High School Choice in Southwest Washington School District

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Abstract

This quality-improvement project examines why families choose one high school over another in Southwest Washington School District (SWSD), which is in a relatively affluent, educated and homogenous area. The goal was to address enrollment attrition in their PBL program, where each yearly cohort has been losing half of its students by graduation, with most students returning to their neighborhood school. The overarching question is why students and parents choose one school over another and why they are leaving the PBL program. I attempted to survey all 7th-10th grade students and parents in SWSD. 54% of students responded and 28% of parents responded. Respondents rated how influential 19 different factors were in their school choice and answered open-ended questions related to why they did or did not choose each high school option. To analyze the factor ratings, I used latent class analyses in RStudio to reveal sub-groupings of respondents. For the open-ended questions, I did an inductive thematic analysis. The primary factors of influence across the district were Learning Preference, Welcoming Environment, Familiarity, Instruction Model, Social Fit, Unique Needs, Friend Influence, Extra-Curricular Activities, Proximity and Course Offerings. Students who chose the PBL program fit three distinct patterns, and students who chose their neighborhood school fit six distinct patterns. I recommended that the district develop a united vision for the PBL program, increase the rigor and offerings of the PBL program and build a broader network for purposes of collaboration, publicity and student recruitment.

Keywords: student preference, student motivation, project-based learning, school choice

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High School Choice in Southwest Washington School District

Executive Summary

This quality-improvement project examines why families choose one high school over another in Southwest Washington School District (SWSD), with the goal of addressing enrollment attrition at Journey High School, the district's project-based learning high school of choice. SWSD is a mid-sized, traditional, public school district that serves the residents of Southwest, a small town in southwest Washington, in the metropolitan area of Portland, Oregon.

SWSD offers its 2400 high school students four high school options, consisting of one traditional comprehensive high school, Southwest Washington High School (SWHS) and three schools of choice, the project-based learning campus (Journey High School and Inquiry Middle School), Smith High School and Virtual Academy. SWHS and Journey-Inquiry are the only two of these options that are meant to serve a broad population and these schools are the focus of this research. SWSD would prefer to shift about 255 students from SWHS to Journey in order to maximize Journey's potential and reduce crowding at SWHS.

Problem of Practice

Each cohort of PBL students has lost (or is on track to lose) about half of its students between its first year and graduation, with most students returning to their neighborhood school. The overarching question is why students and parents choose one school over another and why they are leaving Journey High School or Inquiry Middle School.

Research Synthesis. Berends (2019b) reviewed scholarship on school choice, drawing on four conceptual lenses that helped guide my analysis of how and why families choose K-12 schools: Rational Choice, Institutional, Social Capital and Social Organization. These four lenses overlap in some ways, but each offers a focus on essential elements of student and parent decision-making. These lenses constitute the conceptual framework for this project in the sense that they highlight overt and latent ways that families choose schools.

I did not find any recent studies that specifically analyzed student preferences, although Schneider (2022) did find that "in making decisions about high school selection, parents relied much more on their understanding of their children's needs and preferences than other factors" and proposed that further exploration of student preferences be carried out in the future.

Research has found that the most influential factors for parents are academics, followed by school safety, specialized program, social programs, school and class size, convenience, teacher attentiveness, diversity, social networks and teacher effectiveness. (Altenhofen et al., 2016; Austin & Berends, 2018; Catt & Rhinesmith, 2017; Sattin-Bajaj et al., 2018; M. Schneider et al., 2002a; R. J. Schneider, 2022; Stewart & Wolf, 2014)

Project Questions

1. What school-related factors influence the high school enrollment decisions of 7th-10th grade SWSD students and parents, especially in relation to Southwest Washington High School and Journey High School?
   a. Do students and parents differ and, if so, how do they differ?

2. How influential are parents/guardians in SWSD student enrollment decisions?

3. How do 7th-10th grade SWSD students and parents perceive and differentiate between Southwest Washington High School and Journey High School?
   a. Do students and parents differ and, if so, how do they differ?

Design. I attempted to survey all 7th-10th grade students and parents in SWSD. 54% of students responded and 28% of parents responded. Respondents rated how influential 19 different factors were in their school choice. If they left a school, they rated how influential additional factors were for why they left. Respondents also answered open-ended questions related to why they chose their school and why they did not choose their other options. Other questions related to who made the decision and how seriously various options were considered.

Analysis. For the factor ratings, I first grouped respondents by their school of choice and then did latent class analyses (LCAs) in RStudio to reveal sub-groupings of respondents based on patterns in how they rated the factors. For the open-ended questions, I inductively coded themes in the responses and tallied these encodings by school of choice.

Findings

Question #1 Based on the LCAs, Students that chose Journey High School fit three distinct subgroups, while students that chose Southwest Washington High School fit six distinct subgroups. Parent and student subgroups roughly align. (See LCA Sub-Group Summary below)

The primary factors of influence toward Journey were Learning Preference, Welcoming Environment, Familiarity, Instruction Model, Social Fit, Unique Needs and Friends of Students. These are roughly in order of importance, although not every factor was important to every subgroup.

The primary factors of influence toward SWHS were Friends, Extra-Curricular Activities, Familiarity, Learning Preference, Social Fit, Proximity and Course Offerings. Again, not every factor was important to every subgroup.

Question #2 SWSD 7th-10th grade students are the primary drivers of their own high school enrollment decisions.

Question #3 Students had a generally negative view of Journey High School and a generally positive view of SWHS, although the degree of positivity toward SWHS was smaller than the degree of negativity toward Journey-Inquiry. Negative responses include those that described a school with non-specific negative terms such as dislike, terrible, etc. or that gave examples of low quality based on experience. Positive responses used non-specific positive terms such as loved, enjoyed, etc. or gave examples of high quality based on experience.

Student survey respondents expressed 6.6 negative views of the PBL program for every positive view. Student respondents expressed 2.8 positive views of SWHS for every negative view.

LCA Sub-Group Summary

Journey Choosers	
True PBL Fans (78-100)	1st. Learning Pref 2nd. Environment 3rd. Familiarity
Stick with Friends (42-54)	1st. Friends 2nd. Learning Pref
Haven (33-43)	1st. Learning Pref 1st. Environment 1st. Scheduling 1st. Social Fit 1st. Unique Needs

SWHS Choosers that considered Journey	
Reluctants (65-127)	1st. Friends 1st. Courses 2nd. Extra-Curr
Enthusiasts (31-61)	1st. Extra-Curr 2nd. Friends 2nd. Courses 3rd. Social Fit

SWHS Choosers that did not consider Journey	
Extrovert Traditional Learners (239-530)	1st. Friends 2nd. Learning Pref 2nd. Social Fit 3rd. Extra-Curr
Introvert Traditional Learners (178-395)	1st. Extra-Curr 2nd. Courses 3rd. Friends 3rd. Learning Pref
Papermaker Pack (175-388)	1st. Friends 2nd. Familiarity 3rd. Social Fit 3rd. Proximity
Unengaged (172-381)	1st. Friends 2nd. Proximity 3rd. Parents

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. *Work to ensure that teachers, parents, students and administrators have a united vision and standard for excellence in the PBL program.* As part of this envisioning process, one step is to institute a framework for continuous improvement cycles. Another step is to integrate community partners with the aforementioned teachers, parents, students and administrators, and to structure themselves as a consistent and persistent Advisory Team. Concurrently, Journey could form a networked improvement community (NIC) with the several existing PBL schools in the area for mutual support. One of the first tasks for the advisory team and NIC is to articulate and deeply analyze the problems, challenges and opportunities that Journey is facing. Another initial task is to define the type of improvement process that they want to embrace. These steps would build the foundation for quality improvement and create a broad base of support to promote the positive perception of Journey.

Recommendation 2. *Increase the rigor and offerings of their PBL program.* One avenue to do this is to become an International Baccalaureate (IB) school, as IB aligns well with principles of PBL and has a reputation as a serious and challenging academic option. Another avenue is to expand their specialized offerings (such as their engineering program). By doing this through professional and collegiate partnerships, they would enable students to access and contribute to real workplace endeavors, internships, research partnerships, certifications, technical skills and other such initiatives that would help dissuade naysayers and further demonstrate that Journey is a place that challenges all students.

Recommendation 3. *Publicize the vision and work of the school and create a larger market for students.* If they develop networks and partnerships as described in the first two recommendations, they can capitalize on these partnerships to disseminate their developments and successes. Part of this process is also to partner with other district schools of all levels, and especially with middle and elementary schools in order to increase the richness of learning opportunities for students in each school and to create interest among future students.

Current Journey students should play a central role in these actions, especially in regards to clarifying the vision, collaborating on continuous improvement, guiding additional offerings and marketing the schools. In this way, students would be involved in an essential form of project-based learning, demonstrating how Journey facilitates real-world problem solving and life skills and meaningful work that matters to students now and in the future.

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I. Introduction

For this quality-improvement project, I partnered with the Southwest Washington School District* (SWSD) in the city of Southwest, Washington. SWSD is a mid-sized, traditional, public school district that serves the residents of Southwest, a small town in southwest Washington, in the metropolitan area of Portland, Oregon.

SWSD's problem of practice is under-enrollment and enrollment attrition at Journey High School, the district's project-based learning (PBL) high school of choice. The issues at SWSD's PBL campus may be of interest to any high school of choice, and especially those that may have a similar location and profile. Southwest has traditionally had only one high school, and that high school has an excellent reputation. The city is relatively affluent and ethnically homogenous. Furthermore, the state of Washington has not historically been a choice-rich environment in regards to public schooling options.

The purpose of this capstone project is to discover the factors that influence the high school enrollment choices off students and families in Southwest Washington School District. By better understanding the preferences, needs and desires of their student population, SWSD's leaders can make informed decisions to improve their programming, tailor their offerings and communicate how their schools meet their families' needs and desires.

** Most place and school names in this paper are pseudonyms, in order to create basic search engine anonymity. The actual names and places are easily deduced from the available information.*

II. Organizational Context

Southwest Washington School District (SWSD) is a mid-sized, traditional, public school district that serves the residents of Southwest, Washington and some surrounding areas. The total population of SWSD's service area, student and non-student, is about 32,894 (NCES, 2020). Southwest is situated along the Columbia River, a short distance from the larger cities of Vancouver, Washington and Portland, Oregon. It was founded as a papermill town and the mill was the central point of the town and essentially the sole employer until the 1990s. Since the 1990s, the town has seen an influx of white-collar and high-tech businesses and the population has grown from about 6400 people in 1990 to 26,000 in 2020, making it one of the more rapidly-growing areas in the Pacific Northwest. According to NCES, the served community is about 80% white, 8% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 2% black and 7% other races or mixed races, with a median household income (MHI) of $111,000, although the more recent census puts Southwest's MHI at $121,000. By comparison, the MHI of Washington is about $82,400 and the MHI of Oregon is about $70,084 (United States Census Bureau, 2022b, 2022c). NCES also indicates that 61% of Southwest Washington School District parents have a bachelor degree or higher, compared to 46% nationally (NCES, 2022). In short, Southwest is relatively affluent and educated and according to the school district's stated history, education has long been supported by and enmeshed with local industry.

For the 2022-23 school year, SWSD budgeted an enrollment of 7106 students from K-12, with 2941 in elementary (K-5), 1678 in middle school (6-8) and 2487 in high school (9-12). SWSD operates four high school programs, consisting of one traditional comprehensive high school, Southwest Washington High School (SWHS) and three programs of choice, Journey High School, Smith High School and Virtual Academy. Running Start is an additional dual-enrollment program which is operated separately by Clark County Community College. For

middle school, SWSD operates two traditional, geographically-zoned middle schools, Delta Middle School and Gamma Middle School, as well as two programs of choice, Inquiry Middle School and Virtual Academy.

Virtual is an entirely virtual program, with options from Kindergarten through 12th grade, which was largely born out of the pandemic. Smith is designed to provide flexible learning options in an intentionally-small environment. Journey and SWHS are designed to appeal to a broader enrollment.

Journey (9th-12th) and Inquiry (6th-8th) comprise a Project-Based Learning (PBL) program. Both schools are located on the same property in Southwest and the schools often share resources. Most Journey students matriculate from Inquiry Middle School. Both PBL schools opened in Fall of 2018 with 6th – 9th grade and Journey added a new grade level in each subsequent year, until it reached 12th grade in the 2021-22 school year. Inquiry is currently budgeted for about 20% of all SWSD middle school students and Journey about 8% of all SWSD high school students.

SWHS is a traditional comprehensive high school that offers Advanced Placement courses and a variety of extra-curricular activities such as rocketry, theater, band, etc. Its sports programs are regionally competitive and highly selective. SWHS is highly ranked in popular school-ranking publications.

SWSD's mission is "…to create a learning community where students, staff, and citizens are involved jointly in the advancement of knowledge and personal growth … (with) lifelong learners who are independent and motivated, compassionate, ethical, and contributing members of society" (Southwest Washington School District, 2020). Students, parents and staff have a clear interest in increasing the quality of all schools. The community at large is also a stakeholder, especially as Southwest is a relatively small community. The schools play a

prominent role in community life and school quality is a major part of what attracts residents to the area (confirmed by the results of the survey administered as part of this research).

This project focuses primarily on Journey and SWHS, as these are designed to appeal to a broad population and comprise the majority of SWSD high school students. The results of this research may inform the design of offerings at either school as well as quality improvement in general and the way the district communicates about these schools.

III. Problem of Practice

While the combined Inquiry-Journey campus has met its growth goals, the campus also has capacity for an additional 200-300 students, which it has been unable to meet as it is currently enrolling all who wish to enroll at each grade level (A. Smith, personal communication, September 23, 2022). Table 1 below shows the change in enrollment in each cohort of the PBL program (Inquiry and Journey) compared to each cohort of the traditional program (Gamma, Delta and SWHS) over the same time period (OSPI, 2022). This does not include students who changed schools or left the district during the first year of their cohort. All percentages refer to the original size of the cohort at the end of the first year. For example, for the PBL Cohort that began in 2018-19 and graduated in 2021-2022, 83.2% of the original cohort remained at the end of 10th grade, 54% at the end of 9th grade, and 52.2% at the end of 12th grade.

Table 1 – Enrollment Trends – Southwest Washington School District - PBL Campus vs Neighborhood Schools

Class of	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Avg Change per Year	Total Change
PBL 2022				100%	83.2%	54.0%	52.2%	***-15.9%***	***-47.8%***
Trad 2022				100%	100.8%	104.3%	99.0%	***-0.3%***	***-1.0%***
PBL 2023			100%	98.4%	85.2%	70.5%	54.1%	***-11.5%***	***-45.9%***
Trad 2023			100%	107.5%	105.0%	94.8%	92.5%	***-1.9%***	***-7.5%***
PBL 2024		100%	83.5%	77.2%	72.2%	55.7%		***-11.1%***	***-44.3%***
Trad 2024		100%	105.7%	101.8%	96.6%	86.8%		***-3.3%***	***-13.2%***
PBL 2025	100%	94.0%	83.1%	62.7%	51.8%			***-12.0%***	***-48.2%***
Trad 2025	100%	106.1%	105.1%	103.2%	102.8%			***0.7%***	***2.8%***
PBL 2026	100%	81.2%	81.2%	64.4%				***-11.9%***	***-35.6%***
Trad 2026	100%	100.6%	98.2%	99.6%				***-0.1%***	***-0.4%***
PBL 2027	100%	96.3%	78.9%					***-10.6%***	***-21.1%***
Trad 2027	100%	95.8%	104.4%					***2.2%***	***4.4%***
PBL 2028	100%	95.4%						***-4.6%***	***-4.6%***
Trad 2028	100%	105.4%						***5.4%***	***5.4%***
PBL 2029	100%								
Trad 2029	100%								

Avg Change PBL Cohorts		-8.3%	-11.2%	-11.3%	-11.5%	-20.1%	-9.1%		
Avg Change Trad Cohorts		2.0%	2.7%	0.8%	-1.8%	-5.5%	-3.8%		

The first four PBL cohorts have all lost almost half of their original enrollment size over the life of the cohort and the next two PBL cohorts are on track to do the same. (It is too early to tell for the youngest two cohorts, the classes of 2028 and 2029). While the district expects some students to opt out of non-standard programs when they begin ninth grade, this enrollment decline is larger than SWSD would prefer (A. Smith, personal communication, September 23, 2022) and represents a problem of practice and a lost opportunity for Journey. The problem that drives this project, therefore, is the enrollment loss at Journey and Inquiry as well as SWSD's desire to serve more students through its PBL program.

Increasing the enrollment at Journey would allow the school to increase staffing and provide a dedicated teacher team at each grade level that could structure the learning program in their preferred way (A. Smith, personal communication, September 23, 2022). Increased Journey enrollment would also reduce potential crowding issues at SWHS. Inquiry currently has about 110 students per grade level. If Journey could maintain that enrollment it would have 440 students, about 17.7% of all high school students. 80% retention would comprise 352 students, about 14% of all high school students. Alternately, if Inquiry could increase demand to about 140 students per grade level in 6^{th}-8^{th} grade, and Journey followed with 60% retention, then the Inquiry-Journey campus would fulfill its capacity of 700-800 students. Either scenario requires a better understanding of student preferences, needs and perceptions, and an ability to convert that understanding into increased demand, as both schools have already satisfied current demand.

Regardless of the physical capacity of the buildings, the relatively high enrollment attrition indicates a problem exists, with any number of possible causes. One possible cause for this enrollment attrition may be risk aversion, especially when it comes to a student's high school choice and their final academic preparation before college. While the family may be willing to engage in non-traditional options for middle school, the perception of higher stakes in high

school and the uncertainty of how colleges may perceive a non-traditional high school option may affect the corresponding enrollment decision. Another possible cause is Southwest' traditionalism in general. Southwest has long been a "one high school" town and residents may invest a lot of emotion into having a classic high school experience together with their neighborhood peers and, in some cases, students may not even know that they have a variety of high school options. Correspondingly, some students (or their parents) may perceive Journey as a place for students who don't "fit in," or they may group Journey, SHS and VA under one umbrella, even though there may be many different types of students who could desire any of those schools and have a successful experience there. While Journey does provide means for its students to participate in SWHS athletics and activities, it does not offer the entire gamut of AP courses that some students may desire.

In this investigation, I will examine the factors, preferences and perceptions that affect enrollment decisions among SWSD students and their parents, as both are the primary stakeholders that SWSD is seeking to understand and serve more effectively. I will execute the survey in a way that asks about all of the high school choices to avoid perpetuating any particular narrative in the process of doing the investigation. Furthermore, understanding student preferences across the entire set of high school options can allow SWSD to serve its students more effectively.

Including 7^{th}-8^{th} grade students and parents creates insight into future potential families, and this information may also be useful for increasing middle school enrollment at Inquiry across all middle school grades. Insight from 9^{th}-10^{th} grade students and parents will also shed light on how to increase high school enrollment or avoid attrition. The survey population can be divided into those who 1) began and stayed at Inquiry-Journey, 2) left other SWSD programs for Inquiry-Journey, 3) left Inquiry-Journey for other programs and 4) never enrolled in Inquiry-Journey.

The results of student surveys will inform how SWSD attempts to meet the needs of each student, as well as how they communicate with and inform students and families of their high school options in order to meet enrollment goals for Journey and balance high school enrollment within the capacities of their existing schools. Specifically, the data may also inform changes or additions to the Journey offerings to appeal to a broader swath of students. The investigation seeks to help SWSD thoroughly understand its current state and root its decisions firmly in student desires and needs.

