why some parents make the choice, while others do not? This information would be valuable to public school educators. Additionally, parents in and out of the

public system might find this information interesting. That is, the information would likely assist parents in making educated choices when choosing a school for their child.

Further study on the topic of independent school choice is still needed. Initially, in examining the relevant literature, six possible factors in school choice became evident. These formed the basis from which the 28 opinion statements were developed. Since the return of the questionnaires, I have had the opportunity to reflect further on the issue of independent school choice. In addition to examining other relevant literature, I have had many conversations on the topic. The reflection has provided me with the opportunity to consider alternate rationalizations for making a choice. For example, it is possible that some parents may choose an independent school because of prestige. That is, parents simply want to give their children something that the majority of children will not, or can not, have. Further study is required to examine these possibilities.

In addition, some parents may choose home schooling. Very little is known about the kinds of parents exercising this choice and the reasons they have for doing so. It is believed that there are approximately 20,000 home-schoolers in Canada, with approximately .5% of Manitoba's school children being educated in this way (Mclean, 1998, p. 37). Many home schooling agencies claim this number could be twice as high, as a large proportion of parents do not even register for fear of interference (Mclean, 1998, p. 37). Further study in this area is necessary to determine the kind of parents making this choice and the factors influencing the choice.

Another recommendation is that parents who have children enrolled in both systems, or those who have moved their children from one system to the other, be included in a similar study. The inclusion of these parents might allow for the opportunity

to compare and contrast the public school's performance with that of an independent school. It would also be of significance to include the evaluation of parents with children enrolled in the junior and senior years in an independent school. Would the opinions expressed be similar to those of parents with children enrolled in the elementary years?

With the introduction of vouchers in the province of Ontario, an examination of student enrollment should be performed in that province. How do the opinions of parents with respect to school choice change when the opportunity to exercise choice no longer comes with such a large financial burden? Do those who choose, with the assistance of a voucher, share the same concerns with those who exercise choice without? Is the general satisfaction of parents heightened? Do parents utilizing the voucher option exhibit the kind of satisfaction parents in this study demonstrated? Also, is the number of parents exercising choice increased significantly? Any study in these areas would provide great insight into an issue that will certainly become even more significant in the future.

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Appendix 1
Introductory letter to parents

Robert Janzen
Faculty of Education/ Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba

Dear parent(s):

My name is Robert Janzen. In addition to being a public school teacher, I am a Master of Education student at the University of Manitoba. For my thesis, I am undertaking a study on school choice. The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons parents have for initially choosing to educate their children in Manitoba's independent schools. You are invited to participate in this study.

This study is of significance for two reasons. Firstly, I am interested to know if there are conditions in the public school system that are a cause of concern for parents like yourselves. Secondly, I would like to know what a private school has to offer that would lead parents to make these choices. Your participation in this study, would, therefore, be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in offering your perspective on this issue, I would ask that you complete the attached anonymous questionnaire. The questionnaire should take no longer than 15-20 minutes to complete. Upon completion of the questionnaire, please place it in the included postage-paid, pre-addressed envelope. If at all possible, return the questionnaire by _____. Please be assured that your responses will be completely confidential. Responses on the questionnaires will be analyzed, and the data will be reported on in a group fashion with no mention of the individual participant. Please note that your participation is voluntary. A completed questionnaire will be seen as an indication that you have consented to the use of your responses in the study.

Should you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study, simply contact me, at _____, your school administrator, or the teacher liaison. A copy will be mailed to you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at _____, my advisor Dr. Ed Hickcox, at _____, or the Human Ethics Secretariat of the University of Manitoba, at 474-7122. Or, should you feel more comfortable calling someone at your child's school, please call _____ (This person has agreed to be a liaison for this study).

