IN SEARCH OF SATISFACTION:
AFRICAN-AMERICAN MOTHERS’ CHOICE FOR
FAITH-BASED EDUCATION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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*****

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2004

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This research provides an in-depth view of the decision-making process used by African-American parents when enrolling their children in church/faith-based schools. The specific questions guiding this research project were:

- What do African-American mothers believe are the primary purposes of education for their children?
- Why have some African-American families chosen to not enroll their daughters and sons in public schools?
- What are the factors that lead individual African-American mothers to look to faith-based education for their children’s education?
- What specific criteria do African-American mothers use when considering and selecting an educational program for their children?
- What sacrifices are African-American families willing to make in order to secure a quality educational experience for their children?

This study was conducted using the Delphi Method which requires the establishment of a "panel of experts" with whom the research questions can be explored. African-American mothers or other primary caregivers who 1) attended a selected African-American protestant congregation; and, 2) had children enrolled in a faith-based school in grades
kindergarten through eight, were recruited to serve on the panel. Nineteen mothers agreed to serve as "expert-participants."

The Delphi process included an initial round during which expert-participants responded to an 8-item open-ended questionnaire that was issued online. Subsequently, a questionnaire of 151 position statements was developed from the synthesized responses. Sixty of the position statements were appropriate for use with the Delphi Method. At the completion of the study, panel members achieved consensus* on 47 items that explored:

1) the purposes of Kindergarten – 8th grade education;
2) the factors why families looked beyond public schools to choose faith-based schools; and,
3) the components of an ideal K-8th grade education.

Areas where consensus was not achieved provided additional information in exploring the differing perceptions and beliefs that existed within the families represented. Additional descriptive data regarding the families' experiences with faith-based education were gained through the statistical analysis of the remaining items.

* Consensus was achieved when 80% of the responses fell within two points on a 6-point Likert scale.
DEDICATION

“Faith is not in our ability to hold on to God, but in His ability to hold on to us.”
Hebrews 11:2

This study is dedicated to my mother, Florence Lillian (Barnes) Calhoun, who instilled within me, by word and deed, belief in the unfathomable power of faith in the Divine; and, to my daughter, Lauren Ashley Bridgette Wright, who is living proof of God’s infinite faithfulness to do all that He said He would do and more.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There is a West African proverb that states that it takes a village to raise up a child. In a similar vein, it is true that a successful journey through any doctoral program requires the support and nurturance of a cadre of individuals. Over the past five years, I have been truly blessed to have received such support from numerous individuals and offices from within and beyond The Ohio State University community. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my advisor Dr. Seymour Kleinman, a gracious and committed scholar-educator who has always instilled within me a sense of calm self-assurance. I am also grateful to my remaining committee members, Dr. Ralph Gardner and Dr. Valerie Lee, for their support and intellectual insight they brought to my research topic. I also wish to extend my appreciation to Dr. Donna Ford for her continued support throughout the dissertation process.

There are many individuals who have been helpful throughout the College of Education; however, there are those who have assistance and support goes beyond measure. In the School of Educational Policy & Leadership, I offer special recognition to Dr. Robert Lawson, Ms. Karmella Spears, Ms. Helen Higgins, and Ms. Deborah Zebloudil. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Melvin Adelman (former professor in ED P&L) and Ms. Mary Ann Callahan (former Student Services officer in the College of Education) for their
generous support and encouragement during very difficult circumstances. One of my most rewarding experiences has been working with my writing group of fellow doctoral travelers, Dr. Durene Wheeler (2004) and Ms. Donna Gough, (Ph.D. - Summer 2005). I remain forever indebted to them for their intellectual challenge and unconditional support.

I have been richly blessed through the warmth and support that I consistently receive from the staff and the students of the Frank Hale Black Cultural Center, with special appreciation to Mr. Larry Williamson and Mr. Ron Parker. I have also been blessed to have been a Graduate Associate in the Office of ADA Compliance for the past four years and have benefited greatly from the support and friendship that I have received from Mr. Scott Lissner and Ms. Jan Bosold.

It has been important that I have had the prayers and support of my church family, Ephesus Seventh-Day Adventist Church. I am eternally grateful for the participation of the mothers who served as expert-participants in my research giving generously of their time and spirit. I have also been richly blessed by the spiritual and financial support of the Allegheny West Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists and the North American Division of Seventh-Day Adventists, Department of Education.

Lastly, I must thank my family, Lauren Wright, Willie J. Wright, Jr. (and Winnie) for their unconditional love and belief in me. I am truly blessed and fully aware that in every possible way, God has given me favor as I progressed through this journey to the Ph.D.
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PUBLICATONS

King, T., Barnes-Wright, L., Gibson, N., Johnson, L., Lee, V., Lovelace, B., Turner, S.,
& Wheeler, D. (2002). In G. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.) This bridge we call
home: Radical visions for transformations (pp. 403-415). New York: Routledge Press.

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Educational Policy and Leadership

Minor Area: African and African-American Studies
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“To have faith means to be confident of the things we hope for and to be certain of the things we cannot see.”

Hebrews 11:1

Today, amidst multiple educational reforms and heightened scrutiny of the public school system, many African-American families, across the socioeconomic stratum, bypass neighborhood schools and other district-wide options, choosing instead private elementary and secondary schools for their daughters and sons (Viteritti, 1999; Reid, 2001). 1 The competing camps for and against the many facets of the school choice agenda rush to interpret and reinterpret this phenomenon in ways that serve a myriad of special interests. While some vehemently oppose any perceived retreat from the public school system, others rush to celebrate the emergence of a “new alliance” between urban African-American families and the conservative right (Shokrai, 1996; Levin, 1999).

Meanwhile, located somewhere between or, perhaps, even out of sight, African-American families throughout the nation carefully consider their options and continue in their search for the ideal school or educational program that will meet the needs of their school-age sons and daughters.

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1 For the purpose of this research, private schools are limited to independent schools and faith-based schools.
The history of American education chronicles the persistence of African Americans in their quest to find, sustain and even establish quality educational opportunities (Birnbaum & Taylor, 2000). African-American histories, as well as the African-American literary tradition, are rich with accounts of mothers’, grandmothers’ and othermothers’ struggles to ensure that schools committed to educational excellence and racial uplift existed for the children of their communities (Perry, 2003; Thompson, 1999; Clark-Hines, 1998 and Comer, 1988). Their commitment to the educational lives of their children, as well as to the other children of the community, gives testimony to a steadfast spirit and unrelenting faith in the face of insurmountable odds (Belenky & Bond, 1999; Hill-Collins, 1990; and Hines, 1998).

Confronted with a public education system that had both historically and systematically excluded and underserved their students, African-American families pushed forward, determined to find schools that would prepare their sons and daughters for life-long learning, economic stability and responsible leadership. Janice Hale (2001) noted African-American educator, speaks to this search for educational excellence in her work, *Learning While Black*:

> Creating a public school system that would promote upward mobility for the children of unskilled and uneducated parents was a golden concept at the turn of the century when those parents were European immigrants. However, those Whites who benefited from public education created a game of hide-and-seek

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1 Othermothers are women within the African-American community who have a "more generalized ethic of personal accountability and caring among African-American women. . . . they not only feel a bond with their own family, they experience a bond with all of the Black community's children." See Patricia Hill-Collins' (2000, p. 189) Black Women and Motherhood for additional discussion of othermothers in *Black Feminist Thought*.  

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when it came to African-American children. Essentially, White Americans have hidden quality education, and African Americans have been seeking it for more than a century [emphasis added] (Hale, 2001, p. xvii).

It has been and still is the continuous search for excellence and equity in education that compels African-American mothers to seek and, when necessary, establish schools outside of the public school system; schools that will demand and expect excellence from all of its students (Higginbotham, 1993; Salem, 1990).

Slaughter and Johnson, in their seminal work, Visible Now: Blacks in Private Schools (1988), document the increasing numbers of Black students who enroll in the various types of private schools. Similarly, the 1999 – 2000 Private School Universe Survey notes that 10% of the nation’s elementary and secondary students are enrolled in private schools; 9.4% of the 5,162,684 estimated students are African American (NCES, 2001). While African-American enrollment in private schools reportedly is increasing, it is important to note that this is not a new phenomenon; African-American children have been enrolled in an array of non-public schools for over 150 years. Many families, while seeking the best possible education for their children, choose enrollment in independent schools, those that are predominantly White, as well as those that have been established within the African-American community, and in church and other faith-based schools.

3 Slaughter and Johnson identify five categories of private schools: parochial schools, other religious schools, independent schools, Black independent schools, and the private elite schools.
(Foster, 1992; Hale, 1994; Irvine & Foster, 1996; Ratterjay, 1992; Shujaa, 1992; Slaughter & Johnson, 1988). In fact, it has often been the very lack of access to quality education that has been the driving force behind many African-American families’ “choice” for private schooling.

Some African-American families, sharing a legacy that subscribes to the advantages of the boarding school experience, inevitably look toward the private sector. At one point following the Civil War there were over 500 Black private academies in existence in the southern states, many of which were by necessity boarding schools (Durham, 2003). While a great number of these institutions closed or were absorbed into local school districts during the early 1900’s, as more and more African-Americans migrated to the urban areas, there were at least 83 Black boarding schools still in existence prior to court-ordered desegregation. Schools such as Palmer Memorial Institute established in 1902 in Sedalia, North Carolina; the Laurinburg Institute established in 1904 in North Carolina; and Piney Woods Country Life School established in 1909, near Jackson, Mississippi were established to serve the educational needs of African-American children (Jackson, 2001). These schools provided Black children the opportunity to continue their education when enrollment at local high schools was limited to White students only.

With the arrival of court-ordered desegregation, many African-American families, trusting in the powerful promises of Brown vs. the Board of Education (1954), moved their sons and daughters into integrated educational settings during the 50’s and 60’s believing that there they would become better prepared to live in a society that knew no
barriers based upon color. Today, African-American students are counted among those in attendance at the nations 100+ boarding schools; however, only four Black boarding schools remain in existence today (Piney Woods School, 2002).  