IV. Review of Literature

Overview and Guiding Questions

In seeking to inform this quality improvement project with Southwest Washington School District, a relatively affluent, educated and homogenous school district in a suburban/rural area on the outskirts of a major metropolitan area, I started by seeking sources that most closely approximated these same conditions and that focused on the factors that led to a student or parent decision or shaped their desires. Few articles focused on the decision from the student perspective. A larger body of research exists that focuses on the perspective of parents and guardians as decision-makers. (For the sake of this literature review, I will use "parent" to encompass any type of parent or guardian. I will use "family" to intentionally group students and parents together.) Given a relative lack of research that is specifically analogous to Southwest Washington School District in Southwest, Washington, I will also review research that focuses on why families choose schools in other contexts.

For the sake of maintaining a clear scope and focus, I was careful to avoid research that focused on the impacts of families' choices on school systems or society at large. While the impact that a school has on students in general may be part of the reason that families choose a particular school, I strived to avoid research that focused on if or how a given type of school choice impacts a set of students. To illustrate, an article on why students or parents chose a Charter STEM Academy in suburban Michigan would be of great interest, as would research that explored whether those students persisted at that Academy (i.e. continued to choose it). But studies on whether charter schools increase test scores or graduation rates in general is outside of my scope as is research regarding whether STEM academies cherry pick the best students and negatively impact zoned schools or affect segregation within a school district or a city.

In presenting the literature review findings, I will give a brief broad contextualization and narrow back down to situations and contexts most similar to Southwest Washington School

District. I will outline extant literature related 1) defining school choice, 2) the contexts students or parents exercise choice in middle and high school, 3) conceptualizing a framework for school choice, and 4) factors that determine where students attend high school.

What is school choice?

In the broadest terms, school choice is any action that a family exerts to choose a preferred school or avoid a non-preferred school. This may seem excessively broad, but it may also be the aspect of school choice historically most-associated with wealthy families. Families with means to afford houses in a particular neighborhood or with means to afford private school often exercise those means. Even when families may not be able to afford a home that is zoned to their first choice, they may have enough means to afford a home that prevents them from having to attend their least-preferred choices (Holme, 2002).

In what contexts do families experience public-school choice?

In the confines of public schooling in a given geographic area (i.e. not determined by selection of residence), caregivers and students may have 1) only one option and therefore no functional choice, 2) a choice of district-run magnet schools or intra-district charters, which may be either open-enrollment (often with a lottery) or may have admission criteria (Goldring et al., 2009), 3) non-district charter school options, such as those sponsored by state agencies, non-profit agencies, charter management organizations or other entities (Berends, 2019a), 4) the opportunity to apply publicly-funded vouchers to private school tuition (Berends, 2019a) or 5) online options, either associated with their home district or with other organizations (Watson, 2007). There may also be additional options or mechanisms related to choosing a public school other than the one you are geographically assigned to, including boundary exceptions into

neighboring districts, though these are space- and discretion-dependent and are not open-enrollment options.

The number of choices depends on the size and structure of the school district (in regards to magnets or intra-district charters), whether or not the state allows charters or vouchers, and the number of charter options available, which is generally more in larger cities or in states with a longer history of granting charters. Thus, a family in Houston, Texas (a large urban area with a long charter history) may have more than 20 open-enrollment, high school options within a reasonable distance. Families in Vancouver, Washington (a smaller urban area without any charter schools) have 4 open-enrollment options. Southwest, Washington, the smaller suburban/rural district adjacent to Vancouver has 4 options, so while they may have a lot of options for their size and location, it is still a relatively small number compared to many areas nationwide.

Staying in the geographically-designated school when a magnet or charter option exists must also be considered a choice, especially when we re-factor in the idea that many families exercise school choice by choosing their residence. (Spencer-Robinson, 2022)

Conceptual Framework for School Choice

Berends (2019b) articulated four lenses or perspectives that we may use when analyzing how students (and parents) choose schools: Rational Choice, Institutional, Social Capital and Social Organization. These four lenses are overlapping, but each provides a focus on essential elements of student motivation.

In the school choice context, Rational Choice Theory relies on three major factors, “information, available choices, and a cost-benefit analysis of the best option” (Berends, 2019).

Rational Choice therefore depends on the goals for the student's education and whether the student has access to adequate information to determine if a particular choice will facilitate the student's goals. While this is often associated with test scores, graduation rates and other concrete metrics, a student may also view social factors such as the quality of peers through the rational lens of how peers may contribute to future career opportunities.

The institutional perspective expresses "that all schools operate within highly institutionalized environments, which shape what counts as legitimate schooling." (Berends, 2019). Students and families may have developed a notion of what school should look like, feel like and sound like. These notions may include the format of the classrooms, whether there is a centralized curriculum, the certification level of teachers, class size and testing practices, among many other possibilities (Berends, 2019a). These factors may cause some families to discredit the possibility that a school offers a rigorous academic path, due to an institutional perspective that favors AP courses or structured classrooms, for example.

The social capital perspective encompasses the idea that "networks of administrators, teachers, parents, and children generate social capital at the school level as a means to create an educational setting conducive to the exchange of social norms and information (Hallinan, 2010). It can be understood as a group resource that promotes the success of students through the function of trust mechanisms (Bryk & Schneider, 2002)" (Berends, 2019). Schneider et al (2002b), described examples of parents who choose schools where their involvement in the local PTA or other volunteer activities may increase their social capital. Other possible examples include choosing one school over another due to the influential parents of a peer student. Another more student-focused example may be if a student fears losing the esteem of peers by choosing a different school than their peers, thereby spending less time with them and being seen as outside the social norm.

The social organization perspective broadens the social capital view to include the way relationships within a classroom and a school may strengthen a student on a day-to-day basis as well as the way that the social environment may create or hinder community and belonging (Berends, 2019b). Choosing a private school because it has a well-known teacher exemplifies the social capital perspective. Choosing that same school because that same teacher is known to go above and beyond to support students exemplifies a social organization lens. Social organization would also include elements of school spirit or social rituals that connect to the school's heritage.

The use of the Berends conceptual framework allows me to identify the key orientations that may drive student and parent choices when it comes to selecting a high school. This frame served as the basis of my survey design and the foundation for analyzing the survey and open-ended questions from the survey.

What factors determine where students attend high school?

I did not find any recent studies that specifically analyzed student preferences, although Schneider (2022) did find that "in making decisions about high school selection, parents relied much more on their understanding of their children's needs and preferences than other factors" and proposed that further exploration of student preferences be carried out in the future. In this study, 85 parents of 8th grade students in Erie, Pennsylvania ranked their most important factors (from a set of pre-determined choices) for why they chose their preferred school (out of a choice of 4 public high schools and 2 private schools), and 10 of those 85 parents were interviewed. The Erie metro area is similar in size to the Vancouver/Southwest metro area and has a similar number of school choices, although its residents have a much lower median income. The research found that the biggest factors were 1) Academics, followed by 2) School Safety, 3) Specialized Programs and 4) Social Programs (R. J. Schneider, 2022).

Altenhofen et al. (2016) did a phone survey of 553 parents who applied to at least one of six elementary charter schools located in wealthy, suburban school districts adjacent to Denver, Colorado. The community-type, economic and ethnic profile of these families is similar to Southwest, although the study focus was on elementary choices and the study population ignored those parents that chose to remain in their zoned school. In both closed- and open-ended responses they found that academic characteristics were the most important, as described as "Good teachers", "Reputation for academic quality" and "Core Knowledge Curriculum". Safety and discipline also ranked highly, as did small class sizes and ability grouping (Altenhofen et al., 2016).

Holme (2002) found that parents relied on social networks and especially the opinions of high-status people within their networks. Relatedly, they also used social indicators of status when choosing schools, including avoiding schools with large numbers of second-language learners or with racial or economic profiles that were different from their own. Other researchers also described reliance on social networks and demographic affinity as major influences on school choice (Lareau & Goyette, 2014; Neild, 2005)

V. Project Questions

Understanding why a student or parent may choose a particular school, we must understand 1) the needs, preferences and knowledge of the students and parents, 2) the qualities, characteristics and offerings of the schools and 3) the interaction between those two realities, in terms of 3a) how students perceive the schools' offerings, whether accurately or inaccurately, and 3b) how schools communicate their offerings.

This research proposes to explore and describe family preferences (#1) and perceptions (#3a), with the ultimate goal of enabling the schools to know whether, how and why to improve their offerings (#2) and better execute their communication (#3b).

In this exploration of Southwest Washington School District, we know exactly how students have enrolled historically, and in our data collection, middle school families can clearly signal their intended choice of high school. This choice of school is the dependent variable and it is firmly established. The investigation is designed to discover or more clearly illuminate the independent variables. What causes choice among students and parents?

The research questions are therefore articulated as follows:

1. What school-related factors influence the high school enrollment decisions of 7^{th}-10^{th} grade SWSD students, especially in relation to Southwest Washington High School and Journey High School?
    a. What school-related factors influence the corresponding decisions of these students' parents?
    b. What differences (if any) exist between students and parents in regards to enrollment decisions or desires?

2. How influential are parents/guardians in SWSD student enrollment decisions?
3. How do 7th-10th grade SWSD students perceive and differentiate between Southwest Washington High School and Journey High School?
    a. How do 7th-10th grade SWSD parents perceive and differentiate between Southwest Washington High School and Journey High School?
    b. What differences (if any) exist between how students and parents perceive and differentiate between these two high school options?

Of particular interest within these questions will be the responses of the subsets of families who 1) left the PBL campus to return to their zoned schools, 2) left their zoned schools to move to the PBL campus, or 3) stayed in the PBL campus into and through high school, as this is a time when a significant percentage of SWSD families left the PBL program. (See Table 1 in the Problem of Practice section, which shows that about 20% of PBL students left by the end of 8th grade, while an additional 52% left during their high school years).

In collaboration with SWSD's Director of Secondary Education, we narrowed the research focus to 7th-10th grade on the assumption that 6th graders may still be too distant from their high school decision, as well as the assumption that 11th-12th graders may be too far past the decision and that the nature of the choices has changed significantly in the past 2-3 years, both due to COVID and to the natural evolution of programs in Southwest secondary schools.

VI. Project Design

Data Collection

This study attempted to survey all SWSD students in 7th-10th grade about their future or current high school choices. It also attempted to survey the parents or guardians of all 7th-10th grade SWSD students. The survey opened on January 19th, 2023 and closed on February 7th. Using the REDCap survey system, aliased as a SWSD email address, I sent individualized links to each parent. Two reminder messages were sent to parents through the REDCap system and one was also sent through ParentSquare, the messaging application which the district normally uses. Since the district email system does not allow external addresses to email students, SWSD sent a public link to students on January 19th, and the schools gave students time to complete the survey during their school day. To maximize student response rate the district office contacted individual principals as needed in order to give reminders and to ensure they gave students time during the day to complete the survey. While parents received individualized links, the software only tracked these links for completion, and did not preserve any identifying information as viewable by survey administrators, so the survey is functionally anonymous.

Parents were welcome to complete the survey together, but only one link was available per student in order to preserve a consistent parent rate per student. If a family had more than one student in the survey population, the survey asked them to indicate how many times they completed the survey.

The total target survey population was 2389 individual student respondents and their corresponding parents/guardians. 1285 students responded, a 54% response rate. 663 parent responses were received, for a 28% response rate. In some cases, these are the same parents responding more than once because they have multiple students. In some cases, parents with multiple students considered their response to be the same for each. Therefore, more than 663 students are represented in the parent responses, but the exact number isn't quantifiable. Ideally,

I would have overcome this shortcoming, but it was difficult to do so and keep the survey anonymous.

Student Survey Development

Initially, SWSD only wanted to survey students, and they did not intend to survey parents. As I developed the survey questions, I kept in mind the possibility of also surveying parents and maintained a set of parent-directed questions that corresponded with the student questions, changing the perspective of the questions as needed (i.e. "My Friends" or "I" for the student-directed questions and "My Student's Friends" or "My Student" for the parent-directed questions).

The surveys took guidance from the work of Catt and Rhinesmith (2017), Catt and Grady (2020) and Schneider (2022). In their surveys regarding why parents choose between schooling options (district, charter, private, etc.), Catt and Rhinesmith (2017) and Catt and Grady (2020) asked respondents to rate various factors that may have influenced their school choice, however, they did not give respondents an option to rank their most important factors nor to write in additional factors if theirs was not included. In his survey of Pennsylvania 8th grade parents, Schneider (2022) had a similar list of factors, but instead of asking respondents to evaluate each factor, he asked them to choose their 1st-5th most important factors, and did not give an option to write in additional factors. The format in this study allows students to rate all factors, rank their most important ones and state their own factors if needed, in a relatively concise way.

The factors that influence school choice are the heart of the survey. I developed two initial lists of factors based on my conversations with the district, the academic literature, the specific surveys mentioned in the previous paragraph and my own experience as an educator. The first initial list focused on reasons for choosing a school and the second list focused on

reasons for leaving a school. I checked my lists of factors for wording and comprehensiveness in comparison to the work of Catt, Rhinesmith, Grady and Schneider, adjusting for the specific context of Southwest Washington School District.

Most importantly, I validated the list of factors with four different groups of students and parents, each representing different school choices. Group 1 included students who attend SWHS, but did not seriously consider the PBL program. Group 2 included students who attend SWHS and Gamma Middle School, and did consider the PBL program. Group 3 included students who attend or attended the PBL program. Group 4 included students who attend Virtual Academy and seriously considered Smith High School, the PBL Program and who previously attended SWHS.

The insights of these students and parents proved valuable in adding missing factors, grouping some factors more broadly and making some options more specific. For example, I consolidated several factors into a broader category of extra-curricular activities, and I divided a broader category of academic concerns into specific types of concerns in order to solicit nuances that these validation groups described as very important. I also workshopped the list of variables with SWSD's Director of Secondary Education based on her knowledge of SWSD's specific circumstances. The Director shared the survey with SWSD board members, principals and the SWSD superintendent, who then had a chance to review the survey and offer amendments.

Balancing survey brevity with comprehensiveness is a challenge. In some cases, I excluded factors that other researchers chose, such as "Teaching Religious Values" that apply more to private schools or to the spectrum of choice in a broad context rather than to a specific set of schools. I did not include factors such as "Problems with Administrators" or "Concerns about curriculum" from the exit-type surveys, as the district perceived that these may cause backlash or be erroneously influential. I also subdivided some factors, choosing to specify

various types of academic concerns as opposed to listing "Academics" as a broad category of influence. This was appropriate as this study is trying to discern the nuances between specific schools, rather than broad categories of school choices.

Referring back to the conceptual framework and the idea of viewing school choice through the lenses of Rational Choice, Institutionalism, Social Organization and Social Capital, I strived to make sure these lenses were represented in the available factors. Given that the conceptual framework is more of a description rather than a prescription, these lenses were naturally represented. I experimented with assigning each factor to one or more of the lenses, but ultimately this would be an error in thinking, largely because these lenses often overlap and interrelated. Forcing a categorization in this case seemed too arbitrary, especially for a choice that can be extremely complex. This doesn't mean that the framework is insufficient, but rather that its value is found in analyzing rather than consolidating. As we move to analyzing the results, the question for any given factor will be less, "Is this factor related to Rational Choice?", and more, "How are families seeing this factor rationally, institutionally and/or socially?"

I also added to the survey a series of basic questions, such as what school the student currently attends, what their high school of choice is, and what schools they attended in the past. These questions governed the survey logic that determined what questions the respondent saw. In a set of four or five open-ended questions, the survey asked why the respondent chose their preferred high school, and why they didn't choose the other district options.

In the survey I also asked multiple-choice questions to determine 1) how influential parents were in the student's choice (or students in the parent's choice), 2) how much agreement there was between parent and student, and 3) how seriously each high school option was considered. This last question was especially designed to give insight into whether attending the

geographically-zoned option is simply an unconscious or pre-determined fact for any students. (See Appendix E for the entire student survey instrument).

Parent Survey Development

After viewing the student survey, the district decided they also wanted to survey parents, and I created a second parent-directed instrument that was functionally identical to the initial student-directed instrument, with perspective language changed as needed. Since I had already included parents in the factor-validation focus groups, I did not convene additional groups. (See Appendix E for the entire parent survey instrument).

Final Factor Lists for Choosing and Leaving Schools

The primary questions in the survey are found in a Likert-scale matrix of 19 factors that may affect a family's choice of school. Parents received the same factors as students, with perspective language changed if necessary, as well as two additional factors. All surveyed factors for choosing a school are shown in the following table:

Possible Factors for Choosing a School (Independent Variables)	
Students	**Parents**
Instructional model	Instructional model
Course offerings / Specialized Courses / Variety of Courses	Course offerings / Specialized Courses / Variety of Courses
Welcoming environment	Welcoming environment
Closeness to home	Closeness to home
My friends attend here	My student's friends attend here
	My friends send their students here
I felt I would fit in best here socially	I felt my student would fit in best here socially
I thought I would learn better here / Learning Style	I thought my student would learn better here / Learning Style
The school was familiar to me	The school was familiar to me
Reputation of school	Reputation of school
Dissatisfaction with my other options / Reputation of my other options	Dissatisfaction with our other options / Reputation of our other options
Size of school	Size of school
The structure of the day suits me better	The structure of the day suits us better
The school's ability to meet unique needs	The school's ability to meet unique needs
Extra-curricular offerings (Arts, Athletics, Academic, Social, etc.)	Extra-curricular offerings (Arts, Athletics, Academic, Social, etc.)
Scheduling flexibility	Scheduling flexibility
Felt like classmates would help me improve	Felt like classmates would help my student improve
School Culture / School Spirit	School Culture / School Spirit
Parent Preference	Student Preference
Discussions with teachers / Recommendations from teachers	Discussions with teachers / Recommendations from teachers
	Discussions with other parents / Recommendations from other parents

Respondents rated each factor between:

1-Not at all influential / This was not a factor for me
2-Slightly Influential
3-Moderately Influential
4-Very Influential
5-Extremely Influential / This was a big factor for me

After the matrix, the survey asked respondents to choose their most, second-most and third-most important factors from a multiple-choice list of the same factors, with the additional option of "Other", which allowed them to specify their most important factors. I will use this data regarding the prioritization of factors to triangulate the ratings of the factors.

If a student had previously attended an in-district school other than their school of choice, or if they were planning on leaving their current school, they received a similar matrix, consisting of 21 factors that may influence the choice to leave, with the corresponding multiple-choice questions to choose their most important factors. All surveyed factors for leaving a school are shown in the following table:

Possible Factors for Leaving a School (Independent Variables)	
Students	**Parents**
Lack of desired courses	Lack of desired courses
I did not feel I belonged there	My student or I did not feel like they belonged there
Problems with teachers	Problems with teachers
Problems with other students	Problems with other students
Reputation of School	Reputation of School
The atmosphere is not what I preferred	The atmosphere is not what I or my student preferred
The classes were too hard	The classes were too hard
The classes were too easy	The classes were too easy
The method or model of instruction did not work for me	The method or model of instruction did not work for me or for my student
Transportation issues	Transportation issues
Teachers did not accept me	Teachers did not accept my student
Students did not accept me	Other students did not accept my student
Classes were too big	Classes were too big
Classes were too small	Classes were too small
Curriculum or classes were poorly executed / Quality of Instruction	Curriculum or classes were poorly executed / Quality of Instruction
I felt held back in my learning	I felt my student was held back in their learning
I felt like the classes moved too quickly	I felt like the classes moved too quickly
I did not feel safe	I did not feel that my student was safe
I did not feel like I fit in socially	I did not feel like my student fit in socially
The learning environment did not work for me	The learning environment did not work for me or for my student
Lack of desired activities or programs (extracurricular, academic, etc.)	Lack of desired activities or programs (extracurricular, academic, etc.)