Sincerely,

Robert Janzen

Appendix 2
Introductory letter to principal/ administrator

Robert Janzen
Faculty of Education/ Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba

Dear _____ :

My name is Robert Janzen. In addition to being a public school teacher, I am a Master of Education student at the University of Manitoba. For my thesis, I am undertaking a study on school choice. The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons parents have for choosing to educate their children in independent schools. I am asking for your assistance in completing this study.

This study is of significance for two reasons. Firstly, I am interested to know if there are conditions in the public school system that are a cause of concern for parents like the ones with a child enrolled in your school. Secondly, I would like to know what a private school has to offer that would lead parents to make these choices. Your assistance, would, therefore, be greatly appreciated.

I am asking for your permission to include parents of children in your school in this study. Please be assured that all responses will be completely confidential. Responses on the questionnaires will be analyzed and reported on with no mention of the individual participants or educational institution.

Should you agree to participate in the study, I will provide you with a summary of the results. The reasons parents have for choosing your school may be of interest to you and your staff.

I understand that this is an extremely busy time of year for you and your staff. Therefore, I will not ask you for a large commitment in terms of time and effort. Should you agree to allow your school to be a part of this study, I will ask you to mail a postage-paid package consisting of a letter explaining the study, another letter outlining your agreement to participate in the study, and a questionnaire, to the parents of one classroom (preferably a grade one class). In addition, I will ask that you number each package and record the number. Should an insufficient number of questionnaires be returned, I will ask you to repeat this process, re-mailing the packages to those parents who did not return the original. This process should insure the anonymity of the parents, as I will not know who the parents are, and you will only know who did not return the questionnaire on the first mailing. Finally, I would ask that I be allowed to contact the teacher of this grade one classroom, to solicit his/her help as a liaison for the study. This is outlined in the attached letter, to be given to the teacher of the grade one class.

I thank you for considering my request. I will contact you in the near future. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at _____, my advisor, Dr. Ed Hickcox, at _____, or the Human Ethics Secretariat of the University of Manitoba, at 474-7122.

Sincerely,

Robert Janzen

Appendix 3
School Consent Form

Please complete the following consent form with your name and signature where indicated. Thank you.

I, _____ (please print name), on behalf of _____
(please print school name), agree to participate in the aforementioned study as outlined. I understand that this will include mailing the questionnaire packages to the parents of one grade one classroom.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4
Letter of endorsement from school

Dear Parent(s):

This letter is to inform you that Mr. Robert Janzen has met with the school and outlined the format and purpose of the study 'Why some parents choose to initially enroll their children in Manitoba's independent schools'. As a result, we have agreed to cooperate with him.

Please note that you are under no obligation to respond. However, be assured that your responses will remain anonymous. In addition, the school will not have access to your individual responses, so you need not be concerned about any possible repercussions.

Sincerely yours,

School Administrator

Appendix 5
Introductory letter to teacher liaison

Robert Janzen
Faculty of Education/ Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba

Dear _____ :

Your administrator has agreed to allow me to conduct a study on school choice with parents from your school. The parents, ideally, will come from one grade one classroom. Your class has been selected. It would, therefore, be appreciated if you would act as a liaison for the study. This would mean that parents with questions about the study would have someone to call about the details. A brief outline of the study follows.

My name is Robert Janzen. In addition to being a public school teacher, I am a Master of Education student at the University of Manitoba. For my thesis, I am undertaking a study on school choice. The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons why some parents of grade one children choose to send their children to Manitoba's independent schools, instead of a public school. This study will attempt to determine the issues that parents consider important in making these choices. These considerations include the possibility that there are conditions in the public school that parents seek to avoid. Conversely, the choice could be motivated by a conscious decision for something specific in the alternative setting that a public school does not or cannot offer. This study will attempt to determine the reasons parents in Manitoba have for making their particular educational choice.