While many African-American families struggled against great odds in finding quality education, there were some for whom public education was not a consideration. Many of these families of privilege eschewed the public school system; electing for the anticipated rewards of the private school tradition. In *Our Kind of People: Inside the Black Upper-Class*, Graham (1999) speaks of the many African-American families of financial means sending their children to the “right cotillions, summer camps and private schools.”

Dating back, as early as the late 19th century, Graham reports that many of these families embraced the tradition of sending their sons and daughters to elite preparatory schools. He discusses the importance that upper-class Black families, beginning at the turn of the century, placed on their children gaining an education that would reflect and promote the cultural and social capital that identified them as the Black elite. They believed that this could best be acquired through their sons’ and daughters’ participation in select private institutions, summer camps, social activities, and so forth.

Although it is true that some African-American families chose educational paths outside of the public tradition, for many, the decision for non-public schooling was more of a forced choice when the only choice for education was "to find a way out of no way." It is

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4 The four Black boarding schools that operate today are Piney Woods in Piney Woods, MS; Pine Forge Academy in Pine Forge, PA; Redemption Christian Academy, Troy, NY; Laurinburg Institute, Laurinburg, NC.
within this context that faith-based institutions have historically played a significant role in primary and secondary education within the African-American community.

Within the United States, many denominations, both Black and White, as well as individual churches, operated elementary and secondary schools as early as the 1800’s (Woodson, 1914). During the era of slavery, free Blacks established “Sabbath Schools” where literacy was taught to slaves so that they would be able to read the Bible (Anderson, 1988; Woodson, 1933). Even at the height of the industrial revolution, when slavery existed in its most cruel and oppressive fashion, many slaves risked their lives to slip away to “prayer meetings” where the rudiments of reading and writing were taught.

After the Civil War and during Reconstruction, many efforts to better the plight of the recently emancipated men, women and children, were taken on by both Negro and white churches of the north. With the emergence of the Freedman’s Bureau, hundreds of public schools were established throughout the southern states. However, as the tensions between a victorious Union and the recalcitrant South continued to mount, a significant philanthropic movement was mobilized to assist in resolving the problem of educating the Negro which ultimately resulted in the shaping of an alternate system of Negro education that would ensure the existing social order (Watkins, 2001). Unwilling to accept an education designed to keep them inferior, many African-American communities rejected the education designed for them and, instead, sought to establish schools of their own (Span, 2002). In fact, prior to the 1896 decision of “Plessy vs. Ferguson,” most African-American children were educated in schools that were collaborative ventures between the church and the community.
During the late 19th and early 20th century, cities in the north, such as Philadelphia and New York, established educational facilities for poor children of color. Noted African-American educator and scholar, Carter G. Woodson (1930) portrays such efforts: “Many of those of Philadelphia were of the most ambitious kind, men who had purchased their freedom or had developed sufficient intelligence to delude their would-be captors and conquer the institution of slavery.” Even more recently, during the Civil Rights Era, the Black Church played a pivotal role in leading, as well as, prodding the nation in the fight for the right to quality educational opportunities. The vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., powerful orator and gifted African-American clergyman, delivering the now revered "I Have a Dream" speech has forged an undeniable connection between the Black Church and American education into the nation's collective memory.

While the historical circumstances and contexts, under which the Black Church has sustained a strong focus on quality education, may seem to evolve over time, many African-American families’ lay claim to this spiritual legacy and place a high value on Christian schooling for their sons and daughters (Fraser, 1999). Given these families’ strong connection to their churches, it is often assumed that they predictably will enroll their children in schools that are operated by their individual churches or denomination. However, patterns of enrollment across the nation are finding that this is not always reportedly the case and many churches end up struggling to operate schools that are funded primarily through tuition (Barnes-Wright, 2001; Mainda, 2002).
Additionally, today, 50 years after the acclaimed victory of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954), a growing number of African-American families, across the socio-economic stratum, find they are unsatisfied and disillusioned with the public schools available to them (Carter, 1980; Morken & Formicola, 1999). Many of these families, too, look to the faith-based sector for possible solutions. Although, not affiliated with a specific congregation or denomination, many find satisfaction by enrolling their children in independently operated church schools and other faith-based educational programs (Christian Science Monitor, 2002). In Cleveland, Ohio, 99% of the students who participated in the state supported voucher program chose to attend parochial or other church affiliated schools (Standish, 2002, personal correspondence). Similar efforts in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, St. Louis, Missouri, and now Florida provide opportunities that empower parental choice beyond the local public school districts (Christian Science Monitor, 2002; Holt, 2000).

Although national data document the increasing enrollment of African-American children in the nation’s private elementary and secondary schools (NCES, 2001), there is considerable less research addressing the specific decision-making process that guides a family's choice for a given school. Once families come to the conclusion that they will choose faith-based education, how do they go about the arduous task of determining the best educational program for their son or daughter? More often than not, they are faced with sorting through the competing claims of “excellence”; excellence based upon academic superiority, leadership development, small teacher to pupil ratios, individualized attention, and other promises of privilege that are believed to accompany
the private school education (Coleman, 1987). And, unlike the public school system, there is no standard measure by which parents can compare and evaluate faith-based schools, leaving families often to rely on word-of-mouth, public relations and marketing, or denominational affiliation. Janice Hale, noted African-American scholar and educator avows that:

Regardless of economic status, the typical African American parent does not know the nuances of what is essentially a game of hide-and-seek in elementary and secondary school. The power structure hides the path to high academic achievement, frustrating African American individuals who seek it. . . . In the instances in which the path is not hidden, attainment of the goals is placed out of the reach of most African American children, given the resources available to them" (Hale, 2004, p. 37).

Purpose of the Study

This study, situated within the interpretivist paradigm,\(^5\) will add to the existing discourse and scholarship regarding school choice. While there is a substantial amount of scholarship on school choice, the majority focuses on achievement outcomes, effectiveness for low-income and high-risk children, differences between private and public school performance, and the on-going debate over publicly funded voucher programs (Moe, 1995). There is very little that addresses school choice from within an individual African-American family framework and even less that directly investigates

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\(^5\) Research conducted within the interpretivist paradigm seeks to "provide understanding of direct 'lived experiences' . . . going beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act, but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meaning, contexts, situations and circumstances of action." For additional information, see *Becoming Qualitative Researchers* (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).
the decision-making process used when choosing a faith-based school. This study will begin to address this critical gap in the literature.

The purposes of this study are: (1) to explore the underlying rationale for African-American families’ choice to enroll their children in faith-based schools; (2) to explore characteristics or criteria African-American families use when identifying a particular faith-based school; and (3) to determine the relative importance of factors that make-up the ideal educational program in the collective view of the research participants. The specific questions guiding this research project are:

• What do African-American mothers believe are the primary purposes of education for their children?

• Why have some African-American families chosen to not enroll their daughters and sons in public schools?

• What are the factors that lead individual African-American mothers to look to faith-based education for their children’s education?

• What specific criteria do African-American mothers use when considering and selecting an educational program for their children?

• What sacrifices are African-American families willing to make in order to secure quality faith-based educational experiences for their children?

As African-American families continue to face difficult decisions about the education of their school-age children and as talk of increased governmental support for private schooling heightens, it is my goal for the findings of this study to be used to: (1) assist individual families in making informed decisions when choosing schools that will best meet the needs of their children; (2) to further inform churches and other faith-based initiatives that wish to establish elementary and secondary schools that will educate the
children of their congregations and of the surrounding communities; (3) to assist public school districts in determining why some families are choosing to leave the public school systems; and (4) to introduce and clarify the extent that individual African-American families have historically exercised school choice without regard for partisan politics.

**Educational Significance**

While this research will be conducted using participants from one congregation, the questions that it seeks to explore are not limited to race and ethnicity, class, geographical region or denomination. Indeed, school choice is one of today’s most persistently debated issues at the local, as well as the national level (Good & Braden, 2000). Both candidates in the recent 2004 presidential race sought to secure votes with promises of improved educational opportunities for all children. Amidst the many campaign promises and related election rhetoric was the recognition that quality education is paramount in the minds of America's families, outranked only by concerns for national security and the economy.

As an outgrowth of the 2000 presidential campaign, the White House Office for Faith-Based Initiatives encourages the nation’s churches to increase their involvement as societal change agents, providing a variety of social programs for those in need including after-school programs and other academic intervention services. Although controversial,
the White House Office for Faith-Based Initiatives also advocates for school choice options that allow low-income families the right to use state and local district funds to pay tuition costs for private elementary and secondary schools, including those that are religious in nature.

Many legislators and politicians traditionally regarded as having little concern for the “have-nots,” now rally around the federal charge to *Leave No Child Behind* and call for the use of public funding to provide better choices for families “trapped” in failing schools. While others, traditionally perceived as standing on the side of the poor and otherwise disenfranchised, are now found suspect as their coalitions with the conservative right are called into question. In many cases, the lines have become blurred and one can no longer predict how an individual or organization may identify with the school choice debate. For instance, the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), that advocates for low-income minority families and reportedly gives voice to unlikely partnerships between low-income, inner-city parents and powerful philanthropic foundations that advocate for a variety of school choice formulas (Miner, 2004). Other historically progressive organizations such as the National Education Association, the Urban League, and the American Federation for Teachers, question the underlying motives of the newly configured alliances, such as the BAEO.

The likelihood is great that in the near future there will be increased funding for charter schools, tuition-tax credit incentives, as well as, a growing number of voucher programs that are connected to churches. It will be critical that families are able to determine
which educational programs best meet the needs of their children. Undoubtedly, accountability and the comparative quality of programs will continue to be a concern, not only for parents and school districts, but also for faith-based institutions that may see it as part of their ministry or spiritual responsibility to meet the educational needs of their communities. It is the premise of this research that a thorough understanding of families' decision-making processes and related factors can serve to better inform, both, parents and those organizations that seek to provide quality educational programs for children within the context of faith-based institutions.