Since a student may have left multiple schools, I had to duplicate the set of leaving factors for each school and execute the branching logic in the survey in such a way that students would only see the leaving factors for the schools that they previously attended. In the technical instrument, these factors were coded in a way that made it easy to compare between schools or to compile across schools if desired.

These factors for choosing or leaving schools, and the respondents' ratings of these factors, are the primary focus of the analysis that follows, especially in regards to the first set of project questions.

VII. Data Analysis

In this data analysis section, I will begin by summarizing the descriptive statistics of the survey respondents, including what school the respondent currently attends, their high school of choice, if they previously attended another high school, whether they indicated that their high school choice was parent-driven or student-driven and how seriously they considered other options.

I will then describe the initial analysis of the factors that each respondent rated and how I created three groups of respondents, 1) Journey Choosers, 2) Southwest Washington High School Choosers and 3) PBL Leavers. Following this, I lay out the process and reasoning for the Latent Class Analysis that I executed, which is a way of exploring patterns of responses that bring to light subgroupings of respondents that would not otherwise be obvious. Following this, I detail my inductive thematic analysis of the open-ended responses, including how I coded those responses and organized the themes that arose from them.

I then analyze each group, presenting summary tables for their factor ratings and for the latent class analysis of their factor ratings and exploring and delineating those results. For each group I also then conjoin a summary of the themes of their open-ended responses, as these responses provide nuance for and triangulation with the factor ratings.

Descriptive Summaries

Table 2a describes the survey respondents, based on their self-declaration in the survey (see appendix for more detailed version of the table). Of the 92 students that currently attend Journey, 88 indicated that they will continue at Journey, with one switching to Southwest Washington High School (SWHS) and 3 still undecided. Of the 65 middle school students that chose Journey, 9 are from outside of Inquiry. Most notably, of the 128 students that currently attend Inquiry, only 56 intend to remain on the PBL campus by continuing to Journey, with another 22 undecided and 50 students choosing other schools, mostly SWHS. Of the 154 students who previously attended or are currently attending the PBL campus, 105 chose SWHS, with 29 remaining undecided. Of the 154 students, 76 are currently attending and 78 students previously attended the PBL campus.

Table 2a - Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents, 7th-10th Grade SWSD Students & Their Parents/Guardians

		Respondents		Where They Currently Attend								# Attended or Attending		
Students	High School of Choice	%	Qty	SWHS	JHS	VA (HS)	SHS	DMS	GMS	IMS	VA (MS)	SWHS	JHS or IMS	VA or SHS
	Southwest High (SWHS)	75%	965	446	1	1	0	185	284	46	2	1	105	72
	Journey High (JHS)	12%	153	0	88	0	0	2	7	56	0	8	1	11
	Other Schools	5%	69	3	0	3	42	4	10	4	3	21	19	12
	Undecided	8%	98	6	3	0	0	37	26	22	4	6	29	6
	Total	100%	1285	**455**	**92**	**4**	**42**	**228**	**327**	**128**	**9**	**36**	**154**	**101**

= Returning

		Respondents		Where Student Currently Attends								# Attended or Attending		
Parents	High School of Choice	%	Qty	SWHS	JHS	VA (HS)	SHS	DMS	GMS	IMS	VA (MS)	SWHS	JHS or IMS	VA or SHS
	Southwest High School (SWHS)	72%	479	230	0	2	0	106	118	20	3	1	58	40
	Journey High School (JHS)	11%	76	0	31	0	0	2	1	42	0	1	1	5
	Other Schools	7%	48	5	1	5	18	6	8	3	2	12	14	4
	Undecided	9%	60	8	2	1	0	17	15	15	2	9	22	3
	Total	100%	663	**243**	**34**	**8**	**18**	**131**	**142**	**80**	**7**	**23**	**95**	**52**

Of the 291 students in 7th-10th grade at the PBL campus, 220 completed the survey. If the other 71 students were to respond in the same percentages, then 25 of them would also be

planning on leaving the PBL campus. We can therefore estimate a range of 76 to 101 students who currently attend the PBL campus and are planning to leave. (This number also aligns with the enrollment trends of previous cohorts shown in Table 1). According to the annual enrollment numbers reported to the state, 104 students from the same four cohorts have already left the PBL campus, not including any who left before the end of 6th grade in each cohort. 78 student survey respondents stated that they had previously attended the PBL campus, leaving at least 26 that did not respond. The total number of students who have left or will leave the PBL campus is therefore between 154 to 205, with the minimum being based on the survey and the maximum being a reasonable extrapolation. This number may prove useful when looking at response percentages of those that have left the PBL program.

Table 2b describes 1) who primarily decided where to attend high school, 2) whether they seriously considered other schools and 3) whether they were even aware of other school options. While students and parents did not completely agree on the exact degree of independence of the student in the decision-making process, for the four major district choices most respondents

Table 2b - Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents, 7th-10th Grade SWSD Students & Their Parents/Guardians

		Respondents		Who Primarily Decided (denom = Qty that chose this school)			# that Seriously Considered				# that Didn't Seriously Consider				# that Were Unaware of			
	High School of Choice	%	Qty	Student	Together	Parent	SWHS	JHS	VA	SHS	SWHS	JHS	VA	SHS	SWHS	JHS	VA	SHS
Students	Southwest High	75%	965	55.8%	29.1%	15.1%		96	34	41		733	612	703		136	319	221
	Journey High School	12%	153	75.2%	15.7%	9.2%	60		5	8	92		81	105	1		67	40
	Other Schools	5%	69	63.8%	24.6%	11.6%	36	13	4	1	29	47	32	13	2	9	27	8
	Undecided	8%	98	44.9%	32.7%	22.4%	72	36	15	14	20	41	46	53	6	21	37	31
	Total	100%	1285				**168**	**145**	**58**	**64**	**143**	**821**	**771**	**874**	**9**	**166**	**450**	**300**

		Respondents		Who Primarily Decided (denom = Qty that chose this school)			# that Seriously Considered				# that Didn't Seriously Consider				# that Were Unaware of			
	High School of Choice	%	Qty	Student	Together	Parent	SWHS	JHS	VA	SHS	SWHS	JHS	VA	SHS	SWHS	JHS	VA	SHS
Parents	Southwest High School	72%	479	45.3%	34.9%	19.8%		78	29	28		366	380	399		35	70	52
	Journey High School	11%	76	60.5%	34.2%	5.3%	31		2	3	45		62	62	0		12	11
	Other Schools	7%	48	35.4%	43.8%	20.8%	18	10	3	1	29	38	32	20	1	0	5	2
	Undecided	9%	60	21.7%	60.0%	18.3%	53	34	8	15	5	18	37	31	2	8	15	14
	Total	100%	663				**102**	**122**	**42**	**47**	**79**	**422**	**511**	**512**	**3**	**43**	**102**	**79**

indicated that it was primarily a student-driven decision. Students and parents agreed very closely regarding the instances where the parent was the primary decision-maker.

In addition to the 153 student respondents who chose Journey High School, an additional 145 seriously considered it and 166 were not even aware of the option. If the half of the students that responded are reflective of the half that did not, we can estimate 270 students who have seriously considered Journey and another 309 who might if the district can create adequate awareness.

Factor Analysis - General

Each respondent rated a set of factors for their school of choice. If they left or will leave a school, they also rated a different set of factors for why they left or will leave that school. For ease of presentation, I gave each independent variable a short name, as shown here:

Possible Factors for Choosing a School (Independent Variables)		
Short Name	**Students**	**Parents**
Instruction Model	Instructional model	Instructional model
Courses	Course offerings / Specialized Courses / Variety of Courses	Course offerings / Specialized Courses / Variety of Courses
Environment	Welcoming environment	Welcoming environment
Proximity	Closeness to home	Closeness to home
Friends (of Students)	My friends attend here	My student's friends attend here
Friends (of Parents)		My friends send their students here
Social Fit	I felt I would fit in best here socially	I felt my student would fit in best here socially
Learning Style	I thought I would learn better here / Learning Style	I thought my student would learn better here / Learning Style
Familiarity	The school was familiar to me	The school was familiar to me
Reputation	Reputation of school	Reputation of school
Least Bad Option	Dissatisfaction with my other options / Reputation of my other options	Dissatisfaction with our other options / Reputation of our other options
Size	Size of school	Size of school
Daily Structure	The structure of the day suits me better	The structure of the day suits us better
Unique Needs	The school's ability to meet unique needs	The school's ability to meet unique needs
Extra-Curricular	Extra-curricular offerings (Arts, Athletics, Academic, Social, etc.)	Extra-curricular offerings (Arts, Athletics, Academic, Social, etc.)
Scheduling	Scheduling flexibility	Scheduling flexibility
Classmates	Felt like classmates would help me improve	Felt like classmates would help my student improve
Culture	School Culture / School Spirit	School Culture / School Spirit
Family Preference	Parent Preference	Student Preference
Teacher Influence	Discussions with teachers / Recommendations from teachers	Discussions with teachers / Recommendations from teachers
Peer Influence		Discussions with other parents / Recommendations from other parents

Possible Factors for Leaving a School (Independent Variables)		
Students	**Students**	**Parents**
Courses (Lack)	Lack of desired courses	Lack of desired courses
Belonging	I did not feel I belonged there	My student or I did not feel like they belonged there
Teacher Problems	Problems with teachers	Problems with teachers
Peer Problems	Problems with other students	Problems with other students
Reputation	Reputation of School	Reputation of School
Atmosphere	The atmosphere is not what I preferred	The atmosphere is not what I or my student preferred
Difficulty	The classes were too hard	The classes were too hard
Easiness	The classes were too easy	The classes were too easy
Instruction Model	The method or model of instruction did not work for me	The method or model of instruction did not work for me or for my student
Transportation	Transportation issues	Transportation issues
Acceptance by Teachers	Teachers did not accept me	Teachers did not accept my student
Acceptance by Students	Students did not accept me	Other students did not accept my student
Size (Big)	Classes were too big	Classes were too big
Size (Small)	Classes were too small	Classes were too small
Instruction Quality	Curriculum or classes were poorly executed / Quality of Instruction	Curriculum or classes were poorly executed / Quality of Instruction
Pace (Slow)	I felt held back in my learning	I felt my student was held back in their learning
Pace (Fast)	I felt like the classes moved too quickly	I felt like the classes moved too quickly
Safety	I did not feel safe	I did not feel that my student was safe
Social Fit	I did not feel like I fit in socially	I did not feel like my student fit in socially
Learning Environment	The learning environment did not work for me	The learning environment did not work for me or for my student
Activities (Lack)	Lack of desired activities or programs (extracurricular, academic, etc.)	Lack of desired activities or programs (extracurricular, academic, etc.)

Respondents rated each factor between:

1-Not at all influential / This was not a factor for me
2-Slightly Influential
3-Moderately Influential
4-Very Influential
5-Extremely Influential / This was a big factor for me

For clarity of interpretation I compressed responses of '4' or '5' into a new category that we can call "Highly Influential", and I grouped response of '1', '2' or '3' into a new category that we can call "Less Influential". The rationale behind this is that it is impossible to know what the distance between scores means for reach respondent, and highly likely that the meaning is different for each respondent. I set the criteria for "Highly Influential" at 4 since this is above the average of 1 through 5.

I analyzed the responses in 3 sets, 1) those who selected Journey High School as their high school of choice, 2) those who selected Southwest Washington High School as their high school of choice, with one subgrouping for whether they at least moderately considered Journey High School and another complementary subgrouping for those that did not at least moderately seriously consider Journey High School, and 3) those who previously attended Inquiry or Journey and did not select Journey as their high school of choice. For Groups #1-2, I primarily focused on the factors for choosing a school, while for Group #3 I primarily analyzed the responses regarding why they left Inquiry-Journey.

These groupings are the most relevant to the choice of whether to enroll in Journey and the choice between Journey and SWHS. SWHS is the primary choice in SWSD, representing about 82% of all high school students. Among the survey respondents, 87% chose either SWHS or Journey, and those two schools represent about 93% of all SWSD 9^{th}-10^{th} grade students. Summaries of other subgroupings are available in Appendix: Complete Survey Summary Tables.

The following table summarizes the primary question that I attempt to answer by analyzing each sub-group.

Group	Primary Questions
1) Journey Choosers	What assets do these respondents find in Journey and Inquiry?
2a) SWHS Choosers, considered Journey	What major factors are at play in this choice and why did respondents ultimately choose SWHS?
2b) SWHS Choosers, did not consider Journey	What assets do respondents find in SWHS that leads them away from considering Journey?
3) PBL Program Leavers	What assets did respondent find in other programs, that caused them to leave Journey or Inquiry? What weaknesses or disadvantages did respondents find in Journey or Inquiry?

At every level of analysis, student and parent responses are always broken down separately, yet side-by-side.

Within each group, I averaged the score for each variable, calculated the percentage of respondents that chose Very Influential or Extremely Influential (aka Highly Influential), and calculated the percentage of respondents that chose each variable as one of their 3 most important factors. All summaries were created in Excel, using a variety of COUNTIFS and AVERAGEIFS functions.

Latent Class Analysis of Factors

For finer-grained analysis of the two major sets of factors, I conducted several sets of Latent Class Analysis (LCA) models using RStudio. LCA uses probabilities to reveal latent patterns in the way respondents rated the factors. Respondents who have similar patterns are grouped into latent groups. (I used the word “groups” instead of “classes” to avoid confusion in the context of schooling). As an example, “Learning Preference”, “Environment” and “Familiarity” may receive scores of “highly influential” across the whole set of respondents.

However, within those factors there may be various latent groups of respondents, where any given group may give a low score to one or more factors, but that low rating is hidden by the high rating of other groups. Similarly, a factor with a general low rating may have a latent group that rates that factor highly. The LCA is a model based on probabilities, not an unambiguous description of survey respondents like the summaries of reported factors. To determine the best number of latent groups, I ran the model multiple times, first with two latent groups, increasing the number of latent groups each time, up to seven. The model fitness metrics are maximum log-likelihood, Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC), where the best fit is that in which these values are closest to zero, and the literature suggests that greater weight should be given to BIC if a discrepancy arises with AIC (Mohammed et al., 2015) (Lanza & Rhoades, 2013) (Vermunt & Magidson, 2004). Therefore, I chose the model where BIC was lowest, even if AIC continued to decrease in the adjacent model. The fitness metrics are model-specific, and lower values in one set of models does not mean those models are necessarily better than a set of models with higher values. These fitness statistics are included in the LCA summaries for the selected model and the adjacent models.

As a reminder, respondents ranked their top three most important factors in the survey after rating each of the factors individually. I used this ranking to triangulate the ratings of the factors and the latent class analyses of the factors. I note any discrepancies, such as if a factor was often selected as one of the most important, but does not show up in the highly influential factors, or vice versa.

Inductive Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

After analyzing the reported factors and the latent-class analyses of the reported factors, I also carried out an inductive thematic analysis of the open-ended responses for why respondents

chose their preferred school (SWHS or Journey) and why they did not choose the other school, following a process guided by the work of Merriam and Tisdell (2015).

Respondents answered the open-ended questions in separate entries in the survey. For this portion of the analysis, I reviewed all responses, whether the survey was completed or not. I removed non-responses from the qualitative dataset completely (i.e. from both the numerator and denominator of the percentage). Some respondents that completed the survey had non-responses in the open-ended questions (i.e. typing "N/A" or "I don't know"), while some incomplete surveys had thorough open-ended responses.

In the inductive thematic analysis of the open-ended responses, I coded all responses with labels for any themes that were indicated in the response. The themes are common groupings that arose as I reviewed the responses. They were not predetermined, but rather they were dictated by the responses themselves. The codebook for these themes, including representative examples, is in the appendix. Summaries of the percentages of respondents that indicated each theme are included in the discussion of the three main groups of respondents (Journey Choosers, SWHS Choosers, PBL Leavers).

Summaries of Each Group with the Different Types of Analysis

In the Reported Factor tables and LCA tables that follow, I removed the factors "Friends (of Parents)" and "Peer Influence" (referring to adult peers of the parents) as the responses showed them to be unimpactful and because they only existed on the parent surveys. For ease of presentation in this portion of the analysis, I only include the factors that were shown to be highly influential in order to focus on the most important factors. I have also removed the average score, as it correlates almost exactly to the percentage that chose Very Influential or

Extremely Influential, and removing it here reduces numeric overload. Complete tables are available in the Appendix.

In the tables below, the bright green indicates values that are greater than the mean of the whole factor set, plus one standard deviation. The light green indicates values that are greater than the mean of the whole factor set. Factors that do not fall into these categories for either students or parents may not be included below, but are still part of the mean calculations.

The base data then proceeds as follows:

Group #1 – Journey Choosers

Reported Factors for Choosing Journey High School				
	Students	n=153	Parents	n=76
Short Name	% Very or Extremely	% as Top 3 Factor	% Very or Extremely	% as Top 3 Factor
Learning Style	77.8%	48.4%	93.4%	59.2%
Environment	69.3%	25.5%	92.1%	21.1%
Familiarity	56.9%	25.5%	38.2%	5.3%
Friends (of Students)	51.6%	39.2%	30.3%	11.8%
Social Fit	49.0%	19.6%	67.1%	26.3%
Unique Needs	43.8%	9.8%	52.6%	7.9%
Instruction Model	43.1%	17.0%	93.4%	71.1%
Size	41.2%	17.0%	76.3%	22.4%
Courses	27.5%	15.0%	61.8%	15.8%
Family Preference	13.7%	8.5%	88.2%	32.9%

Latent Class Analysis for Those Who Chose Journey High School					
	Approx. Probable Group Size				
	Students n=153			Parents n=76	
	78	42	33	51	25
	51.0%	27.5%	21.6%	67.1%	32.9%
Variable	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2
Learning Style	90.2%	36.6%	100.0%	90.2%	100.0%
Environment	79.9%	27.5%	96.8%	88.2%	100.0%
Familiarity	62.4%	17.8%	93.8%	21.0%	72.6%
Instruction Model	51.5%	26.6%	43.4%	92.1%	96.0%
Social Fit	49.0%	13.9%	95.2%	54.9%	91.7%
Unique Needs	46.0%	0.0%	95.6%	34.3%	89.5%
Friends (of Students)	43.3%	47.1%	79.1%	27.6%	35.7%
Least Bad Option	38.8%	24.1%	53.9%	17.4%	24.5%
Size	37.1%	21.1%	78.0%	64.5%	100.0%
Courses	33.1%	4.7%	42.8%	57.8%	70.0%
Proximity	31.5%	22.4%	52.5%	17.9%	43.3%
Daily Structure	29.1%	10.8%	76.9%	17.0%	88.6%
Scheduling	28.7%	3.9%	96.6%	0.0%	67.4%
Culture	27.7%	0.0%	72.4%	34.2%	81.7%
Reputation	26.0%	0.0%	57.7%	27.8%	90.7%
Classmates	22.0%	0.0%	74.3%	12.0%	51.2%
Extra-Curricular	20.4%	0.0%	40.2%	8.0%	39.3%
Teacher Influence	9.5%	2.6%	20.2%	32.4%	33.9%
Family Preference	7.9%	18.8%	22.0%	84.3%	96.0%

Model Fit	2-Class	3-Class	4-Class	2-Class	3-Class
max log-likelihood	-1601.3	-1538.9	-1518.5	-751.4	-735.2
AIC	3280.6	3195.9	3195.1	1588.8	1600.4
BIC	3398.8	3374.6	3434.5	1689.0	1751.9

Students report choosing Journey primarily because they feel they would learn better there, the environment is welcoming, they are familiar with the school and their friends have also chosen it. Parents concurred with learning preference and environment, but valued its instructional model substantially higher than students and also deferred to the preference of their student.