Information will be gathered by questionnaire (The questionnaire is attached for your information). Parents may be somewhat reluctant to respond freely to the questionnaire for fear of repercussions. They may be reluctant to criticize public schools. They may also be hesitant to respond freely about their feelings with respect to their school choice, fearing that their school may be made aware of their responses. Parents must be reassured that this will not occur. Responses will remain completely confidential, as I am the only one who will examine the actual questionnaire, and I will not know the identity of the respondent.

Subjects do not identify themselves on the questionnaire. However, since the school will be recording the number of the questionnaire that is being sent to each household, it would be possible to determine which household returned each questionnaire. While it would be possible to make this connection, it *would require steps that will not occur in this study*. The school will retain the lists with the numbers, while the questionnaires will be returned to me. Therefore I will know which numbers have been returned, without knowing the person(s) who responded. Similarly, the school will know who responded (if a second mailing is required), without ever seeing the responses.

In addition, all questionnaires will remain in my possession, until the completion of the study. They will then be destroyed. As a result, **parents can be assured that their responses will remain completely confidential.**

Should parents wish to know more about the study, or receive a summary of the findings, they need only contact me by phone. My home phone number will be included on the introductory letter to parents, encouraging them to contact me for these reasons. However, it is possible that parents may prefer to speak with someone that they know. It is for this possibility that I am requesting your assistance.

This study is of significance for two reasons. Firstly, I am interested to know if there are conditions in the public school system that are a cause of concern for parents like the ones with a child enrolled in your school. Secondly, I would like to know what a private school has to offer that would lead parents to make these choices. Your assistance, would, therefore, be greatly appreciated.

I understand that this is an extremely busy time of year for you. Please be assured that this is not meant to be a large burden of work for you. The extent of your responsibilities may, in fact, consist solely of being the teacher of the children of families chosen for the study.

Should you agree to participate in the study, I will provide you with a summary of the results. The reasons parents have for choosing your school may be of interest to you and your colleagues.

I thank you for considering my request. I will contact you in the near future. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at _____, my advisor, Dr. Ed Hickcox, at _____, or the Human Ethics Secretariat of the University of Manitoba, at 474-7122.

Sincerely,

Robert Janzen

Appendix 6
Questionnaire

Reasons for Choosing Independent Schools in Manitoba

A Questionnaire

Notice to participants

This purpose of this questionnaire is to research the reasons parents have for choosing to enroll their child(ren) in independent schools.

I would appreciate your taking the time to complete the enclosed questionnaire and to return it in the self-addressed postage-paid envelope.

Please note that ALL responses remain confidential. No individual or school will be identified.

Thank you for your assistance.

Robert Janzen
Graduate student
Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology, Faculty of
Education
University of Manitoba

Part A. Background information. Please circle the appropriate response.

Whose decision was it to enroll your child(ren) in an independent school?

1. Mother only
2. Father only
3. Both parents together
4. Other _____

The school that you (the parents) attended would best be described as

- | Father | Mother |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Evangelical | 1. Evangelical |
| 2. Mennonite | 2. Mennonite |
| 3. Jewish | 3. Jewish |
| 4. Catholic | 4. Catholic |
| 5. Elite Academic | 5. Elite Academic |
| 6. Public | 6. Public |
| 7. Other _____ | 7. Other _____ |

If you have more than one child attending an independent school, please respond to the following questions in terms of the child in grade one.

Does this child have any older siblings enrolled in independent schools?

1. Yes
2. No

When was the decision to enroll in an independent school made?

1. Before the child was born
2. Before child began attending kindergarten
3. When the child began grade one.

Part B. Perceived Conditions in Public Schools

Directions: Please circle a number on each of the accompanying scales that best reflects your feelings and/ or perceptions about each item.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
1. Children are physically safe in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. Public school teachers are effective.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. Instructional content often conflicts with teachings of the home.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
4. Public schools provide adequate religious instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. Children are emotionally safe in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. Public schools have effective discipline policies.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. Public schools provide quality education.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. Public schools challenge students intellectually.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. There are opportunities for parental involvement in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. There is opportunity for parental input in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11. Professionals in public schools are good role models.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12. Public schools teach morals and values.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. Public schools are an enjoyable place to be for students.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14. Public schools accepts religious perspectives.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
15. There are too many disruptive and unruly students in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
16. Public schools provide an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
17. Academic expectations are high in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
18. Instruction about the Bible and God is important in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19. Public schools effectively control disruptive and unruly students.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
20. Students feel a sense of belonging in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
21. Illicit drugs are prevalent in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