Additionally, this research provides valuable information that public school districts may find of use as they strive to understand and address the demand for quality schools that are responsive to the families and communities that they serve. It is within this national context that I chose to explore school choice for African-American parents who look beyond the public school system to privately operated faith-based schools.
**Operational Definitions**

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<th>Definition</th>
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<td>Black Church-</td>
<td>For the purposes of this research the “Black Church” is a reference to the collective spiritual culture and political force of churches in the U.S. that possess African-American leadership.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian Education -</td>
<td>An elementary / secondary educational program that is affiliated with and financially connected to a Christian congregation or faith based institution. Christian beliefs and values are integrated or incorporated into the school's curriculum, mission, philosophy and practices. Generally, is seen as referring to Protestant, more so than Catholic school education with the latter being referred to as parochial education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert-Participants -</td>
<td>Individuals invited to participate as a panel member based upon meeting the predetermined criteria: (1) regularly attends a selected local African-American Protestant church (Ephesus SDA Church); and (2) is a mother, grandmother, guardian or primary caregiver of African-American child(ren) in grades Kindergarten through eight; (3) who are currently enrolled in a faith-based school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith -</td>
<td>Faith is used two different ways within the context of this study. When attached to an educational program, such as faith-based schools, faith denotes being connected to a church, denomination, fellowship of like believers. On the other hand, &quot;to have faith&quot; refers to a belief that one's needs and/or desires will be cared for through God's Divine power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith-Based Schools -</td>
<td>Elementary and secondary schools that have a system of religious beliefs as part of their mission and core values; a school may be connected to a specific congregation or affiliated with and subsidized by a religious organization; however, some faith-based schools are non-denominational or ecumenical by design. Christian Academies, Jewish Day Schools, Catholic Schools, Muslim Schools are examples of the diverse types of faith-based schools that exist within the United States. In this study the term faith-based is used interchangeably with “church schools.”</td>
</tr>
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<td>Type</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Schools</td>
<td>Elementary and secondary schools that are financed primarily by tuition, endowments, foundations, etc. rather than by state and/or local taxes and are not connected to a congregation or other faith-based organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Schools</td>
<td>Elementary and secondary schools that are financed primarily by tuition, endowments, foundations, etc. rather than by state and/or local taxes; Private school types include independent schools, for-profit schools and faith-based schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Schools</td>
<td>Any publicly funded elementary and/or secondary school including alternative, magnet, and community “charter” schools.</td>
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Summary

This chapter presented an introduction to the research that was conducted exploring the decision-making process that African-American families use when choosing faith-based education for their children enrolled in kindergarten through grade eight. To more accurately understand this phenomenon, the underlying premise of this research was that findings and resulting conclusions must be informed by individuals who hold expertise in this specific area. In this case, the identified experts were African-American families who enrolled their kindergarten through 8th grade sons and daughters in faith-based schools during the 2003-2004 academic year. It is this collective insight that may prove valuable to churches and other faith-based organizations seeking to establish schools that will meet the needs of the many families who are looking beyond the public school systems.

Chapter two provides an overview of the school choice movement and a representative review of the literature regarding African-American perspectives and contemporary school choice issues; and calls for additional research that explores contemporary African-American families' experiences with church related or faith-based schools. Chapter three details the chosen research design and methodology, the Delphi Method, that was used to first identify a panel of experts and then provide an online forum by which experts shared their informed opinions and beliefs. Chapter four presents the
results and details the level of agreement that expert participants were able to achieve.

Lastly, chapter five discusses the findings in relation to the original research questions, which includes a profile of the ideal educational program through the eyes of the expert-participants and lastly, and makes recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter situates African-American families' choice for faith-based schooling within the context of contemporary school choice scholarship. For some school choice has been articulated as poignant educational reform for ailing public school systems, while others declare that existing school choice programs are destructive in that they shift already limited resources from the public schools-- the one institution expected to ensure the American Dream and its inherent promises. In this chapter, I provide a historical context for the school choice movement and then move on to present school choice as a range of options or configurations rather than panacea or demise. This chapter also reviews the related scholarship that explores school choice through an African-American lens as a backdrop to exploring African-American families' choice for faith-based education.

The Historical Context of School Choice

For many, school choice is considered to be a contemporary educational reform that first appeared on the scene in the last 20 -25 years, particularly during the former Reagan (1980's) and Bush administrations' (early 1990's). However, this is not the case. The initial school choice plan was proposed in 1955 by economist and Nobel peace
prizewinner, Milton Friedman. In *The Role of Government in Education* (1955), Friedman contended that the current public school system, funded and administered by the government, resulted in a public monopoly that was not open to any critique that might lead to consequences. He challenged that:

> Government has appropriately financed general education for citizenship, but in the process, it has been led also to administer most of the schools that provide such education. . . . the administration of schools is neither required by the financing of education, nor justifiable in its own right in a predominantly free enterprise society (p. 12).

Although conceding that it would not be best if education, as a public good, was supplied solely through a market-driven process, he believed that the governmental role should be limited to: (1) the provision of funds for education through citizen taxes, and (2) the establishment of a standard for the quality of education to which all children would be entitled. Friedman believed that a better mechanism would be to provide each child a determined amount that could be only used for education; however, there would be no stipulation regarding the type of school that was chosen. His recommendation was that rather than public financing of a public school system,

> Government, preferably local governmental units, would give each child, through his parents, a specified sum to be used solely in paying for his general education; the parents would be free to spend this sum at a school of their own choice,

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6 Today the Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation sponsors school choice research and advocates for school choice as market-based educational reform.
provided it met certain minimum standards laid down by the appropriate governmental unit. Such schools would be conducted under a variety of auspices by private enterprises operated for profit, non-profit institutions established by private endowment, religious bodies, and some even by governmental units (p. 12).

Interestingly enough, Friedman's proposed provision for public-funded vouchers, to be spent at the parents' school of choice, initially appeared on the scene in the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954) with the U.S. Supreme Court's rendering that the Plessy v. Ferguson notion of "separate but equal" was unconstitutional.\(^7\)

For the next 10 years, many states resisted the Brown ruling and schools for the large part remained segregated. However, once the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted, those states that had refused to follow the earlier ruling of Brown v. Board of Education found themselves face-to-face with impending integration. Soon, thereafter, a number of school districts introduced legislation that not only closed many of the public schools but, also, allowed public funds to be used for private schooling (Henig, 1994). Cookson refers to these first schools of choice as "white flight" academies (1994, p. 27). Levin further illustrates this phenomenon,

\(^7\) In the endnotes of \textit{The Role of Government in Education}, Friedman shares that at the time he was writing, he was unaware that a number of southern states had found his proposal valuable in terms of supporting their efforts to evade the Brown v. the Board of Education ruling. While at first he lamented that this was the case, after thought he changed, believing that "Principles can be tested most clearly by extreme cases . . . . The relevant test of the belief in individual freedom is the willingness to oppose state intervention even when it is designed to prevent individual activity of a kind one thoroughly dislikes. Friedman continues with the assertion that he deplores segregation and racial prejudice and states that it is his belief that he is in agreement that the state should play a role in "preventing violence and physical coercion by one group on another." He goes on to relay that he is opposed to forced segregation, as well as, to forced non-segregation and it is with the knowledge that publicly operated schools will be faced with this dilemma that reaffirms his belief that privately operated schools are the best solution. "Under such a system (privately operated schools) there can develop exclusively white schools, exclusively colored schools and mixed school. Parents can choose where to send their children too."
The massive withdrawal of white students to these academies was initially funded by state tuition grants. After court decisions held such funding unconstitutional, the schools relied on tuition fees, with the burden on parents being relieved by state and federal tax exemptions, free transportation, state-owned textbooks and supplies donated by various government entities (often transferred from the public school system), the use of public facilities and so on (1999, p. 167).

It was within this changing climate that the wisdom of Friedman's "freedom of choice" plan then detailed in *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962) came to be regarded as a viable solution to the turbulent times. Richard Nixon sought to incorporate "freedom of choice" into his "southern strategy" as a way of moving away from court-ordered busing and other pro-active desegregation plans that began to emerge in cities and school districts across the nation.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, efforts grew to reframe the concept of educational vouchers in a vein where they could provide assistance to children who were economically disadvantaged thereby, supporting those who could benefit the most. Christopher Jencks, working with Harvard's Center for the Study of Public Policy, proposed an experiment that would provide vouchers that could be used to attend any participating school whether public or private (Sugarman & Memerer, 1999). Schools would be encouraged to accept children from economically disadvantaged families by the provision of supplemental funds to cover expenditures for additional resources or services that may be needed. Proposals such as this that targeted lower-income families were supported by those committed to advancing the cause of social justice and the
equalizing of educational opportunities. However, even social justice advocates found it difficult to disentangle this more liberal version of an educational voucher from its inherent baggage by reason of its association with the southern states' earlier attempts to resist integration.

In the ensuing years, school choice as educational reform lay dormant until it was reintroduced in the 1980's by President Reagan and then maintained by his successor President Bush. Fully aware of the strength of the opposition from American Federation of Teachers, the National Educational Association and other organized school choice opponents, both presidents retreated from the original proposal to expand school choice to include private schools. Instead, they proposed a plan that was restricted to the public school system and now, building on the social justice model reframed the reform as one that would begin to meet the needs of the many poor and minority children caught in under performing schools (Cookson, 1994).

Meanwhile, philanthropic individuals began to establish private foundations that provided scholarships designed to support poor parents’ right to exercise "freedom of choice" when selecting schools for their children. Through programs such as Children First America, Children's Scholarship Fund and others, many children in urban areas were provided the opportunity to move from their neighborhood school to public, private or religious schools that were believed to provide a better education (McDonald, 2001). As of 2003, the Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington D.C. think tank, reported "thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have privately sponsored scholarship
programs which (reportedly) provide tuition assistance for more than 60,000 children."