One hundred fifty-three students reported choosing Journey, and if the survey result rates per school were to remain the same in the non-respondent portion of the population, then that number could reasonably be as high as 197.

The LCA considers the relative importance of factors to each latent group. Some respondents may rate most factors as slightly or moderately influential and only the most important things as very or extremely influential, while some may rate many factors highly. While Student Group 2 is much less likely to rate "Learning Preference" as highly influential than the other student groups, it is still one of the two most influential factors for Student Group 2. For the LCAs, I did not highlight the merely above-average probabilities (light green) in order to more clearly focus our understanding of the nature of the groups on the factors that they valued most highly.

Among Journey choosers, Student Group 1 might be deemed the "True PBL Fans", as they highly value the learning preference (and "Instructional Model" is well above average). They have had a chance to experience the PBL campus and are continuing their tenure there. Parent Group 1 matches closely enough with this group to be considered together, just with a higher emphasis on instructional model and a willingness to support the preference of their students.

Student Group 2 may be the "Stick with Friends" group, as being with their friends seems to rate much higher than other factors, although they do also appreciate the fit with their learning preference.

Student Group 3 is the "Haven" group. Open-ended responses indicated that some students find acceptance at Journey, that they do not find elsewhere, for their neurodivergence or their sexual orientation or other social needs, and this "Haven" group may be reflective of those students. Parent Group 2 aligns well with this "Haven" group. Although the "Social Fit" factor is below the threshold of one standard deviation above the mean for this parent group, it is still above a 90% probability. These parents also add an emphasis on the small size of Journey as an advantage.

Open-Ended Responses for Journey Choosers

The open-ended responses for choosing Journey align well with the rated factors. By examining the open-ended responses of each group of students together with their closed-ended responses, we can get the most complete picture possible, using each data set to triangulate and explore nuances.

Themes for Choosing Journey High School
(coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students n=156 %	Students n=156 #	Parents n=74 %	Parents n=74 #
General Match	50.0%	78	40.5%	30
Projects	31.4%	49	35.1%	26
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	23.1%	36	20.3%	15
General Positive Perception/Reputation	15.4%	24	16.2%	12
Size	12.8%	20	33.8%	25
Friends	10.3%	16	5.4%	4
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	7.7%	12	8.1%	6
Convenience	4.5%	7	9.5%	7
Quality	3.2%	5	10.8%	8
Safety	0.6%	1	6.8%	5
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.6%	1	1.4%	1

"General Match" encompasses respondents who said something like "it just felt like the right place for me" or "it suits my learning style." If they specifically said that they like projects, then the response was coded with "Projects", and it's possible a response could have both codes. The biggest student reasons for choosing Journey revolve around an enjoyment of projects, feeling a match to the school and a desire to continue what they've already been doing. (Of the 65 middle school students who chose Journey, only nine are coming from outside the PBL campus, and of the 88 high school students that chose Journey, zero students are coming from outside the PBL campus, although eight of those students did previously attend SWHS. It may be notable that "Quality" was a rare theme among respondents, and I will pursue a comparison of perceived quality between SWHS and Journey after presenting the open-ended responses of SWHS Choosers in the next section.

General Negative or Positive Perception indicates that the response lacks either specificity or firsthand experience. I used word choice to deem responses as positive or negative. For words or phrases such as "that school sucks" or "only weirdos go there" or "my friend went

there and hated it", I categorized them as General Negative Perception. For words or phrases such as "I love it here" or "cool kids go here", I used the label General Positive Perception. Quality (as a label) generally indicates firsthand experience, and the codes never overlap. General Match and Projects are codes that sometimes overlap and may sometimes have been used to express polite disapproval. "I just didn't feel like the school worked for me" or "I don't like project-based learning" were common responses that may mean the respondent has a traditional learning preference, but may also mean that they have a negative view of the implementation of the model rather than the model itself.

"Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition" contains many responses such as "normal kids don't go there" which may refer to being an athlete or a traditional learner but may also carry a negative perception of being undesirable.

Group #2 – SWHS Choosers

Reported Factors for Choosing Southwest High School, Among Those Who Also Considered Journey High School

Short Name	Students n=96 % Very or Extremely	Students n=96 % as Top 3 Factor	Parents n=78 % Very or Extremely	Parents n=78 % as Top 3 Factor	
Friends (of Students)	71.9%	60.4%	58.2%	37.2%	
Extra-Curricular	61.5%	38.5%	73.1%	37.2%	
Familiarity	33.3%	10.4%	25.3%	9.0%	SP
Learning Style	44.8%	19.8%	55.7%	26.9%	SP
Social Fit	44.8%	6.3%	62.0%	21.8%	S
Proximity	36.5%	19.8%	26.6%	14.1%	SP
Courses	70.8%	47.9%	78.5%	53.8%	S
Reputation	34.4%	7.3%	54.4%	21.8%	S
Family Preference	26.0%	11.5%	84.6%	21.8%	S
Instruction Model	25.0%	11.5%	63.3%	19.2%	

Reported Factors for Choosing Southwest High School, Among Those Who Did Not Consider Journey High School

Short Name	Students n=869 % Very or Extremely	Students n=869 % as Top 3 Factor	Parents n=401 % Very or Extremely	Parents n=401 % as Top 3 Factor	
Friends (of Students)	77.2%	66.7%	62.4%	37.0%	
Extra-Curricular	62.2%	33.3%	66.1%	31.9%	
Familiarity	59.4%	21.6%	46.6%	12.6%	SP
Learning Style	58.8%	17.2%	70.3%	28.4%	SP
Social Fit	56.5%	18.0%	64.4%	22.2%	S
Proximity	54.0%	33.6%	45.2%	21.0%	SP
Courses	52.4%	27.4%	71.5%	47.4%	S
Reputation	48.1%	12.5%	65.1%	24.7%	S
Family Preference	41.8%	14.2%	76.4%	24.2%	S
Instruction Model	25.5%	3.5%	58.2%	18.8%	

Latent Class Analysis for Those Who Chose Southwest High School, and Considered Journey

	Approx. Probable Group Size				
	Students n=96		Parents n=78		
	65	31	40	24	14
	67.7%	32.3%	51.3%	30.8%	18.0%
Variable	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Friends (of Students)	64.1%	88.0%	51.9%	51.0%	85.8%
Extra-Curricular	46.1%	93.3%	74.8%	59.1%	92.9%
Familiarity	29.1%	42.2%	17.8%	12.4%	71.1%
Learning Style	28.1%	79.4%	73.3%	8.7%	92.6%
Social Fit	26.8%	82.2%	54.7%	50.6%	100.0%
Proximity	26.5%	57.1%	10.1%	24.7%	78.2%
Courses	63.2%	86.8%	97.3%	39.0%	93.1%
Reputation	20.4%	63.5%	73.1%	4.7%	92.8%
Family Preference	23.5%	31.3%	79.8%	83.6%	100.0%
Instruction Model	13.6%	48.8%	92.0%	6.8%	78.9%
Culture	14.6%	65.8%	20.3%	24.5%	100.0%
Environment	11.7%	68.8%	39.2%	34.6%	93.2%
Least Bad Option	13.0%	56.5%	27.9%	8.0%	7.2%
Size	13.8%	57.8%	10.2%	0.0%	42.8%
Daily Structure	10.5%	61.6%	17.7%	0.0%	42.9%
Unique Needs	8.1%	66.6%	22.9%	8.1%	64.3%
Scheduling	14.4%	50.2%	10.2%	0.0%	71.4%
Classmates	8.0%	63.7%	28.0%	8.2%	78.2%
Teacher Influence	7.7%	45.0%	28.0%	8.0%	49.9%

Model Fit	2-Class	3-Class	2-Class	3-Class	4-Class
max log-likelihood	-983.8	-943.5	-860.3	-807.8	-792.6
AIC	2045.6	2005.1	1806.6	1745.5	1759.3
BIC	2145.7	2156.4	1907.9	1898.7	1964.3

Latent Class Analysis for Those Who Chose Southwest High School, and Did Not Consider Journey

	Approx. Probable Group Size								
	Students n=869					Parents n=401			
	239	178	175	172	105	151	119	85	46
	27.5%	20.5%	20.1%	19.8%	12.1%	37.7%	29.7%	21.2%	11.5%
Variable	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Friends (of Students)	90.1%	59.1%	99.1%	42.9%	99.1%	65.2%	73.0%	29.4%	84.2%
Extra-Curricular	79.8%	80.1%	49.3%	8.2%	97.8%	62.7%	90.0%	22.6%	95.4%
Familiarity	73.8%	40.4%	79.0%	14.0%	97.5%	38.0%	64.4%	15.5%	83.1%
Learning Style	83.6%	57.2%	52.0%	7.1%	98.4%	72.3%	100.0%	10.5%	95.6%
Social Fit	84.4%	24.0%	74.7%	5.1%	98.4%	66.9%	90.3%	3.4%	97.5%
Proximity	56.8%	33.3%	71.6%	30.3%	91.8%	32.0%	56.7%	33.4%	82.6%
Courses	75.2%	73.5%	23.6%	4.8%	87.2%	70.6%	100.0%	19.2%	96.9%
Reputation	65.0%	37.8%	46.0%	6.8%	96.3%	60.4%	90.1%	20.5%	100.0%
Family Preference	48.1%	30.0%	41.2%	21.5%	80.1%	80.5%	92.4%	36.6%	91.5%
Instruction Model	39.2%	20.8%	4.2%	3.2%	72.0%	50.8%	90.5%	9.6%	89.8%
Culture	69.2%	10.9%	27.3%	1.2%	96.5%	22.8%	78.0%	2.3%	93.8%
Environment	63.6%	16.1%	32.6%	4.5%	96.5%	19.6%	78.7%	2.8%	93.2%
Least Bad Option	42.9%	29.5%	22.3%	8.5%	92.4%	28.4%	20.3%	8.6%	63.8%
Size	51.4%	22.5%	27.4%	5.5%	89.2%	10.4%	26.5%	0.0%	64.6%
Daily Structure	63.2%	9.8%	16.8%	0.0%	100.0%	19.2%	50.3%	2.2%	93.4%
Unique Needs	45.4%	18.9%	4.9%	0.5%	89.9%	21.7%	31.3%	1.8%	98.3%
Scheduling	52.4%	15.5%	8.3%	0.0%	98.7%	7.6%	16.8%	2.1%	100.0%
Classmates	56.6%	8.9%	16.9%	1.6%	92.1%	20.9%	29.1%	0.0%	83.6%
Teacher Influence	38.4%	8.7%	6.4%	0.0%	79.0%	10.3%	15.8%	0.0%	75.2%

Model Fit	4-Class	5-Class	6-Class		3-Class	4-Class	5-Class	
max log-likelihood	-8565.6	-8475.2	-8430.2		-4245.8	-4160.7	-4105.5	
AIC	17289.0	17148.5	17098.5		8621.6	8495.3	8428.9	
BIC	17665.8	17620.5	17665.8		8881.2	8842.8	8864.3	

The letters between the top tables indicate whether there is statistical difference between the two groups of students (S), parents (P) or both (SP). Almost all student respondents that chose SWHS did so on the basis of the influence of their friends and the presence of extra-curricular activities. Those that did consider Journey seemed to weigh course selection heavier while those that did not consider Journey were driven more by familiarity and proximity as well as social fit and learning preference.

In the survey, 965 students reported choosing SWHS, and if the survey result rates per school were to remain the same in the non-respondent portion of the population, then that number could reasonably be as high as 1882.

Within the LCA, Student Group 1 may be "The Reluctants." They considered Journey, but chose Southwest instead, giving heavy weight to course selection despite feeling a relatively low social fit with SWHS. On the other hand, Student Group 2, perhaps "The Enthusiasts", also heavily weighed course selection but felt a relatively high social fit with SWHS. (Remember that almost all students selected SWHS because of friends and extra-curricular activities, therefore these are important elements for SWHS as a whole, but do not provide distinction among the latent groups).

Similar to the two student groups that considered Journey, the first two student groups among those that didn't consider Journey are mostly only distinguishable by the weight they give to social fit, with Student Group 3 weighing social fit relatively highly and Student Group 4 giving social fit a relatively low score. Compared to Student Groups 1 and 2, they also weigh learning preference more highly. As they didn't consider Journey, Groups 3 and 4 may be presumed to prefer traditional learning. To give them a name then, we might coin Student Group 3 as the "Extroverted Traditional Learners" and Student Group 4 as the "Introverted Traditional Learners."

Student Groups 5 and 6 are unique in being the only ones who do not prioritize extra-curricular activities or course selection, although Group 5 does still give some weight to those offerings, and they both still prioritize being with friends. Student Group 5 may be deemed the "School Spirit", and values familiarity, social fit and proximity. In the open-ended responses, there are many that essentially say "my family has always gone to SWHS, I've never imagined myself going somewhere else, it's where my friends are and it's the easiest place to go." Student

Group 6, however, are the “Unengaged”, as they rate most social factors and all academic or extra-curricular factors as less influential. They only seem to value proximity and the preferences of friends and parents. This may be a group that may choose other schools if they were more aware of other options or were to find something outside of SWHS that better met their needs. Student Group 7, “the Rushers” rated virtually every factor as highly influential, making it difficult to discern what really matters to them and suggesting that they likely didn’t take the survey seriously.

Open-Ended Responses for SWHS Choosers

Themes for Choosing Southwest High School Also Considered Journey High School (coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students %	Students # (n=94)	Parents %	Parents # (n=79)
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	48.9%	46	51.9%	41
Friends	33.0%	31	25.3%	20
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	27.7%	26	19.0%	15
General Match	18.1%	17	11.4%	9
Quality	12.8%	12	13.9%	11
Convenience	8.5%	8	3.8%	3
General Positive Perception/Reputation	5.3%	5	15.2%	12
Size	5.3%	5	5.1%	4

Themes for Choosing Southwest High School Did Not Consider Journey High School (coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students %	Students # (n=849)	Parents %	Parents # (n=412)
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	41.2%	350	40.0%	165
Friends	28.2%	239	17.2%	71
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	26.3%	223	40.3%	166
Convenience	21.8%	185	8.0%	33
General Positive Perception/Reputation	16.8%	143	15.5%	64
General Match	10.7%	91	9.0%	37
Quality	5.3%	45	14.3%	59
Size	3.8%	32	1.9%	8
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.0%	0	1.2%	5

Themes for NOT Choosing PBL, Among SWHS Choosers (coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students %	Students # (n=976)	Parents %	Parents # (n=492)
Never Considered other Options	23.1%	225	13.6%	67
General Match	16.4%	160	20.7%	102
Projects	13.8%	135	7.7%	38
General Negative Perception/Reputation	12.2%	119	9.3%	46
Friends	10.2%	100	8.3%	41
Unaware or Needs More Information	8.9%	87	14.0%	69
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	8.2%	80	14.6%	72
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	7.9%	77	11.2%	55
Quality	5.3%	52	13.8%	68
Convenience	4.9%	48	2.6%	13
Size	3.2%	31	2.8%	14
Grading	1.0%	10	0.0%	0
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.1%	1	0.8%	4
Safety	0.0%	0	0.2%	1
Curriculum Concerns	0.0%	0	0.2%	1

To get a more nuanced and triangulated view of SWHS Choosers, I have pivoted to also examining their open-ended responses. For the open-ended responses related to SWHS Choosers, I have included the themes and percentages for why students chose SWHS, but I have also included the themes for why these same students did not choose PBL. In examining these responses and comparing them to those who chose Journey, it may be best to look at the raw numbers instead of the percentages (or in other words, to compare them as percentages of the whole district), given the disparity between how many students choose Journey and how many choose SWHS.

A primary and important example relates to the perceived quality and reputation of Journey. An analysis of Journey Choosers shows that 5 students described their choice using language that I coded as "high quality", and I coded 24 student responses as emphasizing a general positive perception of Journey. On the other hand, when SWHS Choosers described why they did not choose Journey, I coded 52 student responses that mentioned the "low quality" of Journey or Inquiry and 119 student responses that mentioned a general negative perception of Journey or Inquiry. (Remember that general negative perception are those responses that non-specifically expressed disapproval of the school such as "sucks" or "no way I would ever think about going there". Low quality, as a label, includes responses such as "I went there and didn't' feel like I learned anything" or other responses that gave specific examples. General positive perception and high quality, as labels, indicate the opposite). These 171 students consist of both those that previously attended the PBL program and those that have not. This ratio of 171:29 (or almost 6:1) does not include those who perceive Journey as a place for abnormal students, as these students comprise some but not all of the 77 students who mentioned familiarity, continuity, normalcy or tradition.

Of the 135 SWHS Choosers who said they avoided Journey because they don't like projects, only 3 overlap with the 171 students who mentioned negative perceptions of Journey-Inquiry. It's reasonable to consider the possibility that some number of those students dislike what they've heard about the specific implementation project-based learning at the PBL campus, as opposed to an inherent learning preference mismatch or dislike of projects.

This view of Quality (experienced or perceived), General Positive or Negative Perception/Reputation, the stated dislike of projects and the element of perceived Normalcy are the main unique contributions of the open-ended responses to our understanding of SWSD families. With the exception of the rare codes related to "Specific Circumstance", "Grading" or "Curriculum Concerns", all of the other codes are also represented in the Reported Factors or other parts of the survey, and their percentages correlate well with the Reported Factors.

A relatively small percentage of SWHS Choosers mentioned high quality or general positive perceptions in their responses (21.7% or 205/943). Another 108 (11.5%) mentioned feeling a general match with SWHS. The much larger majority is represented by familiarity, convenience, friendships and/or offerings. These percentages are noteworthy as they indicate the possibility that students could be swayed to attend Journey if they were to be more aware of its offerings, qualities and benefits.