22. Parents feel a sense of belonging in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
23. Alcohol consumption is prevalent among students in public schools	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
24. Public schools are communities of people sharing a common goal.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
25. Public schools are overburdened.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
26. Behavioral expectations of students are high in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
27. Students in public schools are strongly influenced by a culture of sexual promiscuity.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
28. Class sizes are small in public schools.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Part C. Conditions in the Independent School your child attends.

Directions: Please circle a number on each of the accompanying that best reflects your feelings and/ or perceptions about each item.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
1. Children are physically safe.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. Teachers are effective.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. Instructional content often conflicts with teachings of the home.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. Religious instruction is an important part of the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. Children are emotionally safe.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. The school has an effective discipline policy.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. The school provides a quality education.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. The school adequately challenges students intellectually.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. There is opportunity for parental involvement.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
10. There is opportunity for parental input.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11. Teachers are good role models.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12. The school teaches morals and values.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. The school is an enjoyable place to be for children.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14. The school accepts religious perspectives.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
15. There are few disruptive and unruly students in the school.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
16. The school provides an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
17. Academic expectations are high.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
18. Instruction about the Bible and God is important in the school.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19. The school effectively controls disruptive and unruly students.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
20. The school provides a sense of belonging for students.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
21. The use of illicit drugs is prevalent.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
22. The school provides a sense of belonging for the parents.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
23. The use of alcohol is prevalent.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
24. The school is a community of people sharing a common goal.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
25. The school's philosophy mirrors that of the home.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
26. Behavioral expectations of students are high.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
27. Students are strongly influenced by a culture of sexual promiscuity.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
28. Class sizes are small.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Part D.

1. Are there any other conditions not included in the above lists that you feel played a significant part in your decision? Please list them.

2. Please rank order the five most important conditions (i.e. '1' being most significant and '5' being the least significant).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Appendix 7

Factors given by parents (in Part D of the questionnaire) influencing their choice of the independent school (the number in each cell under the column labelled #1 represents the number of parents indicating the corresponding factor as the most important reason.

A number in each cell under the column labelled #2 represents the number of parents indicating the corresponding factor as the second most important reason.)

**Table 31
Watercrest Academy**

Influencing factors	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Seeking improved physical safety	1	1	1	1	2
In search of effective teachers	1				
Seeking instructional content that mirrors the home	1		1		
Desire for religious instruction	1	1			
Seeking improved emotional safety		2	1	1	3
Seeking effective discipline policy			1	1	1
In search of a quality education		1	2		
Wanting students to be challenged intellectually					
Seeking opportunities for parental involvement					
Seeking opportunities for parental input				1	1
Wanting teachers who are good role models		2	1	2	1
Seeking teaching of morals and values	1	2	1	1	1
Wanting a school that is enjoyable		2		1	
Wanting a school that accepts religious perspectives					
Seeking a school not disrupted by unruly students				1	
In search of an atmosphere conducive to learning				1	
A desire for high academic expectations		2	2	1	
Wanting instruction about the Bible and God		1	1	1	1
A school that provides a sense of belonging for students			1		
Seeking a school free from the use of illicit drugs		1			1
A school that provides a sense of belonging for parents			1		
Seeking a school free from the use of alcohol		1			1
Seeking a school with a philosophy that mirrors the home	4		1		1
Wanting a school with high behavioral expectations			1	1	