In light of the opposition to broad school choice plans, many of these private efforts now are in the position to make available empirically-based evidence asserting the positive impact of equity-based scholarships on poor and minority children's academic achievement across the nation.

It is within this contemporary view of choice that Henig acknowledges that "this repackaged vision of educational choice had so immediate and broad an appeal that it became a central element in George Bush's presidential campaign and subsequent domestic program (1994, p. 80). This broad based acceptance of choice reframed led to the establishment of the Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement; "a nimble, entrepreneurial arm of the United States Department of Education." Now, standing a mere 50 years from Friedman's proposal for "freedom of choice" in education, the call for expanded school choice has come full circle and stalwartly reemerges as a national educational reform, asserting to empower parents across the board and, simultaneously, bring about measurable improvements in poorly performing public schools. Today, the No Child Left Behind Act allows for children who are in under-performing schools to transfer to a public school, which has made adequate yearly progress; families electing to remain within the school are eligible to receive supplemental academic services.
School Choice Strategies

Contemporary school choice has been rightly declared to be one of the most hotly debated educational reform issues since Brown v. the Board of Education in 1954. Peter Cookson (1994) has aptly referred to school choice as "the struggle for the very soul of American Education." At the core of the struggle is the reality that "school choice" means many different things to many different people, “a journey of at least a thousand opinions" (Cookson, 1994, p. ix). Nonetheless, school choice advocates tend to classify choice plans into basic categories that fall under either the rubric of public school choice or private school choice (Morken & Formicola, 1999; Sugarman & Memerer, 1999; Cookson, 1994).

Henig and Sugarman contend that to some degree all American families participate in school choice because they choose where to live which then determines to which school their children are assigned. However, for the most part, contemporary school choice plans refer to options that extend beyond this literal interpretation of the phrase. Within this broader scope of school choice, Peter Cookson (1994) identifies 12 basic strategies that alone, or in combination, comprise most school choice plans:

- **Intradistrict-choice**: A plan that allows students to choose schools within one public school district;

- **Interdistrict-choice**: A plan in which students may cross district lines to attend school. Tuition follows the student and transportation costs are provided;

- **Intrasectional-choice**: A plan that is limited to public schools;
Intersectional-choice: A plan that includes both public and private schools;

Controlled-choice: Families are required to choose a school within the community, but choices are managed to ensure the racial, gender and socioeconomic balance of each school.

Magnet schools: Public schools that offer specialized programs; often deliberately designed and located to promote racial balance;

Postsecondary options: Programs that enable high school students to enroll in college courses at government expense; courses count toward high-school graduation requirements as well as college programs.

Second-chance programs: Alternative schools and programs for students who have difficulties in standard public school settings;

Charter schools: Public sponsored autonomous schools that are substantially free of direct administrative control by the government but are held accountable for achieving certain levels of student performance and other specified outcomes.

Workplace training: Apprenticeship programs to teach students a skilled trade not offered through present vocational training. Costs are divided between the employer and the school district.

Voucher plans: Any system of certificate or cash payments by the government that enables public school students to attend schools of their choice, public or private. Vouchers have a fixed value and are redeemed at the time of enrollment.

Tuition tax credit: A system of funding choice that allows parents to receive credit against their income tax if their child attends a nonpublic school (pp.16-17).
Another way of understanding school choice is to look at it as though viewing a continuum. Following this line of reasoning, Morken and Formicola (1999) suggest that those who believe that public funds should be restricted to public schools would be on one end of the continuum; while at the other end would be those who believe that parents should be able to secure the education of their choice with no restrictions. Between the two polar views would be choices that increasingly allow for the spending of public dollars on options that exist beyond the traditional neighborhood school (see Table 2.1).

While the media is flooded with stunning claims of the positive effect of vouchers and other choice based reforms, many scholars advise caution in placing too much faith in the numbers. Cookson urges that we remember

> The human mind behind the numbers guides them and in so doing may help us understand social relationships or may provide a statistical smoke screen behind which to hide them . . . . The school choice coalition is far from being yet another academic camp. It is a powerful, nationally sponsored political movement that has an explicit agenda for reshaping American education, and in the process reshaping American society (1994, p.73).

Nevertheless, the *Education Innovator*, a weekly newsletter released by the Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, cites ongoing examples of empirically based evidence asserting that choice is working in cities and school districts throughout the nation.
SCHOOL CHOICE FUNDING

**Level One: Funds Follow the Student within the District**

| Neighborhood Schools → Interdistrict Transfer → Magnet Schools |

↓ ↓

**Level Two: Funds Follow the Student within and Beyond the District**

| Intradistrict Transfer → Public/Private Scholarships → Vouchers for All* |

↓ ↓

**Level Three: Individual Families Pay School of Choice Directly**

| Tax Credit** → Total Private System*** → Pure Market Approach**** |

* Full, public educational funding follows child to public, private, for-profit, or religious school.

** Families are provided a tax-credit for tuition and school related expenditures.

*** Replace government operated and funded schools; additional $$ for poor and middle class.

**** All public schools and tax subsidies would be abolished; fully private system of education.

Table 2.1: Continuum of school choice strategies with accompanying funding mechanisms.

Source: Adapted from Morken and Formicola's educational spectrum of school choice plans (1999, pp. 2-3).
The National Working Commission on Public School Choice, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, recently released their findings having conducted what the report refers to as a "deep examination" of a number of central issues regarding school choice (2003). They note that the school choice debate is often one of extremes where "some people claim that choice will surely do good, and some people claim that choice will surely do bad." The National Commission wants to move the debate "into the zone where constructive discussion can take place about what is it about the design and operation of choice programs that might have good effects and what has to be done to make sure it doesn't have bad effects."

Paul Hill, Chairperson of the National Commission, notes that the findings suggest that many Americans are hopeful about choice and anticipate that choice will lead to improved learning in children who take advantage of the opportunities it provides. They are also hopeful that choice will result in an increased number of good schools from which families can choose and that, ultimately, this will result in improvements in the quality of public education. On the other hand, there also exist many individuals who fear negative outcomes for increased choice in public education. They hold fears of increased segregation and fears of "creaming" or enticing the better students away from existing schools. While the ultimate fear is that in the end some public schools will continue to deteriorate and the children who remain will be hopelessly disadvantaged. Additionally, the Commission found that there is some concern that increased choice will lead to civic disunity thereby, moving the public school system away from its acclaimed role as the great equalizer.
The National Commission also examined much of the empirical evidence for and against school choice and found that there has been a significant increase in school choice research within the last 10 years. However, they conclude that for the most part the findings are dependent upon the specific design or configuration of the (school choice) plan being evaluated. The report cautions educational policymakers, legislators and school officials to closely review existing research and only then determine what will be in the best interest for their specific state, district, or community.

Equally confusing for some are the disparate voices heard from within the African-American leadership particularly, if one does not understand that school choice comes in many different configurations. Morken and Formicola in their comprehensive work, *The Politics of School Choice* (1999) identify State Representative Annette "Polly" Williams of Milwaukee, Reverend Floyd Flake of Queens, NY (now President of Wilberforce University), and Howard Fuller of Marquette University and Chair of the Black Alliance for Educational Options as prominent leaders in the school choice movement. And, while these leaders are in agreement that African-American families and their children need additional options in choosing quality educations, their respective strategies for bringing increased choice to their constituents vary greatly.

Representative Polly Williams considers quality education to be an issue of equity and social justice. Her persistent efforts were the spark that ignited the Milwaukee grassroots movement that demanded that children trapped in seriously underperforming Milwaukee schools be provided public funded vouchers or educational transfers to
public, as well as, private schools (Morken & Formicola, 1999). In 1998 the Wisconsin Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of Milwaukee's Religious School Choice program allowing families to also choose from participating faith-based schools. Williams is a strong proponent of public supported vouchers for poor, and largely minority children; her weapon of choice is the political process.

On the other hand, Reverend Floyd Flake, former congressional leader grew tired and disillusioned with the legislative process and left Washington to establish an exemplary school in connection with his church, Allen African Methodist Episcopal, in Jamaica, Queens, New York. Flake views quality education as a moral issue and a matter of survival for African-American children and the community. He is a strong advocate for state-funded vouchers and charter schools as effective means to increase educational options. Flake’s commitment to the African-American community and its ultimate survival surpasses that of loyalty to any partisan politics and this stand has resulted in times in his being in conflict with other prominent African-American leaders and organizations (Morken & Formicola, 1999).

Howard Fuller, Distinguished Professor of Education and Founder/Director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University, perhaps is one of the most prominent national voices in the school choice debate. As Chair of the sometimes controversial Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), he is a strong proponent for school choice and parent empowerment. Reportedly serving as the voice for poor families and families of color who have had no voice in educational decision-
making in the public schools, Fuller seeks to transform the American education system in ways that make quality education for all children a right, not a privilege. Fuller and the BAEO have been charged with being pawns of the conservative agenda that ultimately seeks to bring about a market-based reform for education at the expense of the public school system. Fuller’s method of bringing about school choice is through partnering with other choice proponents with whom he shares a common vision for a revitalized system of American education (BAEO, 2000; Morken & Formicola, 1999).

It is important to note that many prominent African-American organizations such as the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Alliance of Black School Educators, as well as, many prominent African-American leaders vehemently oppose many of the school choice strategies. Given their commitment to the continuing improvement of the public school system, they believe that any initiative that transfers limited funding away from the public school systems, will ultimately lead to its continued deterioration and demise.