Group #3 – PBL Leavers

Reported Factors for Leaving the PBL Campus

Short Name	Students n=150 % Very or Extremely	Students n=150 % as Top 3 Factor	Parents n=84 % Very or Extremely	Parents n=84 % as Top 3 Factor
Courses (Lack)	42.0%	30.7%	36.9%	27.4%
Activities (Lack)	40.0%	32.7%	41.7%	28.6%
Atmosphere	37.3%	27.3%	41.7%	25.0%
Instruction Model	29.3%	22.7%	34.5%	29.8%
Belonging	26.0%	15.3%	40.5%	23.8%
Learning Environment	26.0%	14.7%	34.5%	23.8%
Pace (Slow)	24.7%	14.0%	23.8%	7.1%
Reputation	24.7%	9.3%	16.7%	9.5%
Instruction Quality	26.0%	12.7%	26.2%	17.9%
Peer Problems	20.0%	14.0%	21.4%	4.8%
Easiness	20.0%	13.3%	14.3%	1.2%
Social Fit	16.7%	8.0%	23.8%	3.6%

Latent Class Analysis for Leaving the PBL Campus

	Approx. Probable Group Size					
	Students n=150				Parents n=84	
	61	60	23	6	51	33
	40.7%	40.0%	15.3%	4.0%	60.7%	39.3%
Variable	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 1	Group 2
Courses (Lack)	63.4%	11.6%	56.6%	83.3%	31.9%	44.7%
Activities (Lack)	57.9%	8.8%	61.0%	100.0%	37.4%	48.3%
Atmosphere	45.8%	1.2%	95.3%	100.0%	20.0%	75.3%
Instruction Model	33.8%	0.0%	77.5%	100.0%	12.2%	69.1%
Belonging	20.5%	1.5%	86.4%	100.0%	16.5%	77.7%
Learning Environment	25.3%	0.0%	82.2%	83.3%	7.3%	76.7%
Pace (Slow)	23.4%	0.0%	74.2%	100.0%	1.8%	57.9%
Reputation	28.4%	0.0%	65.5%	83.4%	5.8%	33.5%
Instruction Quality	21.9%	0.0%	86.8%	100.0%	6.1%	57.4%
Peer Problems	16.8%	0.3%	60.0%	100.0%	0.0%	54.6%
Easiness	25.3%	1.4%	43.7%	66.7%	3.9%	30.4%
Social Fit	11.6%	0.0%	57.0%	83.3%	10.6%	44.3%

Reported Student Factors for Leaving the PBL Campus from IMS (Before End of 8th grade) & from JHS (after 8th Grade)

Short Name	IMS n=69 % Very or Extremely	IMS n=69 % as Top 3 Factor	JHS n=81 % Very or Extremely	JHS n=81 % as Top 3 Factor
Atmosphere	46.4%	27.5%	29.6%	27.2%
Courses (Lack)	43.5%	23.2%	40.7%	37.0%
Activities (Lack)	39.1%	23.2%	40.7%	40.7%
Instruction Model	33.3%	20.3%	25.9%	24.7%
Instruction Quality	29.0%	15.9%	23.5%	9.9%
Easiness	27.5%	17.4%	13.6%	9.9%
Belonging	27.5%	15.9%	24.7%	14.8%
Learning Environment	27.5%	15.9%	24.7%	13.6%
Reputation	24.6%	13.0%	24.7%	6.2%
Pace (Slow)	24.6%	10.1%	24.7%	17.3%
Peer Problems	20.3%	10.1%	19.8%	17.3%
Teacher Problems	18.8%	5.8%	17.3%	4.9%
Social Fit	17.4%	1.4%	16.0%	13.6%

Latent Class Analysis for Students Leaving the PBL Campus During Middle School (IMS) vs After Middle School (JHS)

	Approx. Probable Group Size				
	Left IMS n=69			Left JHS n=81	
	37	25	7	50	31
	53.6%	36.2%	10.1%	61.7%	38.3%
Variable	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
Atmosphere	14.6%	82.6%	85.7%	3.1%	70.8%
Courses (Lack)	14.1%	79.3%	71.4%	34.0%	51.3%
Activities (Lack)	6.0%	75.3%	85.7%	30.0%	57.5%
Instruction Model	0.0%	64.1%	100.0%	8.1%	53.7%
Instruction Quality	0.0%	52.1%	100.0%	0.0%	60.0%
Easiness	13.1%	36.7%	71.4%	3.8%	28.9%
Belonging	7.9%	40.3%	85.7%	5.1%	55.1%
Learning Environment	0.0%	56.1%	71.4%	0.0%	63.1%
Reputation	5.2%	32.4%	100.0%	7.2%	51.9%
Pace (Slow)	2.5%	36.3%	100.0%	1.7%	60.4%
Peer Problems	7.4%	21.1%	85.7%	6.1%	41.1%
Teacher Problems	0.0%	24.1%	100.0%	0.0%	44.2%
Social Fit	8.1%	12.0%	85.7%	0.0%	41.0%
Safety	5.4%	4.0%	57.1%	0.0%	6.3%
Size (Small)	5.4%	0.0%	42.9%	5.9%	35.0%
Transportation	5.4%	0.0%	85.7%	2.0%	6.3%
Acceptance by Students	5.4%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	22.1%
Pace (Fast)	2.7%	4.0%	85.7%	0.0%	22.1%
Acceptance by Teachers	2.7%	0.0%	57.1%	0.0%	9.5%
Size (Big)	0.0%	8.0%	85.7%	6.0%	6.4%
Difficulty	0.0%	0.0%	85.7%	0.0%	9.5%

Model Fit	2-Class	3-Class	4-Class	2-Class	3-Class
max log-likelihood	-554.0	-455.9	-432.5	-580.1	-557.6
AIC	1193.9	1042.0	1038.9	1246.2	1245.1
BIC	1290.1	1187.2	1233.3	1349.1	1400.7

Leavers are defined as any student who either already left the PBL campus, or has indicated that they plan to do so. Leavers include those who left Inquiry, sometime before the end of 8th grade, and those who left or avoided Journey, leaving the PBL campus any time after the end of 8th grade. In order to fully understand student enrollment decisions as they relate to Journey, you must also consider the student experience at Inquiry.

Of the surveyed students, 150 responded that they have left or will leave the PBL campus and rated the factors for why they left, 69 from Inquiry and 81 from Journey. Of the parent respondents, 84 are PBL leavers, 45 from Inquiry and 39 from Journey. (These quantities are slightly smaller than the totals shown in Table 2a (154 students, 95 parents) due to a technical survey error that I corrected after the first few respondents, where some respondents were not asked the "Factors for Leaving" questions.) The quantity range of PBL Leavers is 154 to 205 (see calculations at the beginning of the Data Analysis section).

The "Journey Choosers", "SWHS Choosers that Considered Journey" and "SWHS Choosers that Didn't Consider Journey" are all mutually exclusive groups. About 100 of the PBL Leavers chose SWHS and are in those groups, while about 50 more chose other Virtual, Smith, other options or are undecided. Especially among the undecided, some respondents may choose to return to Journey, but their responses on the "Factors for Leaving" give us insight into areas of concern at the PBL campus.

Reviewing the LCA for student responses for Inquiry (IMS) Leavers (Groups A, B and C) and Journey (JHS) Leavers (Groups D and E), there are related but somewhat different patterns for Groups A, B, D and E.

The Journey leavers appear sharply divided between those who left strictly for lack of offerings (Group D) and those who left for lack of quality and/or fit (Group E). Group E cited atmosphere and learning environment as well as instructional quality and slow pace as their primary factors. Group D only cited lack of courses and lack of activities as their reasons for leaving.

Among the Inquiry Leavers, Group A indicates less overall dissatisfaction, but atmosphere and lack of challenge were still among their highest factors along with lack of

courses. Group B demonstrates a higher level of dissatisfaction and a more pointed concern about the instructional model and instructional quality.

I have excluded Group C, as it is a small group that rated everything highly, including contradictory factors. They may have rushed through the survey and I cannot draw meaningful conclusions about their factors for leaving.

The PBL Leaver Parent group was too small to run a separate LCA for those who left Inquiry and those who left Journey. However, taken as a combined group (84 respondents) the parents did align well with the students, especially those that left Journey. Parent Group 1 aligns with Student Group D, leaving primarily for a lack of offerings. Parent Group 2 (aligning with Student Group E) expressed dissatisfaction, chiefly with Belonging, Learning Environment, Atmosphere and Instruction Model, and their dissatisfaction with Instruction Quality and Pace (Slow) was also relatively high.

Open-Ended Responses – PBL Leavers and non-PBL Choosers

Themes for NOT Choosing PBL, Previously Attended PBL (coded from open-ended responses)	Left PBL Before the End of 8th Grade				Left PBL After the End of 8th Grade			
	Students	n=58	Parents	n=40	Students	n=68	Parents	n=41
Theme	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
General Negative Perception/Reputation	24.1%	14	17.5%	7	19.1%	13	17.1%	7
General Match	22.4%	13	20.0%	8	19.1%	13	9.8%	4
Projects	20.7%	12	2.5%	1	14.7%	10	2.4%	1
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	13.8%	8	22.5%	9	27.9%	19	34.1%	14
Never Considered other Options	10.3%	6	5.0%	2	7.4%	5	0.0%	0
Quality	8.6%	5	35.0%	14	25.0%	17	36.6%	15
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	6.9%	4	7.5%	3	4.4%	3	4.9%	2
Friends	6.9%	4	7.5%	3	1.5%	1	12.2%	5
Size	5.2%	3	5.0%	2	7.4%	5	7.3%	3
Grading	3.4%	2	0.0%	0	7.4%	5	0.0%	0
Convenience	1.7%	1	5.0%	2	0.0%	0	9.8%	4
Felt Unwelcome	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	1.5%	1	0.0%	0
Safety	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	2.4%	1
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	2.4%	1

Themes for NOT Choosing PBL, Never Attended PBL (coded from open-ended responses)				
	Students	n=1145	Parents	n=584
Theme	%	#	%	#
Never Considered other Options	22.1%	253	14.2%	83
General Match	13.9%	159	18.8%	110
Projects	11.1%	127	7.5%	44
General Negative Perception/Reputation	9.5%	109	6.7%	39
Unaware or Needs More Information	9.1%	104	13.9%	81
Friends	8.6%	99	6.7%	39
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	6.2%	71	9.4%	55
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	5.0%	57	10.1%	59
Convenience	4.5%	52	2.2%	13
Quality	3.0%	34	9.2%	54
Size	2.4%	27	1.9%	11
Grading	0.3%	3	0.0%	0
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.1%	1	1.4%	8
Safety	0.1%	1	0.0%	0
Curriculum Concerns	0.0%	0	0.3%	2

The unique contributions of the open-ended responses to this analysis are primarily in the areas of General Perception and Quality. Recall that 29 (out of 156) students mentioned positive perception or high quality as reasons for choosing Journey. Of the students that left or will leave the PBL campus, 27 cited negative experiences and 22 cited low quality as reasons for avoiding the PBL campus, for a total of 49 out of 126 students. Of those who never attended PBL, an additional 109 cited general negative perceptions and 34 cited low perceived quality.

Of those who never attended PBL, 253 said they never considered it as an option in their open-ended response, and 104 said they weren't aware of it, with 3 students overlapping. These 354 students are much more likely to encounter one of the students that left the PBL campus than one of the students who is still there, and there's about a 40% chance that one of these students will have negative perceptions or experiences toward the PBL experience.

VIII. Findings

In what follows, I will describe the findings as answers to the project questions. I begin with the finding related to the second project question as it both a simpler question and it helps direct our understanding of the other questions by illustrating that in this district students are the drivers of their own high school enrollment decision. We can therefore prioritize our focus toward the student responses while still incorporating the parent responses.

I then use the latent class analysis of the factor ratings to support the findings related to the primary project question that asks what factors influence high school enrollment decisions in Southwest Washington School District. I present a summary table that shows the patterns of responses for each latent sub-group of respondents and I give an interpretation for each sub-group.

Finally, I use the data from the thematic analysis of the open-ended responses to support the findings related to the third project question, regarding student perceptions of each high school option.

Finding #1

SWSD 7th-10th grade students are the primary drivers of their own high school enrollment decisions.

Project Question #2
How influential are parents/guardians in SWSD student enrollment decisions?

Although it was my second research question, I'm first describing who the decision-makers are, as this information helps interpret the other findings. In short, students primarily drive their high school enrollment choice. Parents rarely make this decision unilaterally and they are mutually involved in the decision about a third of the time. Students are the chief decider between roughly half to two-thirds of the cases.

Students		Respondents		Who Primarily Decided (denom = Qty that chose this school)		
	High School of Choice	%	Qty	Student	Together	Parent
	Southwest High	75%	965	55.8%	29.1%	15.1%
	Journey High School	12%	153	75.2%	15.7%	9.2%
	Other Schools	5%	69	63.8%	24.6%	11.6%
	Undecided	8%	98	44.9%	32.7%	22.4%
	Total	100%	1285			

Parents		Respondents		Who Primarily Decided (denom = Qty that chose this school)		
	High School of Choice	%	Qty	Student	Together	Parent
	Southwest High School	72%	479	45.3%	34.9%	19.8%
	Journey High School	11%	76	60.5%	34.2%	5.3%
	Other Schools	7%	48	35.4%	43.8%	20.8%
	Undecided	9%	60	21.7%	60.0%	18.3%
	Total	100%	663			

The degree of influence of parents/guardians in student enrollment decisions is readily available in the survey data. The survey directly asked whether students primarily decided or if parents primarily decided, or if it was a joint decision. For the choice to attend SWHS, students reported that parents primarily made the decision 15.1% of the time, and parents concurred, reporting 19.8%, a statistically insignificant difference. Similarly, for the choice to attend Journey, 9.2% of students reported it was a parent decision and 5.3% of parents reported the same, also a statistically insignificant difference.

For choosing SWHS, 55.8% of students indicated it was a student decision and 45.3% of parents indicated that it was a student decision. While this difference is stronger, in any interpretation the student is heavily involved most of the time, and is the primary decision maker roughly half the time.

For choosing Journey, 75.2% of students reported that it was a student decision and 60.5% of parents concurred. In any interpretation, the student is the primary decision maker in the majority of decisions to attend Journey. For increasing interest in Journey, while SWSD would of course want to inform and motivate parents, they should spend the greater effort to engage and motivate students in their school options.

Finding #2

Students that chose Journey High School fit three distinct profiles, while students that chose Southwest Washington High School fit six distinct profiles. Parent profiles align roughly with student profiles.

Project Question #1

What school-related factors influence the high school enrollment decisions of 7th-10th grade SWSD students, especially in relation to Southwest Washington High School and Journey High School?

What school-related factors influence the corresponding decisions of these students' parents?

What differences (if any) exist between students and parents in regards to enrollment decisions or desires?

Compared to the general aggregate results for the major groups of respondents, the LCAs provide a more nuanced answer to these project questions, as the LCAs show patterns of responses for subgroups of students. For interpretability I've nicknamed each student subgroup, however, the nicknames are only an attempt to interpret results, convey meaning and prompt discussion. The nicknames are not unambiguous descriptions, and while they are based on survey results, the survey results are more complex than a set of nicknames may imply. The LCAs are models based on probabilities and the quantities described below are estimates. The survey size is the estimate of the group size based on the LCA probabilities. For SWHS Choosers, the lower maximum size extrapolates the survey size to the size of the student body. The higher maximum size redistributes the "Rusher" group into the other 4 groups of SWHS Choosers. I've summarized the mutually exclusive student subgroups in the following tables:

Table 3a.1 – What Factors Influence Student and Parent Enrollment Decisions? (Research Question #1)					
LCA Subgroup	Prob. Survey Size	Est. Max. Size	Most Influential Factors (Ranking within Group)	Interpretation	Comparison and Contrast with Parent Groups
Journey Choosers					
True PBL Fans (Group 1)	78	100	Learning Pref. (1st) Environment (2nd) Familiarity (3rd)	These students are familiar with the campus (they probably currently attend PBL). They feel welcome in the environment and they report that the work matches their learning preference.	Parent Group 1 also ranks Learning Preference and Instructional Model in a virtual tie for most influential factors and ranks Environment as 2nd. These parents do not cite familiarity, but they do cite Student Preference as their 3rd most influential factor. These are the parents that support the "True PBL Fan" students in their decision to continue with PBL.
Stick with Friends (Group 2)	42	54	Friends (1st) Learning Pref. (2nd)	While Learning Preference is 2nd for these students, it's at a substantially lower rate than the "True PBL Fans" (37% vs 90%). Friends are their most important factor and they may not want to start new friendships in a new place even though they haven't indicated the greatest fit with Journey.	There is no clearly corresponding parent group for this student group.
Haven (Group 3)	33	43	Learning Pref. (1st) Environment (1st) Scheduling (1st) Social Fit (1st) Unique Needs (1st)	While these students also value Learning Preference and Environment, they stand out for their high emphasis on Social Fit and Unique Needs. Open-ended responses indicate that neurodivergence and sexual orientation are included among reasons that students find a better situation at Journey.	Parent Group 2 aligns well with all of the factors that "Haven" students value. These parents do place a slightly higher emphasis on the small size of Journey (100% vs 78%), but considering that Size is one element of Social Fit, this still creates a sensible correlation.

Table 3a.2 – What Factors Influence Student and Parent Enrollment Decisions? (Research Question #1)					
LCA Subgroup	Prob. Survey Size	Est. Max. Size	Most Influential Factors (Ranking within Group)	Interpretation	Comparison and Contrast with Parent Groups
SWHS Choosers that considered Journey					
Reluctants (Group 1)	65	127	Friends (1st) Courses (1st) Extra-Curr. (2nd)	Notable of this group is the relatively low influence of Social Fit (27%) and of Learning Preference (28%). Despite this lack of Social Fit and Learning Preference match, they are opting for being with Friends and having the Courses and Extra-Curricular activities they desire, after giving Journey serious consideration.	Parent Group 2 aligns with the "Reluctants" in the prioritization of Friends and Extra-Curriculars. The highest factor of this parent group is deference to the preference of their student. Social Fit is somewhat higher for this parent group than for this student group, but is relatively low compared to other parent groups. This "Reluctant Parent" group rates all of the academic measures very low, suggesting that perhaps they don't think SWHS is the best academic option for their student, but are willing to allow their student to follow friends to SWHS for the extra-curricular activities.
Enthusiasts (Group 2)	31	61	Extra-Curr. (1st) Friends (2nd) Courses (2nd) Social Fit (3rd)	The "Enthusiasts" are similar to the "Reluctants" in terms of Friends, Courses and Extra-Curricular Activities. However they are opposite in regards to Social Fit (82%) and Learning Preference (80%). While they considered Journey and therefore presumably had a good experience there, they appear to feel a much greater connection with all that SWHS has to offer.	Parent Group 1 may be the "Academic Enthusiasts", where they are relatively low on Friends and Social Fit, and low on Culture, but high on Courses, Instruction Model, Learning Preference and Reputation. Parent Group 3 may be the "All-Around Enthusiasts". They are highest on Social Fit and Culture and still very high on Environment, Courses, Extra-Curricular, Learning Preference and Reputation, Friends and Instruction Model.

Table 3a.3 – What Factors Influence Student and Parent Enrollment Decisions? (Research Question #1)					
LCA Subgroup	Prob. Survey Size	Est. Max. Size	Most Influential Factors (Ranking within Group)	Interpretation	Comparison and Contrast with Parent Groups
SWHS Choosers that did not consider Journey					
Extrovert Traditional Learners (Group 3)	239	466 to 530	Friends (1st) Learning Pref. (2nd) Social Fit (2rd) Extra-Curr. (3rd)	Familiarity with SWHS and Course Selection follow closely behind these first four factors. This group is very comparable to the "Enthusiasts" except for the fact that this group never seriously considered Journey.	Parent Group 4 aligns very well with this student group, with a slightly higher-ranked emphasis on Courses.
Introvert Traditional Learners (Group 4)	178	347 to 395	Extra-Curr. (1st) Courses (2nd) Friends (3rd) Learning Pref. (3rd)	This group is very similar to the Extrovert Traditional Learners, except for the low emphasis on Social Fit (24% vs 84%) and Familiarity (40% vs 74%). They seem to know their learning preference and were not enticed to consider Journey, but they don't feel the social fit with SWHS.	There is no clearly corresponding parent group for this student group, although this student group does share a prioritization of Learning Preference and Courses with Parent Group 5.
Papermaker Pack (Group 5)	175	341 to 388	Friends (1st) Familiarity (2nd) Social Fit (3rd) Proximity (3rd)	This is one of two groups that did not emphasize Extra-Curriculars or Courses (and they are also relatively low on Learning Preference and very low on Instruction Model). They are extremely influenced by friends (99%) and they are going with the familiar place where they fit in socially and can get to conveniently.	Parent Group 5 encompasses this student group, but adds an additional emphasis on the academic factors. This parent group is very similar to Parent Group 3, "All-Around Enthusiasts" who rate most of the major elements highly.
Unengaged (Group 6)	172	335 to 381	Friends (1st) Proximity (2nd) Parents (3rd)	This group values everything relatively lowly compared to other groups, with their top factor at only (40%). They mention very little about the academic, extra-curricular or social offerings of SWHS, and are primarily following their friends and parents to the convenient place.	Parent Group 6 shares these top 3 factors with the "Unengaged", with their highest factor being Student Preference, followed closely by Proximity and Friends.