Seeking a school with small class size					1
Seeking a school free from the influence of sexual promiscuity		1			1
Seeking a school community with common goals					1
Teaching a personal relationship with Jesus Christ	3				
Seeking high moral and ethical expectations	1		1	1	
Wanting children to have friends of same (Christian) values		1		1	1
Seeking a school in charge of the condition of its atmosphere	1				
Seeking a school where God's word is in all work	1				
Seeking religious educational freedom	1				
Teachers who can hug students-get involved in their lives				1	1
Reinforcement of self-esteem		1			

Table 32
Lakeshore Elementary

Influencing factors	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Seeking improved physical safety	2			2	1
In search of effective teachers				1	
Seeking instructional content that mirrors the home					
Desire for religious instruction	3	3	2		
Seeking improved emotional safety	1		2	2	
Seeking effective discipline policy					
In search of a quality education	1	3	1	1	
Wanting students to be challenged intellectually					
Seeking opportunities for parental involvement		2			1
Seeking opportunities for parental input					
Wanting teachers who are good role models		1			2
Seeking teaching of morals and values	1	1	1		
Wanting a school that is enjoyable					
Wanting a school that accepts religious perspectives					
Seeking a school not disrupted by unruly students		1		2	1
In search of an atmosphere conducive to learning	1		2		2

A desire for high academic expectations	1		2		
Wanting instruction about the Bible and God	1	1		2	
A school that provides a sense of belonging for students			2		
Seeking a school free from the use of illicit drugs					
A school that provides a sense of belonging for parents		1	2		
Seeking a school free from the use of alcohol					
Seeking a school with a philosophy that mirrors the home	2		1		1
Wanting a school with high behavioral expectations			2	1	
Seeking a school with small class size	1	1		2	1
Seeking a school free from the influence of sexual promiscuity					
Seeking a school community with common goals	2	1		1	2
Seeking a quality music program				2	
Seeking a school that provides individual attention	1				
Seeking a small school			1	1	
Teaching of a second language			1		
Seeking a school with high moral standards		2			

Table 33
Emily Morris

Influencing factors	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Seeking improved physical safety		1			
In search of effective teachers				1	2
Seeking instructional content that mirrors the home					
Desire for religious instruction					
Seeking improved emotional safety		1			
Seeking effective discipline policy		1			
In search of a quality education	3				
Wanting students to be challenged intellectually			1		1
Seeking opportunities for parental involvement		1			
Seeking opportunities for parental input					
Wanting teachers who are good role models			1		2

Seeking teaching of morals and values	2				
Wanting a school that is enjoyable					
Wanting a school that accepts religious perspectives					
Seeking a school not disrupted by unruly students	1	1			
In search of an atmosphere conducive to learning	1	2	2		
A desire for high academic expectations	6	2		1	
Wanting instruction about the Bible and God					
A school that provides a sense of belonging for students	1				
Seeking a school free from the use of illicit drugs					
A school that provides a sense of belonging for parents					
Seeking a school free from the use of alcohol					
Seeking a school with a philosophy that mirrors the home					
Wanting a school with high behavioral expectations	1	2	2	1	
Seeking a school with small class size	1	1	1		
Seeking a school free from the influence of sexual promiscuity					
Seeking a school community with common goals				1	
Seeking a school that is well equipped					2
Seeking a school that values Phys-ed.				2	1
Knowledge of the schools reputation					1
Seeking a school with strong values	1				

Table 34
St. Francis

Influencing factors	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Seeking improved physical safety	1		1		1
In search of effective teachers		1			
Seeking instructional content that mirrors the home					
Desire for religious instruction				1	
Seeking improved emotional safety			1		
Seeking effective discipline policy				1	
In search of a quality education				1	