Numerous polls tout a growing increase in support for school choice among African-Americans (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2002; School Choice Advisor, 2001). However, a great many African-American families with children enrolled in faith-based schools remain outside of the current scope of school choice research efforts. Having chosen the path of faith-based schooling, without the benefit of state or philanthropic assistance, their experiences have not been represented in the majority of the evaluation or policy studies and other related educational scholarship.
Furthermore, there is even less scholarship that explores why families ultimately choose a given faith-based school over another; nor has there been focused study on the steps that are involved in the overall decision-making process. Lack of attention to these families’ experiences is particularly perplexing, given that over 90% of children who were awarded state-funded vouchers through the Cleveland Scholarship Program were enrolled in religious / faith-based schools. This study begins to address this critical gap in the literature bringing to the forefront the "invisible" cadre of families for whom the decision to enroll their children in church schools has been made without reference to the latest school-choice ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court or the ongoing tirade that continues to beleaguer the nation's public school system.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework
The nature of this research seeks to honor the African-American legacy of commitment to educational achievement as a means for personal and collective community improvement. This study depicts the "lived experiences" of parents who are actively involved in their children’s educational lives and explores the processes by which they choose a school or educational program for their children. In framing my research as such, it is my intent to honor the educational legacy of scholars such as, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983), James Comer (1988), Linda Darling-Hammond (1997), Annette Perry (2003), Asa Hilliard (2003) and countless others, who in their research endeavors identify, explore and portray that which is successful and effective in working with children and communities who have been historically marginalized; thereby, challenging the cultural mythology of parental disinterest and lack of involvement that reportedly operates within the African-American community. Comer (1988) asserts that:

"These are black family stories that are not being told by scholars and a media obsessed with 'the victims,' or worse,' those who are not able or not trying.' An understanding of the strategies and strengths of the 'survivors' will tell us more about the obstacles and ways around them than an exclusive focus on 'the victims'."
In like fashion, I choose to situate my research in the conceptual framework of Black feminist thought and Black women’s standpoint epistemology⁸ shedding light upon those families who have successfully navigated the school-choice waters and found satisfaction in faith-based education.

Research Design

The research design of the study used a mixed-method paradigm which combined online qualitative interviewing, via a form of asynchronous computer-mediated communication, (CMC), with the Delphi Method. The Delphi Method is a descriptive research technique that was originally developed during the 1950's by Norman Dalkey and Olaf Helmer under the auspices of the Rand Corporation. Project Delphi, as it was referred to, was employed to aid in defense research that looked to anticipate domestic military requirements in the event of strategic Soviet attacks (Helmer, 1983; Adler and Ziglio, 1996; Mann and Stewart, 2000).

The Delphi Method, the first of what is sometimes referred to as "futures research," has now permeated the research community and has been used by numerous disciplines outside of the realm of military science and political science (Linstone and Turoff, 1975). Weaver (1971) points to early applications of the Delphi Method within the educational

⁸ Kirsch offers, “What we believe counts as knowledge depends heavily on our cultural, social, and historical location. Standpoint theory holds that people who occupy marginalized positions in a culture acquire a ‘double perspective’—often as a matter of survival—and subsequently, understand the workings of both the dominant culture and their own marginal one….people [Black women] who occupy marginal positions in a culture can offer more insightful, more complete interpretations of that culture than those who do not possess the double perspective” (1999, p. 14-15). For additional insight on standpoint theory or epistemology see Hill-Collins, Black Feminist Thought.
community as early as 1965 when the Rand Corporation solicited input from education and other related experts to develop a list of potential educational goals for federal funding. Continued application of the Delphi Method to educational studies has taken place in an array of forums over the last forty years including studies addressing the future needs and desires of school districts, studies that look to establish curricular standards for internationalized agricultural extension programs and projects seeking to identify forthcoming trends in educational administration and policy arenas (Ludwig, 1994; Weaver, 1971).

In addition to a proliferation among disciplines, the Delphi technique has been modified to more aptly meet the research goals of a variety of studies. A review of recent articles and texts that provide introductions to the Delphi now include references to the "Policy Delphi," the "Delphi Evaluation," the "Decision Delphi," the "Mini-Delphi," the "Automated Delphi," and corporate Delphi research (Linstone and Turoff, 1975; Helmer, 1983; Lang, [n.d.]). What these various studies share in common is the use of "experts" as panel members who through the research process render a synthesized informed judgment about the selected research issue. This collective judgment is obtained through the use of two or more iterations / rounds of data collection during which the experts review the collective responses and provide feedback as they render subsequent ratings.
It is the selection of the panel experts upon which the crux of the study depends. Echoing the advice of many, Lang asserts that:

Considering the membership of the panel is perhaps the most critical point in using the Delphi. The effective selection of the panel not only maximizes the quality of responses, but also gives the results of the study credibility with the wider audience. Panelists are chosen because of their specific expertise in the area of study (n.d., Suggestions for Improvement, par. 2).

It is within this line of reasoning that the present research identified families who have chosen to enroll their children in faith-based schools, as the "true experts" in comparison to those who have been involved in educational research, policy formulation and the like. A Delphi panel of purposively selected experts was initially interviewed on-line and then surveyed to address five encompassing research questions through their respective lenses. The research questions that provided guidance for this study were: 1) What criteria do individual African-American mothers use when selecting a (K – 8) faith-based school for their daughters and sons; and, 2) What does the ideal educational program (K-8) look like in the collective view of the research participants?

The Delphi method was used to achieve the goals of this research project because of its distinctive characteristics that integrate well with “Black Feminist Thought and Black women’s standpoint theory” (Hill-Collins, 2000), which provides the theoretical framework for this study (See Table 3.1). According to Hill-Collins (2000, pp. 257-266),
knowledge construction that reflects Black women’s standpoint epistemology is characterized by:

- **Lived Experience as a Criterion of Meaning** – those individuals who have lived through the experience are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences;

- **The Use of Dialogue in Assessing Knowledge Claims** – new knowledge claims are rarely worked out in isolation from other individuals and are usually developed through dialogues with other members of the community;

- **The Ethics of Caring** – the three interrelated components of the ethic of caring - personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy - are central to the knowledge validation process;

- **The Ethic of Personal Accountability** – people are expected to be accountable for their knowledge claims. Within this logic, many reject prevailing positivist beliefs that probing into an individual’s personal viewpoint is outside the boundaries of discussion. Rather, all views expressed and actions taken are thought to derive from a central set of core beliefs that cannot be other than personal.
Similarly, Rotundi and Gustafson (1996) theorize that successful Delphi groups share the following characteristics:

- Groups which gain an understanding of the lines of reasoning behind members’ opinions have a greater tendency for their thinking to converge than groups which do not.

- When a group’s thinking begins to converge, a synergistic group perspective often emerges.

- Insights that accompany the creation of a synergistic perspective are more likely to occur when the participants understand the basis for one another’s ideas and perspectives.

- Groups that develop a group perspective are more likely to develop a consensus solution that can be strongly supported by the entire group.

Rotondi and Gustafson offer additional strategies that, when put into place, further enhance the Delphi Method. They encourage the use of “in-depth conversation” which provides a deeper understanding of members thinking and the use of team building and reduced participant anonymity to “promote mutual understanding.” Both of these strategies reflect constructs of Black Feminist Thought that encourage the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims and the use of "lived experience" as a criterion for meaning-making. Additionally, Rotondi and Gustafson’s recognition of the individual
investment required and suggested strategies to increase panel members' motivation to participate clearly resonate with Hill-Collins’ "ethic of caring" and "ethics of personal accountability" (see Table 3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black Feminist Thought</th>
<th>Delphi Method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliance upon concrete or “lived” experience as criteria for credible meaning making.</td>
<td>Demonstrated experience in the area of expertise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creation of equal relationships through dialogue; “talking with” rather than “talking to.”</td>
<td>Gaining understanding of the lines of reasoning behind members’ responses; in-depth conversation promoting deep understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ethic of caring is central to the knowledge validation process;</td>
<td>Promotion of mutual understanding is important to the overall success of the process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on personal accountability.</td>
<td>Individual investment and motivation to participate.</td>
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Table 3.1: Black Feminist Thought – Delphi Method Matrix

Source: Adapted from Hill-Collins (2000) and Rotundi and Gustfason (1996)

Many researchers continue to document the digital divide and, subsequently, discourage on-line research models for historically marginalized communities. Mann and Stewart (2002) report challenges of using computer-mediated communication (CMC) for both
researcher and research participants. Researchers using CMC must have a certain degree of computer literacy and expertise; first to design an effective process and also to provide limited technical assistance to the research participants. Two additional areas noted by Mann and Stewart held the potential to be problematic for the present research study: 1) obtaining accurate e-mail addresses; and, 2) ensuring co-operation. Although in the case of this study, participants supplied e-mail addresses directly to the researcher, there were instances in which the mail was returned for a variety of reasons. In these cases, the participant had to supply a different or corrected online address. Ensuring continued co-operation was also a potential challenge; Mann and Stewart note:

Even if the technology is available, it is important to remember that many individuals do not share the enthusiasm for the Internet and CMC that is suggested by usage statistics. As Falk discovered, some people did not enjoy electronic talk, experienced new contacts with outsiders as threatening and time consuming, and were afraid that 'creating permanent text might expose them to criticism or perhaps ridicule (1992). Other participants might be happy in principle to work in the electronic environment, but the usual problems of ensuring co-operation in a potentially demanding area like qualitative research remains (2002, p. 29).

In terms of challenges for research participants, Mann and Stewart indicate that varying degrees of computer literacy continues to be a concern, as well as, issues of differential access that are reportedly correlated with ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, and to some extent, age (2002).
In spite of these challenges, the Delphi process offers many advantages to the busy lives of African-American mothers that may outweigh or at least minimize some of the reported disadvantages (Rotondi & Gustafson, 1996). Selwyn and Robson offer that "Using e-mail as an interview tool eschews the conventional constraints of spatial and temporal proximity between interviewer and respondent and offers the considerable practical advantage of providing 'ready-transcribed' data" (1998, p.1). Perhaps the most significant advantage lies in the fact that panel members have the luxury to determine when to read and respond to the survey. This alone may increase their motivation to participate, as well as, reduce the cost, time, and effort it takes to successfully convene a group of individuals with necessary expertise at the same time and location.