Table 3b – What Factors Influenced Students and Parents to Leave PBL? (Research Question #1)					
LCA Subgroup	Prob. Survey Size	Est. Max. Size	Most Influential Factors (Ranking within Group)	Interpretation	Comparison and Contrast with Parent Groups
Inquiry Leavers					
Seeking More Challenge (Leaver Group A)	37	51	Atmosphere (1st) Courses (1st) Easiness (2nd)	Their overall level of dissatisfaction may be lower than Group B, but they are seeking a greater challenge in a different atmosphere.	The prioritization of course selection and atmosphere of this student group aligns with Parent Group 1.
Broadly Dissatisfied (Leaver Group B)	25	44	Atmosphere (1st) Courses (1st) Activities (2nd) Model (3rd)	The level of dissatisfaction may be higher (percentage of students who ranked factors highly), and in addition to their most influential factors, they also rated Instruction Quality and Learning Environment relatively highly.	Parent Group 2 aligns well with this student group, and also adds an emphasis on Belonging.
Journey Leavers					
Wanting More Offerings (Leaver Group D)	50	68	Courses (1st) Activities (1st)	Offerings (Courses and Activities) are the only factors that this group cites frequently.	Parent Group 1 aligns well with this student group, except Parent Group 1 has a stronger dissatisfaction with atmosphere.
Broadly Dissatisfied (Leaver Group E)	31	42	Atmosphere (1st) Learning Env. (2nd) Pace (Slow) (2nd) Inst. Quality (2nd)	In addition to the most influential factors, this group also rates Activities, Courses, Model and Belonging relatively highly.	Parent Group 2 aligns very closely with this student group.

Finding #3

Student survey respondents expressed 6.6 negative views of the PBL program for every positive view. Student respondents expressed 2.8 positive views of Southwest Washington High School for every negative view.

Project Question #3

How do 7th-10th grade SWSD students perceive and differentiate between Southwest Washington High School and Journey High School?

How do 7th-10th grade SWSD parents perceive and differentiate between Southwest Washington High School and Journey High School?

What differences (if any) exist between how students and parents perceive and differentiate between these two high school options?

The primary data for these perception and differentiation questions come from the open-ended responses. While the two open-ended questions in the survey, "Why did you choose (SWHS or Journey)?" and "Why didn't you choose (Journey or SWHS)?" don't directly ask respondents to tell us their perceptions of these schools, they do give respondents the opportunity to do so, especially if the perceptions are strong or relevant to their decision. Asking these questions in close succession is a clear invitation to explain what makes the difference.

Most of the codes that I identified in my inductive analysis are also represented in the ratings of factors or in other questions on the survey, with the exception of General Positive Perception, General Negative Perception, Quality, Projects and Normalcy. The responses encompassed in these codes either offer a unique insight or a level of specificity that's not available elsewhere in the survey. Therefore, I focused on these in order to assess the nature of student and parent perception of Journey and SWHS.

Theme	No to PBL		Yes to PBL		No to SWHS		Yes to SWHS	
	Students n=1102 #	Parents n=588 #	Students n=156 #	Parents n=74 #	Students n=257 #	Parents n=159 #	Students n=943 #	Parents n=491 #
General Positive Perception/Reputation	0	0	24	12	0	0	148	76
General Negative Perception/Reputation	136	53	0	0	55	34	0	0
Quality (or Lack Thereof)	56	83	5	8	19	8	57	70
General Match (or Lack Thereof)	185	122	78	30	103	69	108	46
Projects	149	46	49	26	0	0	0	0
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	78	60	36	15	6	4	376	180
Unaware or Needs More Information	104	81	0	0	5	2	0	0
Never Considered other Options	264	85	0	0	1	0	0	0

In the table above, I removed the percentages because these numbers should be considered as part of the whole district. If for example 50% of PBL non-choosers had a negative view of the PBL Campus and 50% of SWHS non-choosers had a negative view of SWHS, the percentages would portray a false equivalency when in reality the number of students with a negative view of PBL would dwarf the number with a negative view of SWHS. (That said, there are likely students who chose SWHS despite having a negative view of it and students who chose PBL despite having a negative view of it, and this survey did not capture those students).

In the open-ended responses, 192 students expressed a directly negative view of the PBL Campus (combining General Perception and Quality) and 29 expressed a positive view, a ratio of 6.6 negative views for every positive one. In contrast, 205 students expressed a positive view of SWHS and 74 expressed a negative view, or 2.8 positive views for every negative one. General Match, which is at least partially a proxy for positive or negative views, carries 2.4 negative views for every positive one in regards to PBL and a nearly 1 to 1 ratio for SWHS. Projects is also a partial proxy, and has 3 negative views for every positive view for the PBL Campus.

IX. Recommendations

It is not in the scope of this research to evaluate the quality of the current offerings at Journey or Inquiry. The findings, however, clearly indicate that many former students perceive poor quality based on their experience and that many other students perceive Journey as a non-serious academic option and learning environment. A frequent statement in the open-ended responses is that respondents believe Journey will not prepare students for college or life and that it caters to students who cannot succeed in a rigorous setting. At the same time, there is a core of respondents that have chosen Journey precisely because they recognize the value of project-based learning in creating real-world skills and in sparking creative problem solving. There is a discrepancy among the lived experiences of those that are or have been part of Journey, as well as between Journey supporters and the rest of the district community. In short, Journey either has a strong need for quality improvement or a need to publicize the quality that it has, likely both.

In light of the findings above, I recommend that Journey approach it's quality improvement in the following three stages, 1) reviewing or establishing a united vision of excellence and a framework for continuous improvement, 2) increasing the ambition, rigor and offerings of the PBL program and 3) publicize the vision and work of the school and create a larger market for students, in part by increasing partnerships with other schools, parents, community, professional and collegiate partners.

Recommendation #1 - United Vision and Framework for Improvement

The first recommendation is to ensure that teachers, parents, students, administrators and partners have a united vision and standard for excellence, not just within the school, but in the community at large. By incorporating a broad network into their re-visioning process, the school can begin to break down some of the negative perceptions that became apparent in the findings.

Journey cannot succeed as a silo or an "other" place that is not an essential part of the community (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). This vision review would include questions related to gold-standard PBL, but it would also include questions such as how the school can be both a place that helps non-traditional learners to succeed, and also a place that challenges the college-seeking honors student. The findings indicated that the community at large was uncertain whether Journey was an alternative school or a place for all students or a serious place for learning among other uncertainties. This re-envisioning process will allow the district to embrace or refute these identities and have a united sense of purpose and a foundation for quality improvements.

As part of this process, I recommend instituting a framework for continuous improvement cycles that involves the same broad base of stakeholders (Bryk et al., 2015; Westover, 2019). The broad base of supports both draws on the assets of the community for the act of improvement, and provides the nucleus for a messaging machine that counters the negative narrative around the school.

A beginning step is to integrate community partners with the aforementioned teachers, parents, students and administrators, and to structure themselves as a consistent and persistent Advisory Team. Concurrently, Journey could form a networked improvement community (NIC) with the several existing PBL schools in the area for mutual support (Brown & Poortman, 2018). One of the first tasks for the advisory team and NIC is to articulate and deeply analyze the problems, challenges and opportunities that Journey is facing. Another initial task is to define the type of improvement process that they want to embrace.

Recommendation #2 - Increase the ambition, rigor and offerings of the PBL program

The second recommendation is to increase the ambition, rigor and offerings of the PBL program. Increasing the rigor addresses the findings that some families do not perceive Journey as a serious or college-preparatory option. Increasing the offerings addresses the clearly-indicated student desire for more curricular and extra-curricular options.

One avenue that a broad-based Journey team may consider is to become an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. While it is not necessary nor beneficial for Journey to become SWHS, Journey does need to show that it is a serious academic option if it is to draw students from one of the top-ranked schools in the area. The IB program has a comparable reputation to the Advanced Placement (AP) program and courses that many survey respondents stated as the reason they left or avoided Journey. The principles of IB may align better with PBL than AP does, as posited by this statement from the Buck Institute for Education, a major proponent of PBL:

> "Through PBL we seek to develop 21st century skills, in particular critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. The IB program has very similar goals—that students be inquirers, thinkers, communicators, open-minded, risk-takers and reflective.
>
> The IB program places structured inquiry at the heart of the learning process. Successful inquiry leads to meaningful reflection and responsible action initiated by students as the result of their inquiry. PBL is organized around a driving question, which focuses student work around an important issue or challenge. Student learning in IB is framed by a series of essential questions: Who are we? Where are we in space and time? How do we express ourselves? How does the world work? How do we organize ourselves? How do we share the planet?" (Buck Institute for Education, 2023)

Being able to tap into the credibility and rigor of the IB program would help Journey be and portray itself as a learning option that can challenge all learners.

Several respondents described Journey's engineering program as the entire reason that they are continuing at Journey or why they chose the school in the first place. Journey should be looking to expand this type of offering. Additionally, professional and collegiate partnerships that allow students to access and contribute to real workplace endeavors, internships, research partnerships, certifications, technical skills and other such initiatives would help Journey develop

into a place that challenges all students (Juuti et al., 2021). The broad base of stakeholder partners that I mentioned earlier would be a crucial element in developing these types of offerings.

Recommendation #3 - Publicize the vision and work of the school and create a larger market for students

The third recommendation is to publicize the vision and work of the school and to create a larger market for future students through school and community partnerships. As mentioned earlier, by using partners throughout the process of clarifying its vision, establishing a continuous improvement framework and increasing its offerings, Journey would also be developing a publicity machine to disseminate its developments and successes.

Currently, a big chunk of Journey's publicity appears to be disaffected PBL students who share a negative reputation about Journey at SWHS and likely in the community at large. Many open-ended responses refer to the previous negative experiences of peers in PBL. In the survey, 171 out of 976 students that chose SWHS directly expressed a negative perception or used language that I coded as describing Journey as low quality. This does not include those who simply expressed a mismatch or general dislike for Journey or its instructional model. Journey must counter that narrative.

Part of this process is to partner with or integrate with other district schools of all levels. Partnering with SWHS or other high schools to have joint projects or otherwise mutually support each other may decrease the othering that was apparent in the survey findings. Partnering with middle and elementary schools can increase the richness of learning opportunities for students in each school, as well as help create interest among future students (Karcher, 2009; Shroyer et al., 2007).

At a more basic level, the district simply needs to publicize Inquiry and Journey's existence and assets. According to survey results, approximately 300 students were not even aware of Journey as an option. The district needs to over-inform elementary students of its PBL options beginning in 4th grade and reiterate Journey as an option beginning in 7th grade. If Journey is actively partnering with the lower schools, this publicity will happen more naturally and potential students will have a greater sense of the benefits and opportunities that the PBL program embodies. Additionally, the school and district must broadcast its successes often to the community at large.

Throughout this entire improvement process, if current Journey students play a central role in the process itself, they will be participating in an excellent form of project-based learning (Fletcher, 2005; Rubin & Silva, 2003). For example, students could lead a process of creating a broader selection of basic extra-curricular offerings at Journey, either by leading them or finding community partners to lead them or fund them. This would be one more avenue to show how Journey facilitates real-world problem solving and life skills and meaningful work that matters to students now and in the future.

X. Conclusion

Southwest Washington School District (SWSD) has experienced under-enrollment and enrollment attrition at its PBL High School. I attempted to survey all 7th-10th grade students in SWSD and their parents/guardians in order to gain insight into the factors that influenced their high school enrollment decisions and provide the school district information that would allow them to improve their high school offerings, tailor them to family needs and desires, and communicate effectively regarding their high school offerings. Approximately 54% of students responded and approximately 28% of parents/guardians responded.

Through the survey, I found that SWSD students are the primary decision-makers regarding where they attend high school. In the survey, respondents rated various factors for how influential the factors were in their high school choice, and gave open-ended responses regarding why they did or did not choose each of their options. I used latent class analysis to examine the factor ratings and create profiles of the types of students that chose Journey (the PBL high school) and those that chose Southwest Washington High School (the traditional high school).

Based on the LCAs, Students that chose Journey High School fit three distinct subgroups, while students that chose Southwest Washington High School fit six distinct subgroups. Parent and student subgroups roughly align. See the LCA Sub-Group Summary below for a representation of those groups.

Across all students, the primary factors of influence toward Journey were Learning Preference, Welcoming Environment, Familiarity, Instruction Model, Social Fit, Unique Needs and Friends of Students. These are roughly in order of importance, although not every factor was important to every subgroup. The primary factors of influence toward SWHS were Friends of

Students, Extra-Curricular Activities, Familiarity, Learning Preference, Social Fit, Proximity and Course Offerings. Again, not every factor was important to every subgroup.

Journey Choosers	
True PBL Fans (78-100)	1st. Learning Pref 2nd. Environment 3rd. Familiarity
Stick with Friends (42-54)	1st. Friends 2nd. Learning Pref
Haven (33-43)	1st. Learning Pref 1st. Environment 1st. Scheduling 1st. Social Fit 1st. Unique Needs

SWHS Choosers that considered Journey	
Reluctants (65-127)	1st. Friends 1st. Courses 2nd. Extra-Curr
Enthusiasts (31-61)	1st. Extra-Curr 2nd. Friends 2nd. Courses 3rd. Social Fit

LCA Sub-Group Summary

SWHS Choosers that did not consider Journey	
Extrovert Traditional Learners (239-530)	1st. Friends 2nd. Learning Pref 2nd. Social Fit 3rd. Extra-Curr
Introvert Traditional Learners (178-395)	1st. Extra-Curr 2nd. Courses 3rd. Friends 3rd. Learning Pref
Papermaker Pack (175-388)	1st. Friends 2nd. Familiarity 3rd. Social Fit 3rd. Proximity
Unengaged (172-381)	1st. Friends 2nd. Proximity 3rd. Parents

Based on the open-ended responses, students had a generally negative view of Journey High School and a generally positive view of SWHS, although the degree of positivity toward SWHS was smaller than the degree of negativity toward Journey-Inquiry. Student survey respondents expressed 6.6 negative views of the PBL program for every positive view. Student respondents expressed 2.8 positive views of Southwest Washington High School for every negative view.

These results could be useful for any high school of choice, but especially for those in relatively-affluent or demographically-homogenous locations, where choice has historically been limited and where the traditional choice is highly regarded. The results could be useful as they highlight factors and combinations of factors that are important for students and families and illuminate considerations that may be important when two schools are set up to compete with each other within a district or confined geographic area.

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Appendix

A - Complete Survey Summary Tables

Journey High School-Related

Reported Factors for Choosing Journey High School

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=153)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=76)
Instruction Model	3.2	43.1%	17.0%	4.6	93.4%	71.1%
Courses	2.9	27.5%	15.0%	3.7	61.8%	15.8%
Environment	3.8	69.3%	25.5%	4.5	92.1%	21.1%
Proximity	2.8	33.3%	11.1%	2.3	26.3%	7.9%
Friends (of Students)	3.3	51.6%	39.2%	2.7	30.3%	11.8%
Friends (of Parents)				1.6	7.9%	1.3%
Social Fit	3.3	49.0%	19.6%	3.8	67.1%	26.3%
Learning Style	4.1	77.8%	48.4%	4.6	93.4%	59.2%
Familiarity	3.4	56.9%	25.5%	3.0	38.2%	5.3%
Reputation	2.5	25.5%	5.2%	3.4	48.7%	5.3%
Best Option	3.0	37.9%	13.1%	2.3	19.7%	2.6%
Size	3.1	41.2%	17.0%	4.1	76.3%	22.4%
Daily Structure	2.9	34.0%	8.5%	3.1	40.8%	0.0%
Unique Needs	3.2	43.8%	9.8%	3.4	52.6%	7.9%
Extra-Curricular	2.5	19.0%	5.9%	2.4	18.4%	1.3%
Scheduling	2.9	35.9%	12.4%	2.2	22.4%	0.0%
Classmates	2.7	26.8%	3.9%	2.6	25.0%	0.0%
Culture	2.7	29.4%	7.2%	3.3	50.0%	3.9%
Parent Preference	2.1	13.7%	8.5%			
Student Preference				4.4	88.2%	32.9%
Teacher Influence	2.0	9.8%	2.0%	2.6	32.9%	1.3%
Peer Influence				2.3	15.8%	1.3%

Reported Factors for Choosing Other High Schools, Among Those Who Previously Attended The PBL Campus (Journey or Inquiry)

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=153)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=94)
Instruction Model	3.0	34.0%	9.2%	3.9	64.9%	18.1%
Courses	3.8	64.1%	43.8%	4.2	79.8%	47.9%
Environment	3.1	36.6%	13.1%	3.8	64.9%	7.4%
Proximity	2.8	30.7%	18.3%	2.6	28.7%	13.8%
Friends (of Students)	3.5	59.5%	39.2%	3.2	42.6%	17.0%
Friends (of Parents)				2.3	21.3%	2.1%
Social Fit	3.2	45.1%	16.3%	3.8	68.1%	25.5%
Learning Style	3.7	60.1%	24.8%	4.1	78.7%	41.5%
Familiarity	2.7	32.0%	9.2%	2.6	30.9%	9.6%
Reputation	3.0	37.3%	9.2%	3.4	47.9%	13.8%
Best Option	3.0	37.9%	19.0%	2.8	30.9%	11.7%
Size	3.0	39.2%	15.7%	3.0	37.2%	4.3%
Daily Structure	2.8	34.6%	5.2%	2.6	29.8%	3.2%
Unique Needs	2.7	30.7%	5.9%	2.8	33.0%	7.4%
Extra-Curricular	3.5	59.5%	35.3%	3.8	67.0%	22.3%
Scheduling	2.6	28.1%	2.6%	2.3	23.4%	0.0%
Classmates	2.7	31.4%	0.7%	2.6	26.6%	3.2%
Culture	2.7	30.1%	3.9%	3.1	38.3%	3.2%
Parent Preference	2.7	26.8%	9.8%			
Student Preference				4.4	87.2%	27.7%
Teacher Influence	2.1	17.6%	1.3%	2.4	24.5%	2.1%
Peer Influence				2.4	14.9%	1.1%

Reported Factors for Choosing Journey High School, Among Those Who Also Considered Southwest High School

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=60)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=31)
Instruction Model	3.1	36.7%	18.3%	4.5	87.1%	71.0%
Courses	2.9	28.3%	11.7%	3.5	58.1%	12.9%
Environment	3.6	61.7%	15.0%	4.5	93.5%	19.4%
Proximity	2.7	30.0%	10.0%	2.3	25.8%	6.5%
Friends (of Students)	3.3	50.0%	41.7%	2.5	19.4%	9.7%
Friends (of Parents)				1.5	3.2%	0.0%
Social Fit	2.9	33.3%	11.7%	3.9	71.0%	32.3%
Learning Style	3.9	71.7%	45.0%	4.5	90.3%	54.8%
Familiarity	3.2	51.7%	30.0%	2.9	41.9%	3.2%
Reputation	2.1	20.0%	6.7%	3.2	45.2%	3.2%
Best Option	2.7	26.7%	13.3%	2.3	19.4%	6.5%
Size	3.0	35.0%	16.7%	4.4	87.1%	22.6%
Daily Structure	2.8	30.0%	13.3%	3.0	35.5%	0.0%
Unique Needs	3.0	35.0%	6.7%	3.3	48.4%	9.7%
Extra-Curricular	2.3	16.7%	8.3%	2.5	16.1%	3.2%
Scheduling	2.8	30.0%	15.0%	2.4	25.8%	0.0%
Classmates	2.7	21.7%	8.3%	2.8	25.8%	0.0%
Culture	2.4	21.7%	5.0%	3.0	41.9%	3.2%
Parent Preference	2.1	15.0%	15.0%			
Student Preference				4.6	90.3%	32.3%
Teacher Influence	2.0	8.3%	3.3%	2.6	29.0%	3.2%
Peer Influence				2.2	6.5%	3.2%