Wanting students to be challenged intellectually	1			
Seeking opportunities for parental involvement		1		1
Seeking opportunities for parental input				
Wanting teachers who are good role models			1	
Seeking teaching of morals and values			1	
Wanting a school that is enjoyable	1		1	
Wanting a school that accepts religious perspectives				
Seeking a school not disrupted by unruly students				1
In search of an atmosphere conducive to learning				
A desire for high academic expectations	1	1		1
Wanting instruction about the Bible and God	1			
A school that provides a sense of belonging for students			1	
Seeking a school free from the use of illicit drugs				
A school that provides a sense of belonging for parents			1	
Seeking a school free from the use of alcohol				
Seeking a school with a philosophy that mirrors the home	1			
Wanting a school with high behavioral expectations		2		
Seeking a school with small class size	1			
Seeking a school free from the influence of sexual promiscuity				
Seeking a school community with common goals			1	
Seeking a school with a Christian attitude			1	1
Proximity to home				1
Seeking a dress code		1		
Seeking a small enrollment	1			
Wanting a school that teaches the entire child				2
Seeking a school with a positive, respectful and caring atmosphere		1	1	1
Seeking a school free from rough play and foul language	1			
Seeking a school that promotes emotional development	1			

Table 37
All Schools

Influencing factors	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Seeking improved physical safety	4	2	2	3	4
In search of effective teachers	1	1	0	2	2
Seeking instructional content that mirrors the home	1	0	1	0	0
Desire for religious instruction	4	4	2	1	0
Seeking improved emotional safety	1	3	4	3	2
Seeking effective discipline policy	0	1	1	2	1
In search of a quality education	4	4	3	2	0
Wanting students to be challenged intellectually	1	0	1	0	1
Seeking opportunities for parental involvement	0	4	0	0	2
Seeking opportunities for parental input	0	0	0	1	1
Wanting teachers who are good role models	0	3	2	3	5
Seeking teaching of morals and values	2	5	3	2	2
Wanting a school that is enjoyable	1	2	1	1	0
Wanting a school that accepts religious perspectives	0	0	0	0	0
Seeking a school not disrupted by unruly students	0	2	1	4	1
In search of an atmosphere conducive to learning	1	1	4	3	0
A desire for high academic expectations	8	3	5	1	2
Wanting instruction about the Bible and God	2	2	1	3	2
A school that provides a sense of belonging for students	0	1	4	0	0
Seeking a school free from the use of illicit drugs	0	1	0	0	1
A school that provides a sense of belonging for parents	0	1	4	0	0
Seeking a school free from the use of alcohol	0	1	0	0	1
Seeking a school with a philosophy that mirrors the home	7	0	2	0	2
Wanting a school with high behavioral expectations	1	4	5	3	0
Seeking a school with small class size	2	2	1	3	2
Seeking a school free from the influence of sexual promiscuity	0	1	0	0	1
Seeking a school with a Christian attitude	0	0	1	0	1
Proximity to home	0	0	0	0	1
Seeking a dress code	0	1	0	0	0

Seeking a small enrollment	1	0	0	0	0
Wanting a school that teaches the entire child	0	0	0	2	0
Seeking a school with a positive, respectful and caring atmosphere	0	1	1	1	0
Seeking a school free from rough play and foul language	1	0	0	0	0
Seeking a school that promotes emotional development	1	0	0	0	0
Seeking a school that is well equipped	0	0	0	0	2
Seeking a school that values Phys-ed.	0	0	0	2	1
Knowledge of the schools reputation	0	0	0	0	1
Seeking a school with strong values	0	1	0	0	0
Seeking a quality music program	0	0	0	2	0
Seeking a school that provides individual attention	1	0	0	0	0
Seeking a small school	0	0	1	1	0
Teaching of a second language	0	0	1	0	0
Seeking a school with high moral standards	0	2	0	0	0
Seeking a quality music program	0	0	0	2	0
Seeking a school that provides individual attention	1	0	0	0	0
Seeking a small school	0	0	1	1	0
Teaching of a second language	0	0	1	0	0
Seeking a school with high moral standards	0	2	0	0	0
Seeking a school community with common goals	2	1	1	2	3