Another distinct advantage of the Delphi Method, whether electronic or by traditional mail, is that the process forces individuals to think through their ideas and write them down prior to sharing with other expert-participants on the panel. Not only does the process of writing thoughts down help to clarify one's thinking, it also provides a written record of the groups’ dialogue and provides each expert-participant with ample time to digest prior comments before responding. Lastly, the anonymity that is a critical component of the Delphi process reduces the likelihood that any individual expert-participant will be able to dominate the interaction, as can be the case, in face-to-face group meetings (Gordon, 1994; Stone-Fish & Busby, 1996). These advantages, inherent
in the Delphi Method, may also serve to eliminate some of the reported barriers to participation that are particular to many African-American mothers who juggle multiple responsibilities such as families, careers, school and other duties that routinely place significant demands on their limited time.

**Setting**

Study participants were recruited from within one African-American Seventh-Day Adventist congregation located in northeast Columbus, Ohio. The congregation was selected as a prototype of Protestant congregations that have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to education, elementary through post-secondary. The results of Delphi Panel studies are not intended to be generalizable to other populations. However, noting the selection of the setting from which the expert-participants were selected was critical in that the completed study provides a process that other congregations can replicate, obtain results and draw conclusions specific to their membership and related constituents.

The selected congregation has a recorded membership of 700+ that is comprised of families, as well as, single individuals that represent a cross-section of socio-economic income levels, as well as levels of educational attainment. The membership is largely African-American, yet there are a number of European-American congregants that are active members and seem to be well connected within the church family. Additionally, the congregation is home to a sizeable African population, primarily from southern Africa, who is also an integral part of the church family.
The selected congregation has a long-standing history of support for Christian education among its membership with many of its families having attended Christian elementary schools and academies for three to four generations. A number of families are alumni of Pine Forge Academy, one of the few remaining African-American boarding schools within the nation. Over the past fifteen years, a significant number of the children and youth of the congregation have been enrolled in schools outside of the traditional public school system even though until two years ago the congregation did not have a school of its own. The congregation's commitment to Christian education is demonstrated through its programmatic efforts, as well as, through the financial assistance it provides for church-affiliated Christian education. Prior to opening its own school, any child of the congregation who attended a denominational school between the grades of kindergarten and eighth grade was automatically granted a scholarship of at least $500 per school year. Now, families whose children are enrolled in the congregations' K-8th grade school, receive a tuition discount of $500.

Each Sabbath, following the Children's Story, members generously donates offerings that help to provide financial assistance for any family struggling to cover the costs of tuition and fees at the congregation's own K-8th grade school. As the congregation's youth grow and mature, the financial assistance is continued for any student who attends a

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9 In the late 60's and early 70's, the selected congregation operated a Kindergarten – 6th school at its old location, but, opted in 1988 to temporarily close the school when they moved to a newly constructed worship facility on the northeast side of Columbus. However, it was a part of the church’s long-range vision to again build and establish an educational complex once the mortgage for the new facility had been reduced or eliminated. Beginning in May 2000, the church’s education committee, under the authority of the Church Board, began to explore the feasibility of re-establishing a school and received full church support to proceed. The new school began enrolling students in grades K – 8, August of 2002.
denominational high school and on through undergraduate school, for students who attend denominational colleges and universities. It is customary for a significant number of the congregation's youth to attend and complete undergraduate, as well as, graduate and professional schools.

In addition to the financial assistance that is provided, the congregation has active children and youth ministries and regularly incorporates educational oriented programs into the services. A selective overview of the congregation's annual programming efforts includes the following youth focused initiatives:

- Adventist Youth Society; Junior AYS
- Pathfinders (ages 10+); Adventurers (ages 5-9)
- Varsity, Junior Varsity, & Little Tykes Basketball Leagues
- Children's Choir; Youth Gospel Choir
- Vacation Bible School
- Young Women's Ministry
- Annual Spelling Bee
- Oratorical Contest
- Youth Science Fair
- Family and Game Nights
- Field Trips to Columbus Art Museum, Ohio State Women's Basketball Game
- College Days at Oakwood College in Huntsville, AL
Additionally, an annual graduation ceremony is held, where all recent graduates, from kindergarten through doctoral recipients, are presented to the congregation and acknowledged for their accomplishments. And, in general educational accomplishments are noted from the pulpit and young people are recognized for honors, awards and other acts of distinction throughout the year. Coupled with the ongoing emphasis on academic achievement and excellence, the children and young people are reminded of the importance of their honoring and thanking God for the many talents and gifts that have been entrusted to them.

Young people need to be impressed with the truth that their endowments are not their own. Strength, time, and intellect belong to God, and should be put to the highest use. Youth are branches from which God expects fruit, stewards whose capital must yield increase. Every young person has a work to do for the honor of God and the uplifting of humanity (White, 2000, p. 39).

Youth learn at an early age that the true measure of success is found in the "joy of service in this world and for the joy of wider service in the world to come." Education, as such, is viewed as part of God's divine plan of redemption for mankind and therefore, each individual is expected to do his or her best.

Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children…. Instead of producing educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men and women who are strong to think and act – individuals who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, individuals who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions (White, 2000, p.12).
Identification of Expert Panel

In accordance with the chosen theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought / Black Women's Standpoint Theory, African-American/Black mothers' lived experiences were the social location from which this research was designed to explore how families go about choosing a faith-based school. Because the bulk of contemporary scholarship on school choice is so aligned with the different proponents or opponents of choice, the voices of the families are rarely, if ever, heard (Cooper, 2001). One of the aims of this study was to begin to address this void by giving voice to those families who have been in the forefront, making the choices for faith-based schooling.

Following the lead of well-respected scholars who look to African-American mothers to inform their research about African-American families and children, this research study invited mothers to serve as the expert-participants in this study (Delpit, 1995; Hill-Collins, 1990; and Ladson-Billing, 1994).\(^\text{10}\) Individuals who satisfied the following criteria were invited to participate in the study as an expert-participant:

1. Regular attendance at a selected local African-American Protestant church (Ephesus SDA Church);
2. Is a mother, grandmother or primary caregiver;
3. For an African-American child(ren) who is currently enrolled in a faith-based school in grade K-8.

\(^{10}\) Within the cultural context of the African-American community "mother-work" has been historically performed by women—whether blood or biological mothers, extended or fictive kin or community othermothers. Hill-Collins asserts that "women's centrality is characterized less by the absence of husbands and fathers than by the significance of women. Though men may be physically present or have well-defined or culturally significant roles in the extended family, the kin unit tends to be women centered (2000, p. 178).
It was expected that in most cases the expert-participant would be the mother of the children; however, it was understood that within the cultural context of the African-American family, one of the primary caregivers may be a child's grandmother, aunt, older sibling, close family member, or foster parent. It was also understood that in some instances the sought after expert may indeed be the child's father or grandfather. In order to allow for this possibility, the 2<sup>nd</sup> criterion for expert-participant was modified from reading "is a mother, grandmother, or female primary caregiver of African-American child(ren)" to read "is a mother, grandmother, guardian or primary caregiver of African-American child(ren). Situating the primary caregiver as non-gender specific allowed for those instances where fathers / males perform the role of “mothering” for the children; reflecting the notion that "to mother" can also be social construction rather than purely biological. Brown and Davis suggest that, "Summarily, the word 'mother' is more than a noun. It is a verb. A verb, which means to give life to, to nurture and protect and/or to assist in the development of a person (2000).”

Initially, a list of potential panel members was developed through the church office and the church's Education Committee. Next, the mothers of children in grades K-8 that attended faith-based schools were contacted by telephone to explain the research study and to determine their interest and willingness to serve as an expert-participant (see Appendix B). Those that agreed to participate were sent a follow-up letter detailing their involvement, roles and expectations. This letter was accompanied by an Informed Consent Form that each participant was asked to review, sign and immediately return (see Appendix D).
From a total of 27 eligible participants, a panel of 19 expert-participants was established (see Appendix D for expert-participant demographics). Gordon (1994) reports that most Delphi panels consist of 15 to 35 members and generally experience an acceptance rate of somewhere between 35% and 75%. Ziglio (2000) offers that a small panel size can be successful if the panel members are somewhat homogenous. In the present study 70% of potential participants (19 out of 27) agreed to be a member of the Delphi Panel. Fifteen of the Delphi Panel members or 78% completed both session one and two instruments.

Nineteen mothers of children who were enrolled in faith-based schools, grades kindergarten through 8th agreed to serve as expert-participants. Seventh-three per cent of the women are married, 11% divorced, and another 11% single. One participant did not report her marital status. Eighty percent of the participants reported sharing the decision-making process with their husbands. Fifty-eight percent noted that their children were involved in the decision. Thirteen percent of the participants reported that their husband made the final decision.

Comparatively, the expert-participants were a highly educated group. Ninety four percent had some level of postsecondary education with 56% having a Bachelor's degree or higher. Of the nineteen participants, all but two worked outside of the home or were students. The majority, 53% of the participants, had attended a faith-based school at
some point when in kindergarten through 8th grade. The children of the participants were enrolled three local Christian schools—63% were enrolled in the school affiliated with the congregation, another 21% were enrolled in another SDA school and 16% were enrolled in a non-denominational faith-based school.

Instrumentation

The Session One instrument, an open-ended eight question online interview was developed to solicit information from each of the expert participants regarding their beliefs about the following components (see Appendix C for the Session One instrument):

A. The purpose of Kindergarten – 8th grade education;
B. Their choice to seek schools outside of the public school system;
C. The components of an ideal educational program;
D. Challenges and barriers to finding the ideal school;
E. Sacrifices necessary to secure Christian education;
F. Factors involved in choosing to re-enroll; and,
G. Future considerations for high school.

The responses to the Session One instrument were reviewed and then synthesized (see Appendix E for the collective responses). Next, this synthesized list of responses was used to develop the Session Two instrument, a comprehensive list of position statements.
with a six-point Likert rating scale following each of the position statements (See Appendix F). The Session Two instrument called for the Delphi Panel members to review each position statement and then give feedback, via their rating of one through six, to the beliefs, opinions and values offered by their fellow panel members.