Reported Factors for Choosing Journey High School, Among Those Who Did Not Consider Southwest High School

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=93)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=45)
Instruction Model	3.3	47.9%	16.0%	4.6	95.7%	69.6%
Courses	3.0	27.7%	17.0%	3.8	63.0%	17.4%
Environment	3.9	74.5%	31.9%	4.4	89.1%	21.7%
Proximity	2.9	36.2%	11.7%	2.3	26.1%	8.7%
Friends (of Students)	3.3	53.2%	37.2%	2.8	37.0%	13.0%
Friends (of Parents)				1.7	10.9%	2.2%
Social Fit	3.6	59.6%	24.5%	3.7	63.0%	21.7%
Learning Style	4.2	81.9%	51.1%	4.6	93.5%	60.9%
Familiarity	3.6	60.6%	22.3%	3.0	34.8%	6.5%
Reputation	2.8	29.8%	4.3%	3.5	50.0%	6.5%
Best Option	3.3	45.7%	12.8%	2.2	19.6%	0.0%
Size	3.2	45.7%	17.0%	3.8	67.4%	21.7%
Daily Structure	3.0	37.2%	5.3%	3.1	43.5%	0.0%
Unique Needs	3.3	50.0%	11.7%	3.4	54.3%	6.5%
Extra-Curricular	2.6	21.3%	4.3%	2.2	19.6%	0.0%
Scheduling	3.0	40.4%	10.6%	2.1	19.6%	0.0%
Classmates	2.7	30.9%	2.1%	2.5	23.9%	0.0%
Culture	2.9	35.1%	8.5%	3.4	54.3%	4.3%
Parent Preference	2.2	13.8%	4.3%			
Student Preference				4.3	84.8%	39.1%
Teacher Influence	2.0	11.7%	1.1%	2.6	34.8%	0.0%
Peer Influence				2.3	21.7%	0.0%

Reported Factors for Leaving the PBL Campus

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=154)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=95)
Courses (Lack)	3.0	42.0%	30.7%	2.8	36.9%	27.4%
Belonging	2.5	26.0%	15.3%	2.8	40.5%	23.8%
Teacher Problems	2.1	18.0%	5.3%	1.9	19.0%	9.5%
Peer Problems	2.3	20.0%	14.0%	2.0	21.4%	4.8%
Reputation	2.4	24.7%	9.3%	2.0	16.7%	9.5%
Atmosphere	2.9	37.3%	27.3%	2.9	41.7%	25.0%
Difficulty	1.6	6.0%	2.7%	1.3	4.8%	4.8%
Easiness	2.1	20.0%	13.3%	1.7	14.3%	1.2%
Instruction Model	2.5	29.3%	22.7%	2.7	34.5%	29.8%
Transportation	1.6	7.3%	4.0%	1.3	3.6%	4.8%
Acceptance by Teachers	1.5	5.3%	1.3%	1.5	10.7%	1.2%
Acceptance by Students	1.7	10.7%	5.3%	1.7	14.3%	3.6%
Size (Big)	1.6	8.7%	4.0%	1.3	3.6%	0.0%
Size (Small)	1.8	12.7%	9.3%	1.3	3.6%	1.2%
Instruction Quality	2.3	26.0%	12.7%	2.2	26.2%	17.9%
Pace (Slow)	2.4	24.7%	14.0%	2.2	23.8%	7.1%
Pace (Fast)	1.7	10.0%	4.0%	1.3	2.4%	1.2%
Safety	1.5	6.0%	1.3%	1.5	7.1%	1.2%
Social Fit	2.1	16.7%	8.0%	2.1	23.8%	3.6%
Learning Environment	2.5	26.0%	14.7%	2.7	34.5%	23.8%
Activities (Lack)	2.9	40.0%	32.7%	3.0	41.7%	28.6%

Reported Factors for Leaving PBL Campus (after 8th grade)

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=83)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=46)
Courses (Lack)	3.0	40.7%	37.0%	3.2	51.3%	38.5%
Belonging	2.4	24.7%	14.8%	2.4	25.6%	17.9%
Teacher Problems	2.0	17.3%	4.9%	1.9	20.5%	10.3%
Peer Problems	2.2	19.8%	17.3%	1.6	10.3%	0.0%
Reputation	2.3	24.7%	6.2%	2.2	20.5%	17.9%
Atmosphere	2.7	29.6%	27.2%	2.7	30.8%	20.5%
Difficulty	1.5	3.7%	2.5%	1.5	10.3%	7.7%
Easiness	1.9	13.6%	9.9%	1.9	17.9%	2.6%
Instruction Model	2.4	25.9%	24.7%	2.6	30.8%	28.2%
Transportation	1.4	3.7%	2.5%	1.3	2.6%	2.6%
Acceptance by Teachers	1.3	3.7%	1.2%	1.5	10.3%	0.0%
Acceptance by Students	1.6	8.6%	2.5%	1.4	7.7%	0.0%
Size (Big)	1.4	6.2%	1.2%	1.3	2.6%	0.0%
Size (Small)	1.9	17.3%	12.3%	1.3	5.1%	2.6%
Instruction Quality	2.2	23.5%	9.9%	2.5	38.5%	25.6%
Pace (Slow)	2.4	24.7%	17.3%	2.4	23.1%	10.3%
Pace (Fast)	1.6	8.6%	2.5%	1.4	5.1%	2.6%
Safety	1.3	2.5%	2.5%	1.5	7.7%	0.0%
Social Fit	2.1	16.0%	13.6%	1.8	12.8%	2.6%
Learning Environment	2.4	24.7%	13.6%	2.5	25.6%	17.9%
Activities (Lack)	2.9	40.7%	40.7%	3.3	53.8%	38.5%

Inquiry Middle School-Related

Reported Factors for Choosing Inquiry Middle School (6th Grade Only)

Short Name	Students		n=83	Parents		n=41
	Avg Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor	Average Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor
Instruction Model	2.9	31.3%	8.4%	4.2	82.9%	56.1%
Courses	3.1	39.8%	12.0%	3.4	48.8%	12.2%
Environment	3.6	55.4%	31.3%	4.2	80.5%	17.1%
Proximity	2.3	18.1%	12.0%	2.1	14.6%	2.4%
Friends (of Students)	3.0	44.6%	43.4%	2.6	29.3%	12.2%
Friends (of Parents)				2.1	14.6%	0.0%
Social Fit	3.3	48.2%	21.7%	3.9	70.7%	26.8%
Learning Style	4.1	75.9%	53.0%	4.3	85.4%	68.3%
Familiarity	2.1	18.1%	7.2%	2.1	17.1%	4.9%
Reputation	2.8	33.7%	9.6%	3.3	43.9%	19.5%
Best Option	2.7	31.3%	12.0%	2.3	24.4%	4.9%
Size	2.4	26.5%	16.9%	3.7	65.9%	14.6%
Daily Structure	2.7	30.1%	4.8%	2.5	26.8%	0.0%
Unique Needs	3.0	43.4%	12.0%	3.2	41.5%	7.3%
Extra-Curricular	2.6	31.3%	6.0%	2.1	14.6%	2.4%
Scheduling	2.6	30.1%	4.8%	1.8	4.9%	0.0%
Classmates	2.6	28.9%	3.6%	2.6	29.3%	4.9%
Culture	2.9	28.9%	10.8%	3.2	43.9%	0.0%
Parent Preference	2.4	25.3%	14.5%			
Student Preference				4.0	73.2%	24.4%
Teacher Influence	2.2	22.9%	3.6%	2.7	39.0%	4.9%
Peer Influence				3.0	34.1%	4.9%

Reported Factors for Leaving PBL Campus (after 6th or 7th grade)

Short Name	Students		n=71	Parents		n=49
	Avg Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor	Average Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor
Courses (Lack)	3.0	43.5%	23.2%	2.4	24.4%	17.8%
Belonging	2.5	27.5%	15.9%	3.2	53.3%	28.9%
Teacher Problems	2.2	18.8%	5.8%	1.8	17.8%	8.9%
Peer Problems	2.3	20.3%	10.1%	2.4	31.1%	8.9%
Reputation	2.4	24.6%	13.0%	1.8	13.3%	2.2%
Atmosphere	3.1	46.4%	27.5%	3.1	51.1%	28.9%
Difficulty	1.7	8.7%	2.9%	1.2	0.0%	2.2%
Easiness	2.3	27.5%	17.4%	1.6	11.1%	0.0%
Instruction Model	2.7	33.3%	20.3%	2.8	37.8%	31.1%
Transportation	1.8	11.6%	5.8%	1.3	4.4%	6.7%
Acceptance by Teachers	1.6	7.2%	1.4%	1.6	11.1%	2.2%
Acceptance by Students	1.8	13.0%	8.7%	2.0	20.0%	6.7%
Size (Big)	1.8	11.6%	7.2%	1.3	4.4%	0.0%
Size (Small)	1.7	7.2%	5.8%	1.2	2.2%	0.0%
Instruction Quality	2.5	29.0%	15.9%	1.9	15.6%	11.1%
Pace (Slow)	2.3	24.6%	10.1%	2.1	24.4%	4.4%
Pace (Fast)	1.8	11.6%	5.8%	1.2	0.0%	0.0%
Safety	1.8	10.1%	0.0%	1.5	6.7%	2.2%
Social Fit	2.1	17.4%	1.4%	2.4	33.3%	4.4%
Learning Environment	2.6	27.5%	15.9%	2.8	42.2%	28.9%
Activities (Lack)	2.8	39.1%	23.2%	2.7	31.1%	20.0%

Southwest Washington High School-Related

Reported Factors for Choosing Southwest High School

Short Name	Students		n=965	Parents		n=479
	Avg Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor	Average Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor
Instruction Model	2.8	25.5%	4.2%	3.6	59.3%	18.8%
Courses	3.5	54.1%	29.4%	4.0	72.9%	48.4%
Environment	3.2	39.0%	8.8%	3.3	43.0%	3.5%
Proximity	3.4	52.2%	32.4%	3.1	42.4%	20.0%
Friends (of Students)	4.1	76.6%	66.1%	3.6	61.6%	36.7%
Friends (of Parents)				2.7	34.0%	4.2%
Social Fit	3.5	55.3%	16.9%	3.7	63.9%	22.3%
Learning Style	3.6	57.5%	17.4%	3.8	68.3%	28.2%
Familiarity	3.5	56.6%	20.1%	3.1	43.0%	11.7%
Reputation	3.3	46.7%	11.9%	3.7	63.9%	24.4%
Best Option	2.9	34.4%	7.5%	2.5	24.6%	5.4%
Size	3.0	35.3%	7.9%	2.5	18.2%	0.8%
Daily Structure	3.0	34.3%	3.9%	2.8	30.7%	0.8%
Unique Needs	2.7	28.2%	2.6%	2.7	28.6%	2.5%
Extra-Curricular	3.7	62.1%	34.2%	3.9	67.4%	32.8%
Scheduling	2.9	30.9%	3.1%	2.4	19.4%	0.4%
Classmates	2.9	32.2%	1.3%	2.6	26.9%	1.7%
Culture	3.0	38.1%	4.2%	3.2	42.0%	3.5%
Parent Preference	3.1	40.1%	14.0%			
Student Preference				4.1	77.7%	23.8%
Teacher Influence	2.5	23.2%	1.2%	2.3	18.6%	1.0%
Peer Influence				2.6	26.1%	1.9%

Reported Factors for Leaving Southwest High School

Short Name	Students		n=36	Parents		n=23
	Avg Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor	Average Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor
Courses (Lack)	2.0	13.9%	19.4%	1.7	16.7%	5.6%
Belonging	3.2	47.2%	13.9%	3.5	55.6%	55.6%
Teacher Problems	3.0	36.1%	27.8%	2.3	22.2%	11.1%
Peer Problems	2.7	30.6%	19.4%	2.9	44.4%	22.2%
Reputation	2.6	25.0%	0.0%	2.2	22.2%	5.6%
Atmosphere	3.3	44.4%	13.9%	4.2	72.2%	38.9%
Difficulty	2.8	33.3%	25.0%	2.3	27.8%	16.7%
Easiness	1.6	8.3%	0.0%	1.4	5.6%	0.0%
Instruction Model	3.2	41.7%	27.8%	3.2	55.6%	44.4%
Transportation	1.9	16.7%	8.3%	1.3	5.6%	0.0%
Acceptance by Teachers	2.4	25.0%	19.4%	2.2	33.3%	0.0%
Acceptance by Students	2.6	27.8%	11.1%	2.9	50.0%	5.6%
Size (Big)	2.6	30.6%	5.6%	3.1	55.6%	5.6%
Size (Small)	1.6	8.3%	0.0%	1.2	0.0%	0.0%
Instruction Quality	2.6	27.8%	13.9%	2.4	27.8%	5.6%
Pace (Slow)	2.3	19.4%	2.8%	2.1	16.7%	5.6%
Pace (Fast)	2.8	36.1%	16.7%	2.5	22.2%	11.1%
Safety	2.5	25.0%	5.6%	2.3	22.2%	11.1%
Social Fit	2.9	38.9%	8.3%	2.8	38.9%	11.1%
Learning Environment	3.5	55.6%	19.4%	3.5	61.1%	16.7%
Activities (Lack)	1.9	13.9%	8.3%	1.6	11.1%	5.6%

Reported Factors for Choosing Southwest High School, Among Those Who Also Considered Journey High School

Short Name	Students		n=96	Parents		n=78
	Avg Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor	Average Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor
Instruction Model	2.9	25.0%	11.5%	3.7	63.3%	19.2%
Courses	3.9	70.8%	47.9%	4.1	78.5%	53.8%
Environment	3.0	30.2%	8.3%	3.2	46.8%	1.3%
Proximity	2.9	36.5%	19.8%	2.6	26.6%	14.1%
Friends (of Students)	3.9	71.9%	60.4%	3.6	58.2%	37.2%
Friends (of Parents)				2.5	26.6%	5.1%
Social Fit	3.0	44.8%	6.3%	3.5	62.0%	21.8%
Learning Style	3.3	44.8%	19.8%	3.5	55.7%	26.9%
Familiarity	2.7	33.3%	10.4%	2.5	25.3%	9.0%
Reputation	2.9	34.4%	7.3%	3.4	54.4%	21.8%
Best Option	2.7	27.1%	8.3%	2.3	17.7%	9.0%
Size	2.7	28.1%	14.6%	2.3	12.7%	0.0%
Daily Structure	2.6	27.1%	8.3%	2.3	16.7%	0.0%
Unique Needs	2.4	27.1%	7.3%	2.6	25.6%	2.6%
Extra-Curricular	3.6	61.5%	38.5%	3.9	73.1%	37.2%
Scheduling	2.7	26.0%	6.3%	2.2	17.9%	0.0%
Classmates	2.6	26.0%	2.1%	2.6	30.8%	0.0%
Culture	2.7	31.3%	2.1%	2.9	35.9%	5.1%
Parent Preference	2.6	26.0%	11.5%			
Student Preference				4.3	84.6%	21.8%
Teacher Influence	2.2	19.8%	5.2%	2.4	25.6%	2.6%
Peer Influence				2.8	30.8%	2.6%

Reported Factors for Choosing Southwest High School, Among Those Who Did Not Consider Journey High School

Short Name	Students		n=869	Parents		n=401
	Avg Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor	Average Score	% Very or Extremely Influential	% as Top 3 Factor
Instruction Model	2.8	25.5%	3.5%	3.6	58.2%	18.8%
Courses	3.5	52.4%	27.4%	4.0	71.5%	47.4%
Environment	3.2	40.1%	9.0%	3.3	42.5%	4.0%
Proximity	3.5	54.0%	33.6%	3.2	45.2%	21.0%
Friends (of Students)	4.1	77.2%	66.7%	3.6	62.4%	37.0%
Friends (of Parents)				2.8	35.9%	4.0%
Social Fit	3.6	56.5%	18.0%	3.8	64.4%	22.2%
Learning Style	3.6	58.8%	17.2%	3.9	70.3%	28.4%
Familiarity	3.6	59.4%	21.6%	3.2	46.6%	12.6%
Reputation	3.4	48.1%	12.5%	3.7	65.1%	24.7%
Best Option	3.0	35.2%	7.3%	2.5	25.9%	4.7%
Size	3.1	36.1%	7.3%	2.5	19.2%	1.0%
Daily Structure	3.0	35.1%	3.4%	2.9	33.3%	1.0%
Unique Needs	2.8	28.3%	2.0%	2.7	29.1%	2.5%
Extra-Curricular	3.8	62.2%	33.3%	3.8	66.1%	31.9%
Scheduling	2.9	31.6%	2.8%	2.4	19.7%	0.7%
Classmates	2.9	32.8%	1.2%	2.6	26.1%	2.0%
Culture	3.1	39.0%	4.5%	3.2	43.3%	3.2%
Parent Preference	3.2	41.8%	14.2%			
Student Preference				4.1	76.4%	24.2%
Teacher Influence	2.5	23.5%	0.8%	2.3	17.2%	0.7%
Peer Influence				2.5	24.9%	1.7%

Smith High School-Related and Virtual Academy-Related

Reported Factors for Choosing Smith High School

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=47)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=25)
Instruction Model	3.3	52.1%	8.5%	4.4	88.0%	36.0%
Courses	2.6	16.7%	4.3%	3.6	60.0%	0.0%
Environment	4.0	72.9%	34.0%	4.7	96.0%	40.0%
Proximity	2.9	35.4%	19.1%	3.0	40.0%	8.0%
Friends (of Students)	2.5	29.2%	21.3%	1.9	20.0%	4.0%
Friends (of Parents)				1.8	12.0%	0.0%
Social Fit	3.0	43.8%	19.1%	4.4	84.0%	32.0%
Learning Style	4.3	85.4%	57.4%	4.7	92.0%	80.0%
Familiarity	2.0	16.7%	4.3%	2.7	32.0%	4.0%
Reputation	2.9	31.3%	10.6%	3.6	48.0%	4.0%
Best Option	3.3	54.2%	21.3%	3.6	56.0%	8.0%
Size	3.9	70.8%	44.7%	4.6	96.0%	40.0%
Daily Structure	3.6	58.3%	21.3%	3.9	80.0%	0.0%
Unique Needs	3.7	66.7%	14.9%	4.4	88.0%	20.0%
Extra-Curricular	2.2	20.8%	0.0%	2.7	36.0%	0.0%
Scheduling	3.2	52.1%	0.0%	3.1	44.0%	0.0%
Classmates	2.6	31.3%	0.0%	3.2	44.0%	4.0%
Culture	2.7	29.2%	4.3%	3.8	60.0%	4.0%
Parent Preference	2.8	31.3%	6.4%			
Student Preference				4.0	72.0%	8.0%
Teacher Influence	2.8	35.4%	4.3%	3.8	56.0%	4.0%
Peer Influence				2.9	28.0%	4.0%

Reported Factors for Choosing Virtual Academy (High School)