Data Collection

The Delphi instruments were sent on-line in an electronic folder to 16 of the Delphi Panel member in two successive mailings. The electronic folder contained a cover letter with instructions that included a response due date plus the instrument for that particular round. Three members indicated from the beginning their preference to receive hard copies of the same information; all remaining instruments and correspondence were sent to these members via U.S. postal mail or hand delivered and accompanied by pre-paid postage envelopes for the return of the completed instruments.

Panel members were initially given 10 days to return their completed Session One instrument. It was anticipated that the instrument should take no more than 30 minutes to complete, depending on the amount of comments the individual panel members elected to offer. Panel members who did not respond within three days beyond the stated due date received a reminder message either on-line or by telephone. After ten days, non-respondents were contacted via telephone to determine if additional time was needed or if a panel member had opted to discontinue her participation in the study. Given the time of year, a number of families were wrapping up the school year or departing for family vacations, which resulted in a delay in obtaining responses from some panel members.
Additionally, two panel members experienced illness and/or death within their families and were delayed in returning their responses. At the point when the individuals with family emergencies had returned their completed instruments and all other panel members had received at least three reminders, the decision was made to continue forward to Session Two with a panel of 15 members.

Upon receipt of the completed Session One instruments the data were saved in individual folders for each panel member on a secure hard drive and then on CD. Hard copies of each instrument were also printed and filed for future reference. Documents were created and saved on the hard drive and CD for the completed paper instruments that were returned by the three panel members who chose to participate via U.S. mail. Hard copies of these three instruments were also filed for future reference.

The Session Two instrument was sent electronically or via U.S. mail to the 15 panel members who completed and returned the Session One instrument. This instrument was a 21-page instrument comprised of 151 position statements grouped into eight sections. The statements, crafted from the collective responses to the Session One instrument were grouped by category:

1) Purposes of K-8th grade education;
2) Reasons for looking beyond the public school system;
3) Components of an ideal educational program;
4) Challenges in finding the ideal school;
5) Sacrifices made in securing Christian education;
6) Factors in choosing to re-enroll;
7) Anticipated high school choices, and
8) Key individuals involved in the decision-making process.

Data Analysis

The initial open-ended series of interview questions that comprised the Session One instrument were analyzed by content analysis with sentences being the unit of analysis. The resulting data were used to inform the development of the position statements that were included in the Session Two instrument. The data generated by the Session Two instrument were first coded and then analyzed using traditional descriptive statistics – the median to identify the collective standpoint and then, the interquartile range to determine dispersion of responses as an indication of the strength of agreement. Minitab 14, software designed for use on the personal computer, was used to conduct the statistical analysis.

The analyses for the Session Two instruments included the median, an individual tally for each item / position statement to determine if consensus had been achieved as well as, the interquartile ranges which reflected the strength of the agreement. Consensus was pre-determined to have been achieved when 80% of panel members’ ratings fell between any two points within the 6-point Likert scale. It was anticipated that at the completion of the rounds there would be a collective sense of what factors the panel members agreed
were crucial items for the ideal educational program or school. Additionally, it was anticipated that analysis of items where consensus was not reached would give valuable insight to areas where panel members have considerable differences in their values, beliefs and desires in regards to the ideal school.

Given that the nature of this study was to explore past decision-making, there were some position statements that upon review were more fact, an indication of what had transpired, rather than a position that might be modified upon continued exploration. It was determined that these items would be better analyzed through cumulative frequency counts and percentages rather than by attempting to reach consensus. The following chapter will present the data that were gathered as a result of conducting the two-round Delphi Panel study.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

In this chapter the results are presented in two distinct, yet related sections. The first section portrays the results that were achieved using the Delphi Method’s successive sessions in seeking consensus / agreement. The latter portion of the chapter provides additional valuable information regarding the panel members’ experiences in choosing faith-based schools that is better suited for portrayal through general descriptive measures than by seeking consensus.11

The chapter begins with an overview of the panel participants’ responses to the Session One instrument. This is followed by the presentation of those items for which consensus was reached during Session Two; each item is identified with its respective statistical descriptors and strength of agreement as reflected by the interquartile range. This section of the chapter ends with the identification and presentation of items for which consensus was not achieved. The chapter then continues with the portrayal of participants’ experiences when choosing to re-enroll or leave a particular school, high-school plans and the role that other family members and key individuals played in the overall decision-making process.

11 The Delphi method or technique is best used on items that require participants to reflect on their individual values or judgment. The items that were not analyzed for consensus were items that reflected actions each participant/family took rather than a stated ideal or desired state.
Results: Session One

The results from this session are based upon the individual responses of 19 panel participants who completed and returned the Session One instrument. The instrument included an 8-item questionnaire accompanied by a letter of confirmation, on-line and mailing instructions, and an informed consent form. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and beliefs on each of the eight items, using as much or as little space as they saw fit. The questions, intended to initiate participants’ thinking about their experience in identifying and choosing a faith-based schools, also solicited information regarding re-enrollment, future high-school plans, as well as, a question that explored what other individuals had also played key roles in the decision for a given school.

The collective responses to the 8-item questionnaire were reviewed, categorized and synthesized into eight respective sections: 1) The Purposes of Kindergarten – 8th Grade Education; 2) Looking Beyond the Public School System; 3) Components of an Ideal Educational Program; 4) Challenges Faced in Finding the Ideal School; 5) Securing Christian Education; 6) Choosing Re-Enrollment; 7) High-School Options; and 8) Making the Decision for Church / Faith-Based Schooling. A summary of participant responses to the Session One instrument can be viewed in Appendix E. From this summary 151 position statements were developed to be presented for feedback from the panel participants during Session Two.
Results: Session Two

Panel participants’ ratings of the 151 position statements in each of the aforementioned eight sections comprise the data collected during Session Two. Statistical analysis of the collective responses from a panel of 15 members provided the results for this section.\textsuperscript{12}

Sixty (40\%) of the 151 position statements rated by the panel participants were analyzed using the Delphi Method to determine the level of agreement or consensus among the panel participants. Consensus was considered achieved when 80\% of the participants’ responses to a given item fell within two categories on a six-point Likert scale. Medians and interquartile ranges were calculated to determine items of consensus and to measure the degree of variance for each of the 60 items.

In total, consensus was achieved on 47 out of the 60 or 78\% of the position statements analyzed using the Delphi Method. Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 report the median for each item for which consensus was achieved and the corresponding degree of variance or dispersion. The remaining 91 position statements provide additional descriptive information pertaining to the panel members’ experiences when choosing to enroll or re-enroll their daughters and sons in faith-based schools that was obtained from the Session Two instrument but not analyzed for consensus.

\textsuperscript{12} Four of the original 19 panel members that completed the Session I instrument did not continue through to Session II; three indicated that they were somewhat daunted by the length of the session two instrument, yet agreed to continue, and one indicated that she was not able to continue due to extenuating circumstances. After sending reminders via e-mail, telephone and in person, I concluded that it would be best to move forward honoring the notion in my letter of introduction that some participants might find themselves unable to complete the study.
Consensus on the Purposes of Kindergarten-8th Grade Education

Each item (position statement) in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Definitely true, (2) True for the most part; (3) I’m undecided; (4) Not true for the most part; (5) Not True; and (6) This is not important to me. Consensus was achieved on each of the 18 items.

At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should cultivate a desire for learning.

The consensus of the Delphi Panel found that it is definitely true that an ideal educational program should cultivate a desire for learning. Of the 15 participating panel members, 14 rated this item with (1) “definitely true” and the one remaining member assigned a rating of (2) “true for the most part. Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 clearly reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should meet the educational needs of all students.

The Delphi Panel achieved consensus that it is true for the most part that an ideal K-8 educational program should meet the need of all students. Of the 15 participating panel members, 12 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining three chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.
At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should establish and maintain high expectations for all students.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that it is definitely true that an ideal educational program should maintain high expectation for all students. Of the 15 participating panel members, 12 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” Two chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part and one rated this item with (4) “Not true, for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should create a sense of connectedness that includes students, teachers & staff, parents, church and community.

The consensus of the Delphi Panel was that it is definitely true that an ideal educational program should create a sense of connectedness that includes students, teachers & staff, parents, church and community. Of the 15 participating panel members, 12 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” Two chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part and one rated this item (3) “I’m undecided.” Consensus was achieved with a median of 1.0 and an interquartile range of 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should lay the foundation for all future educational pursuits.

The consensus among the Delphi Panel participants was that it is definitely true that an ideal educational program should lay the foundation for all future educational pursuits.
Of the 15 participating panel members, 11 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining four chose the rating of (2) “True for the most part. Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 1.0 reflecting a small but measurable degree of variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should teach principles of learning that will help the students to learn about the world around them. The Delphi Panel reached consensus that it is definitely true that an ideal educational program should teach principles of learning that will help the students to learn about the world around them. Of the 15 participating panel members, 14 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining one chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should provide continuous review of fundamental concepts that have been taught and continue to build upon these core lessons as students progress from one grade to the next. The consensus among the Delphi Panel was that it is definitely true that an ideal educational program should provide continuous review of fundamental concepts that have been taught and continue to build upon these core lessons as students progress from one grade to the next. Of the 15 participating panel members, 14 rated this item with (1)
“definitely true.” The remaining one chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part. Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should be hands-on, engaging and fun.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that it is definitely true that an ideal educational program should be hands-on, engaging and fun. Of the 15 participating panel members, 13 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining two chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should prepare its students to be well-rounded individuals who will be an asset to both God and society.

Consensus was reached that it is definitely true that an ideal educational program should prepare its students to be well-rounded individuals who will be an asset to both God and society. Of the 15 participating panel members, 13 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining two chose a rating of (2) “true for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.
At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child is learning basic knowledge about core subjects, e.g., reading, writing, math, science, social studies and language arts.