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=6)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=8)
Instruction Model	3.6	42.9%	0.0%	4.1	75.0%	25.0%
Courses	3.6	42.9%	50.0%	3.3	37.5%	0.0%
Environment	3.7	71.4%	0.0%	3.8	62.5%	0.0%
Proximity	3.1	57.1%	0.0%	3.4	50.0%	25.0%
Friends (of Students)	2.0	14.3%	0.0%	1.6	12.5%	0.0%
Friends (of Parents)				1.3	0.0%	0.0%
Social Fit	2.9	42.9%	16.7%	2.8	37.5%	0.0%
Learning Style	3.7	71.4%	66.7%	3.4	50.0%	37.5%
Familiarity	2.1	14.3%	16.7%	2.5	25.0%	0.0%
Reputation	2.6	14.3%	0.0%	2.6	37.5%	0.0%
Best Option	3.1	57.1%	33.3%	3.4	62.5%	37.5%
Size	2.3	28.6%	16.7%	2.4	37.5%	12.5%
Daily Structure	3.6	71.4%	33.3%	4.8	100.0%	25.0%
Unique Needs	3.6	71.4%	16.7%	4.5	87.5%	37.5%
Extra-Curricular	2.4	28.6%	16.7%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Scheduling	3.9	71.4%	16.7%	5.0	100.0%	62.5%
Classmates	1.7	0.0%	0.0%	1.5	12.5%	0.0%
Culture	2.1	14.3%	0.0%	1.6	12.5%	0.0%
Parent Preference	3.7	42.9%	16.7%			
Student Preference				3.8	62.5%	25.0%
Teacher Influence	2.4	14.3%	0.0%	2.0	25.0%	0.0%
Peer Influence				1.5	0.0%	0.0%

Reported Factors for Choosing Other High Schools, Among Those Who Previously Attended Smith High School

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=2)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=1)
Instruction Model	3.0	0.0%	0.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Courses	4.5	100.0%	50.0%	4.0	100.0%	100.0%
Environment	3.5	50.0%	0.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Proximity	3.5	50.0%	0.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Friends (of Students)	5.0	100.0%	50.0%	3.0	0.0%	0.0%
Friends (of Parents)				1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Social Fit	4.0	50.0%	50.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Learning Style	3.0	0.0%	50.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Familiarity	2.5	50.0%	0.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Reputation	3.0	50.0%	0.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Best Option	2.5	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Size	2.5	50.0%	50.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Daily Structure	2.5	0.0%	0.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Unique Needs	2.5	50.0%	0.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Extra-Curricular	4.5	100.0%	50.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Scheduling	1.5	0.0%	0.0%	2.0	0.0%	0.0%
Classmates	4.0	100.0%	0.0%	2.0	0.0%	0.0%
Culture	3.0	50.0%	0.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Parent Preference	3.0	50.0%	0.0%			
Student Preference				4.0	100.0%	0.0%
Teacher Influence	1.5	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Peer Influence				1.0	0.0%	0.0%

Reported Factors for Choosing Other High Schools, Among Those Who Previously Attended Virtual Academy

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=99)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=51)
Instruction Model	2.9	28.3%	5.1%	4.0	64.7%	35.3%
Courses	3.5	50.5%	30.3%	4.3	78.4%	47.1%
Environment	3.2	40.4%	13.1%	3.6	56.9%	2.0%
Proximity	3.2	44.4%	26.3%	3.2	47.1%	17.6%
Friends (of Students)	3.6	64.6%	57.6%	3.3	52.9%	23.5%
Friends (of Parents)				2.6	33.3%	0.0%
Social Fit	3.3	45.5%	11.1%	3.7	60.8%	21.6%
Learning Style	3.7	63.6%	26.3%	4.1	78.4%	41.2%
Familiarity	3.1	43.4%	13.1%	3.1	43.1%	5.9%
Reputation	2.9	32.3%	10.1%	3.7	70.6%	17.6%
Best Option	3.0	33.3%	13.1%	2.6	21.6%	7.8%
Size	2.8	23.2%	15.2%	3.1	29.4%	9.8%
Daily Structure	2.8	26.3%	5.1%	3.2	37.3%	3.9%
Unique Needs	2.8	32.3%	4.0%	3.3	43.1%	3.9%
Extra-Curricular	3.4	52.5%	19.2%	3.9	68.6%	23.5%
Scheduling	2.7	27.3%	4.0%	2.8	25.5%	3.9%
Classmates	2.6	27.3%	5.1%	2.9	31.4%	3.9%
Culture	2.7	22.2%	3.0%	3.3	45.1%	9.8%
Parent Preference	2.9	33.3%	15.2%			
Student Preference				4.3	80.4%	15.7%
Teacher Influence	2.3	16.2%	0.0%	2.6	25.5%	0.0%
Peer Influence				2.8	33.3%	3.9%

Reported Factors for Leaving Smith High School

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=2)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=1)
Courses (Lack)	3.5	50.0%	50.0%	3.0	0.0%	100.0%
Belonging	1.5	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Teacher Problems	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Peer Problems	2.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Reputation	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Atmosphere	1.5	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Difficulty	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Easiness	3.0	50.0%	50.0%	2.0	0.0%	0.0%
Instruction Model	2.5	50.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Transportation	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Acceptance by Teachers	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Acceptance by Students	1.5	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Size (Big)	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Size (Small)	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Instruction Quality	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Pace (Slow)	2.5	50.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Pace (Fast)	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Safety	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Social Fit	2.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Learning Environment	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	1.0	0.0%	0.0%
Activities (Lack)	4.0	50.0%	100.0%	4.0	100.0%	0.0%

Reported Factors for Leaving Virtual Academy

Short Name	Students Avg Score	Students % Very or Extremely Influential	Students % as Top 3 Factor (n=99)	Parents Average Score	Parents % Very or Extremely Influential	Parents % as Top 3 Factor (n=51)
Courses (Lack)	2.5	27.6%	27.6%	2.1	14.0%	18.0%
Belonging	2.8	37.8%	16.3%	2.8	38.0%	26.0%
Teacher Problems	1.9	14.3%	4.1%	1.7	12.0%	2.0%
Peer Problems	1.6	7.1%	5.1%	1.4	8.0%	2.0%
Reputation	1.8	11.2%	8.2%	1.6	8.0%	6.0%
Atmosphere	3.0	42.9%	27.6%	3.0	46.0%	20.0%
Difficulty	2.0	13.3%	9.2%	1.4	4.0%	2.0%
Easiness	2.0	10.2%	8.2%	1.7	12.0%	6.0%
Instruction Model	2.9	38.8%	26.5%	3.2	48.0%	56.0%
Transportation	1.5	5.1%	4.1%	1.2	2.0%	4.0%
Acceptance by Teachers	1.4	4.1%	3.1%	1.3	4.0%	0.0%
Acceptance by Students	1.5	6.1%	2.0%	1.4	6.0%	0.0%
Size (Big)	1.5	3.1%	4.1%	1.4	6.0%	2.0%
Size (Small)	1.6	6.1%	3.1%	1.1	0.0%	0.0%
Instruction Quality	2.3	21.4%	14.3%	2.2	18.0%	16.0%
Pace (Slow)	2.4	21.4%	11.2%	2.1	16.0%	8.0%
Pace (Fast)	2.3	22.4%	10.2%	1.4	2.0%	2.0%
Safety	1.4	3.1%	0.0%	1.4	8.0%	2.0%
Social Fit	2.0	16.3%	8.2%	1.8	14.0%	8.0%
Learning Environment	2.9	38.8%	22.4%	3.0	42.0%	44.0%
Activities (Lack)	2.5	24.5%	12.2%	2.5	28.0%	22.0%

B - Expanded Tables – Descriptive Statistics

Table 2a - Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents, 7th-10th Grade CSD Students & Their Parents/Guardians

Students

High School of Choice	Respondents %	Respondents Qty	Where They Currently Attend: SWHS	JHS	VA (HS)	SHS	DMS	GMS	IMS	VA (MS)	# Attended/Attending (of those who chose this school): SWHS	JHS or IMS	VA	SHS
Southwest High (SWHS)	75%	965	446	1	1	0	185	284	46	2	1	105	71	1
Journey High School (JHS)	12%	153	0	88	0	0	2	7	56	0	8	1	11	0
Virtual Academy (VA)	0%	6	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0
Smith High School (SHS)	4%	47	2	0	0	41	1	2	1	0	19	13	7	0
Other Public High School	0%	5	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	2	1	0
Private School	1%	11	1	0	0	1	2	6	1	0	1	2	3	1
Home School	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Undecided	8%	98	6	3	0	0	37	26	22	4	6	29	6	0
Total Responses	100%	1285	**455**	**92**	**4**	**42**	**228**	**327**	**128**	**9**	**36**	**154**	**99**	**2**
Response Rate by School		54%	46%	88%	9%	84%	47%	66%	69%	26%				

= Returning to School

Parents

High School of Choice	Respondents %	Respondents Qty	Where Their Student Currently Attends: SWHS	JHS	VA (HS)	SHS	DMS	GMS	IMS	VA (MS)	# Attended/Attending (of those who chose this school): SWHS	JHS or IMS	VA	SHS
Southwest High (SWHS)	72%	479	230	0	2	0	106	118	20	3	1	58	40	0
Journey High School (JHS)	11%	76	0	31	0	0	2	1	42	0	1	1	5	0
Virtual Academy (VA)	1%	8	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	0
Smith High School (SHS)	4%	25	1	0	1	17	3	2	1	0	8	8	3	0
Other Public High School	1%	7	2	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	2	0	0
Private School	1%	7	1	0	0	1	0	5	0	0	1	1	0	1
Home School	0%	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Undecided	9%	60	8	2	1	0	17	15	15	2	9	22	3	0
Total	100%	663	**243**	**34**	**8**	**18**	**131**	**142**	**80**	**7**	**23**	**95**	**51**	**1**
Response Rate by School		28%	24%	32%	19%	36%	27%	29%	43%	21%				

C - Qualitative Response Codebook

Code	Theme	Meaning Toward Choosing a School	Meaning Toward NOT Choosing A School
#na	Non-Answer	Response did not explain why Examples include: Still debating I don't know Just wanted to Parents chose/Kid Chose Non-responses (i.e. "n/a")	Same as Meaning Toward Choosing a School
aware	Unaware or Needs More Information	N/A	Didn't know about this option Or Didn't know what advantages the option might offer
convenience	Convenience	Examples include: Closer distance Ability to carpool	Examples include: Further distance Lack of transportation
curriculum	Curriculum Concerns	N/A	Some aspect of the quality or nature of the curriculum
friends	Friends	Friends were choosing this school	Friends were not choosing this school
grading	Grading	Liked the grading system	Did not like the grading system
match	General Match	Various and/or general reasons Examples include: Best choice for me Just felt like a better fit I liked the style better Better community here Better preparation for college	Various and/or general reasons Examples include: Not the right fit This is an alternative school I don't prefer X aspect of… Needed more structure Un-preferred environment
neg	General Negative Perception/Reputation	N/A	General and/or secondhand reasons that included negative words or phrasings. Examples include: I don't like it It's the weird school No way, I would never I heard it's horrible
offerings	Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	Presence of certain types of classes, activities, sports, extra-curriculars, etc.	Absence of (or difficulty accessing) certain types of classes, activities, sports, extra-curriculars, etc.
pos	General Positive Perception/Reputation	General and/or secondhand reasons that included positive words or phrasings. Examples include: Seemed like the best choice I heard good things It's the popular school	N/A
projects	Projects	Enjoys doing and learning through projects	Doesn't enjoy doing or learning through projects

quality	Quality	Specific examples of high quality or excellence. Examples include: Strong academic expectations The teachers are higher quality Tried and true curriculum Better achievement	Specific examples of low quality or lack of excellence. Examples include: My student had a terrible experience there Unorganized and understaffed Execution and leadership was lacking
safety	Safety	Presence of emotional, social or physical safety (i.e. LGBT-friendly, less bullying, etc.)	Absence of emotional, social or physical safety (i.e. presence of bullying, etc.)
size	Size	Size of School or Classes, whether the preference is for large or small	Same as Meaning Toward Choosing a School
special	Special or Specific Circumstance	Accommodating of Special Education needs or other specific needs	Unaccommodating of Special Education needs or other specific needs
tradition	Familiarity/Continuity Normalcy/Tradition	Indicated various aspects of familiarity, continuity, normalcy or tradition. Examples include: All my family went there Just where I always planned on It's the normal place to go Wanted a regular school	Indicated various ways that the choice lacked familiarity, continuity, normalcy or tradition. Examples include: I wanted traditional classes The school was too new Always wanted (the other choice) My family never went there
unconsidered	Never Considered other Options	N/A	Includes phrases such as: Didn't want to Never thought about it I chose somewhere else Etc.
welcome	Felt Unwelcome	N/A	Did not feel welcome

D - Qualitative Responses – Complete Summaries

Themes for Choosing Journey High School
(coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students %	Students n=156 #	Parents %	Parents n=74 #
General Match	50.0%	78	40.5%	30
Projects	31.4%	49	35.1%	26
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	23.1%	36	20.3%	15
General Positive Perception/Reputation	15.4%	24	16.2%	12
Size	12.8%	20	33.8%	25
Friends	10.3%	16	5.4%	4
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	7.7%	12	8.1%	6
Convenience	4.5%	7	9.5%	7
Quality	3.2%	5	10.8%	8
Safety	0.6%	1	6.8%	5
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.6%	1	1.4%	1

Themes for Choosing Southwest High School Also Considered Journey High School
(coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students %	Students n=94 #	Parents %	Parents n=79 #
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	48.9%	46	51.9%	41
Friends	33.0%	31	25.3%	20
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	27.7%	26	19.0%	15
General Match	18.1%	17	11.4%	9
Quality	12.8%	12	13.9%	11
Convenience	8.5%	8	3.8%	3
General Positive Perception/Reputation	5.3%	5	15.2%	12
Size	5.3%	5	5.1%	4

Themes for Choosing Southwest High School Did Not Consider Journey High School
(coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students %	Students n=849 #	Parents %	Parents n=412 #
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	41.2%	350	40.0%	165
Friends	28.2%	239	17.2%	71
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	26.3%	223	40.3%	166
Convenience	21.8%	185	8.0%	33
General Positive Perception/Reputation	16.8%	143	15.5%	64
General Match	10.7%	91	9.0%	37
Quality	5.3%	45	14.3%	59
Size	3.8%	32	1.9%	8
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.0%	0	1.2%	5

Themes for NOT Choosing PBL, Among SWHS Choosers
(coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students %	Students n=976 #	Parents %	Parents n=492 #
Never Considered other Options	23.1%	225	13.6%	67
General Match	16.4%	160	20.7%	102
Projects	13.8%	135	7.7%	38
General Negative Perception/Reputation	12.2%	119	9.3%	46
Friends	10.2%	100	8.3%	41
Unaware or Needs More Information	8.9%	87	14.0%	69
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	8.2%	80	14.6%	72
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	7.9%	77	11.2%	55
Quality	5.3%	52	13.8%	68
Convenience	4.9%	48	2.6%	13
Size	3.2%	31	2.8%	14
Grading	1.0%	10	0.0%	0
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.1%	1	0.8%	4
Safety	0.0%	0	0.2%	1
Curriculum Concerns	0.0%	0	0.2%	1

Themes for NOT Choosing PBL, All Respondents
(coded from open-ended responses)

Theme	Students %	Students n=1102 #	Parents %	Parents n=588 #
Never Considered other Options	24.0%	264	14.5%	85
General Match	16.8%	185	20.7%	122
Projects	13.5%	149	7.8%	46
General Negative Perception/Reputation	12.3%	136	9.0%	53
Unaware or Needs More Information	9.4%	104	13.8%	81
Friends	9.4%	104	8.0%	47
Offerings (Academic and/or Extra)	7.6%	84	13.9%	82
Familiarity/Continuity/Normalcy/Tradition	7.1%	78	10.2%	60
Quality	5.1%	56	14.1%	83
Convenience	4.8%	53	3.2%	19
Size	3.2%	35	2.7%	16
Grading	0.9%	10	0.0%	0
Special or Specific Circumstance	0.1%	1	1.5%	9
Safety	0.1%	1	0.2%	1
Felt Unwelcome	0.1%	1	0.0%	0
Curriculum Concerns	0.0%	0	0.3%	2

E - Instruments

Student Survey

- Online Version - https://redcap.link/SWSDschoolchoice
- PDF Version - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CHKJj7tAafosMNDOrLFMOwr3FbKoi46Q/view?usp=share_link

Parent Survey

- Online Version - https://redcap.link/SWSDschoolchoice-parent
- PDF Version - https://drive.google.com/file/d/19jUT0BM-diAaPvhxSiD_ZoDd6XViqsr1/view?usp=sharing

F - Communications

First Informational Message (including Opt-out)

Dear Students and Families,

To best serve our community, we would like to gain more insight into how and why our students and families choose their middle school or their high school. With this goal, next week we will survey both parents and students regarding your needs, desires, opinions and preferences regarding school choice.

The survey will have open-ended questions of why you did or didn't choose each school option, as well as multiple-choice questions regarding how influential certain factors were in this choice. If a student changed schools, there will be a set of questions regarding why they left. We anticipate that most surveys can be completed in 20-30 minutes or less.

Students in 6th – 10th grade will take the survey during advisory in the week of January 9th. Parents will receive a survey to their email during the same week. Parents and students may have different reasons for making the same choice, and in order to learn that nuance, we hope you will not coordinate responses. If you would like to opt your student out of this survey, please inform _____ by January 6th, and we will not include them in the survey.

Parents of multiple students will receive one survey link per student. You may complete the survey once (if responses are similar across students) or multiple times (if responses differ). Please complete the surveys by January 14th.

Please let us know if you have any questions. The better the response rate, the better we will be able to serve you, and we thank you in advance for your insight and collaboration.

Sincerely,

_____

****

Email Messages When Survey was Sent

Dear Student,

Please complete this survey to let us know your reasons for choosing the school that you did. Please be thoughtful and accurate in your responses so that we can serve you better.

The survey is anonymous. The software will track whether this link was used, but it will not allow survey administrators to see which results correspond with which link. If someone else completes the survey using your link, you will no longer be able to complete the survey.

We anticipate the survey will take 20-30 minutes in most cases. Please try to complete the survey in one setting, but if you need more time, you may save and return later using the same link. Please do not coordinate your responses with anyone.

You may open the survey in your web browser by clicking the link below:
[survey-link]

If the link above does not work, try copying the link below into your web browser:
[survey-url]

Thank you for your insight and collaboration!

Sincerely,

****

Dear Parent,

You are receiving this survey as the parent of a _____ (grade) student in Southwest Washington School District. Please complete this survey to let us know your reasons for choosing a school for your student. Please be thoughtful and accurate in your responses so that we can serve you better.

The survey is anonymous. The software will track whether this link was used, but it will not allow survey administrators to see which results correspond with which link.

This survey was sent to the first parent email address listed for each student. If you would prefer that a different parent complete the survey, you may forward this email to them. Each link can only be used once.

If you have multiple students, you will receive one link per student. You may take the survey once (if your responses are similar across students) or multiple times (if your responses differ). Please note that the 6th grade survey asks about choice of middle school, whereas the 7th-10th grade surveys ask about future or current choice of high school, so it would be helpful if you completed at least two surveys if one of your students is in 6th grade.

We anticipate the survey will take 20-30 minutes in most cases. Please try to complete the survey in one setting, but if you need more time, you may save and return later using the same link. Please do not coordinate your responses with anyone.

You may open the survey in your web browser by clicking the link below:
[survey-link]

If the link above does not work, try copying the link below into your web browser:
[survey-url]

Thank you for your insight and collaboration!

Sincerely,

****