Consensus among the Delphi Panel participants was that it is definitely true that they expected their children to be learning basic knowledge about core subjects, e.g., reading, writing, math, science, social studies and language arts at the school in which they were enrolled. Of the 15 participating panel members, 13 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining two chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part. Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child has regular opportunities to learn and exercise his/her social skills.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that they expected that the school where their children were enrolled would include regular opportunities to learn and exercise their social skills. Of the 15 participating panel members, 14 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining one participant did not rate this item. Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.
At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child is learning to develop good study habits.

Consensus among the Delphi Panel participants was that the school where their child was enrolled would be helping the children to develop good study habits. Of the 15 participating panel members, 14 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining one chose a rating of (2) “true for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child above all is taught to love the Lord.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that the school where there children were enrolled would teach the children to love the Lord. Of the 15 participating panel members, 14 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining one chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child is receiving an education that is Biblically based and promotes Christian values and beliefs.

The Delphi Panel achieved consensus desiring that the school, in which their children were enrolled, would provide children with education that is Biblically based and
promotes Christian values and beliefs. Of the 15 participating panel members, 13 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining two chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part. Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child is taught Seventh-day Adventist values and beliefs.

Consensus among the Delphi Panel participants indicated that it was important that the school where their children were enrolled teaches Seventh-day Adventist values and beliefs. Of the 15 participating panel members, 10 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” Three chose a rating of (2) “true for the most part” and two selected (4) “not true, for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 1.0 reflecting a small, yet, measurable degree of variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child is challenged academically and exposed to new ideas and concepts.

The Delphi Panel achieved consensus that it is important that the school where there are children attend challenges its students academically and exposes them to new ideas and concepts. Of the 15 participating panel members, 12 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” The remaining three chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part. Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.
At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child is learning how to stand firm on his/her beliefs and principles. The Delphi Panel reached consensus agreeing that it is definitely true that the child’s school is helping children to learn to stand by his/her principles and beliefs. Of the 15 participating panel members, 13 rated this item as (1) “definitely true.” The remaining two chose a rating of (2) “true for the most part.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.

At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child experiences various types of learning opportunities beyond the basic or core subject areas (foreign languages, computer technology, music, the arts, community service-learning, leadership, etc.). The Delphi Panel reached consensus that it is definitely true that their children’s school must provide various types of learning opportunities that extend beyond the basic subjects. Of the 15 participating panel members, 13 rated this item with (1) “definitely true.” One chose a rating of (2) “True for the most part” and the remaining participant identified (3) “I’m undecided.” Consensus on this item was achieved with the median response being 1.0. The interquartile range was 0.0 reflecting minimal variance in the participants’ responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Interquartile Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should cultivate a desire for learning.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should meet the educational needs of all students.</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should establish and maintain high expectations for all students.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should create a sense of connectedness that includes students, teachers and staff, parents, church and community.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should lay the foundation for all future educational pursuits.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should teach principles of learning that will help the students to learn about the world around them.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should provide continuous review of fundamental concepts and build upon these core lessons as students progress from one year to the next.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should be hands-on, engaging and fun.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal educational programs should prepare students to be well-rounded individuals who will be an asset to both God and society.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child is learning basic knowledge about core subjects.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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</tr>
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Continued

Table 4.1: Strength of Agreement for Purposes of Kindergarten-8th Grade Education

65
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child have regular opportunities to learn and exercise social skills.</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child is learning to develop good study habits.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child above all be taught to love the Lord.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child is receiving an education that is Biblically-based and promotes Christian values and beliefs.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child is taught Seventh-day Adventist values and beliefs.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child is challenged academically and exposed to new ideas and concepts.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child is learning how to stand firm on his/her beliefs and principles.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me that my child experiences various types of learning opportunities beyond the basic or core subject areas.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consensus on Looking Beyond the Public School System
Each item (position statement) in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree; (3) Neutral/Undecided; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Agree; and (6) Was of No Concern. Consensus was achieved on 15 of the 19 items.

I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education, because I looked for a school where my child would be comfortable and not feel out of place as a Christian.
Consensus was achieved indicating the panel participants’ strong agreement that they looked for a school where their child would be comfortable and not feel out of place as a Christian. Ten of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree.” One participant chose (2) “Agree,” one chose (3) “Neutral/Undecided” and two participants chose “Disagree.” One participant did not rate this item. Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.250 reflecting dispersion within the participants’ responses.

I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education, because I wanted to limit the non-Christian influences that exist in many public schools.
Consensus was achieved that the Delphi Panel strongly agrees with the desire to limit the non-Christian influences their children might experience in public schools. Ten of the
fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and the remaining five participants chose (2) “Agree.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet, measurable variance within the responses.

I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education, because I believe that non-public schools will help my child tap into his/her potential. Consensus was achieved with the Delphi Panel agreeing with the belief that non-public schools will help their children tap into their potential. Ten of the fifteen participants rated this item (2) “Agree,” two chose (1) “Strongly Agree,” two chose (4) “Disagree” and the remaining participant responded (3) “Neutral/Undecided.” Consensus was achieved the median being (2) “Agree” with an interquartile range of 0.0 reflecting minimal variance.

I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education, because I believe that the teachers in non-public schools are better qualified and experienced. The Delphi Panel reached consensus in that they disagreed with the belief that the teachers in non-public schools are better qualified and more experienced. Nine of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (4) “Disagree” and three responded with (5) “Strongly Disagree.” The three remaining responses were equally divided between (1) “Strongly Agree,” (2) “Agree” and (3) “Neutral/Undecided.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (4) “Disagree” with an interquartile range of 0.0 reflecting minimal variance.
I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education, because I wanted a more controlled environment for my child.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus strongly agreeing that they wanted a more controlled environment than public schools might provide for their children. Eight of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and the remaining seven participants chose (2) “Agree.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting a small, yet, measurable variance within the responses.

I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because I wanted a school that would pay closer attention to my child’s needs.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus agreeing that their desire for a school that would pay closer attention to their children’s needs influenced their decision to choose a church/faith-based school. Seven of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and six participants chose (2) “Agree.” Of the two remaining participants, one rated this item with (3) “Neutral/Undecided” and the other with (4) “Disagree.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (2) “Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet, measurable variance within the responses.

I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because I wanted a school where my child would receive one-on-one help.

Consensus was reached with the panel participants agreeing that their desire for a school where their children would receive one-on-one help influenced their decision for a church
I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because I know that in church school my children will receive a strong foundation for a successful life with God at the center.

Consensus was achieved indicating the panel participants’ strong agreement that they believed that their children would receive a strong foundation for a successful life with God at the center in a church/faith-based school. Eight of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and five participants chose (2) “Agree.” The two remaining participants rated this item with (3) “Neutral/Undecided.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet, measurable variance within the responses.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus strongly agreeing that a church/faith-based school would strengthen their child’s Christian walk and faith in the Lord. Ten of the
fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and the remaining five participants chose (2) “Agree.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet, measurable variance within the responses.

I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because I want a school where high standards and academic excellence are expected.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus strongly agreeing that their desire for a school where high standards and academic excellence are expected influenced their choice for a church/faith-based school. Thirteen of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree.” Of the remaining participants, one responded (2) “Agree” and the other (3) “Neutral/Undecided.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 0.0 reflecting minimal variance within the responses.

I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because it is important for my child to be taught by teachers who are Christians.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus strongly agreeing with the importance for having their children taught by Christian teachers. Nine of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and five participants chose (2) “Agree.” The remaining participant indicated a rating of (3) “Neutral/Undecided.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet, measurable variance within the responses.
I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because it is important that what my child learns at school is consistent with our spiritual life and beliefs at home.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus strongly agreeing that it is important that what their children learn at school is consistent with the spiritual life and beliefs practiced within their respective homes. Eleven of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and the remaining four participants chose (2) “Agree.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet, measurable variance within the responses.

I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because I chose to place my child in his/her school because of the Christian environment, which incorporates God into the educational program.

Consensus was achieved with the panel participants indicating they strongly agreed that their choice for a church/faith-based school was based on their desire for a school that incorporated God within its educational program and had a Christian environment.

Thirteen of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and the remaining two chose (2) “Agree.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 0 reflecting minimal variance within the responses.
I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because I want my child to be in a school where Christian principles are actively enforced.

Consensus was reached with the panel participants strongly agreeing that they wanted their children to be at a school where the principles of Christianity are actively enforced. Fourteen of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and the remaining one chose a rating of (2) “Agree.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 0 reflecting minimal variance within the responses.

I chose to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school because I want a school where there are teachers who will nurture and genuinely care about my child.

Consensus was reached with the Delphi Panel strongly agreeing that their desire for a school where teachers would nurture and genuinely care about their children influenced their decision for a church/faith-based school. Fourteen of the fifteen participants responded to this item with a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree” and the remaining one chose a rating of (2) “Agree.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (1) “Strongly Agree” with an interquartile range of 0.0 reflecting minimal variance within the responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Interquartile Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I looked for a school where my child would be comfortable and not feel out of place as a Christian.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to limit the non-Christian influences that exist in many public schools.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that non-public schools will help my child tap into his/her potential.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the teachers in non-public school are better qualified and experienced.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose to look beyond public schools because I wanted a more controlled environment for my child.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted a school that would pay closer attention to my child’s needs.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted a school where my child would receive one-on-one help.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that in church school my children will receive a strong foundation for a successful life with God at the center.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that attending a church/faith-based school will help to strengthen my child’s Christian walk and faith in the lord.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want a school where high standards and academic excellence are expected.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for my child to be taught by teachers who are Christians.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued

Table 4.2 Level of Agreement on Looking Beyond the Public School System
Table 4.2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1.0</th>
<th>1.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important that what my child learns at school is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistent with our spiritual life and beliefs at home.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose to place my child in his/her school because of</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Christian environment which incorporates God into the educational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>program.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my child to be in a school where Christian principles are actively</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enforced.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want a school where there are teachers who will nurture and genuinely</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care about my child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consensus on Components of an Ideal Educational Program

Each item (position statement) in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Did Not Even Consider, (2) No Importance; (3) Minimal Importance; (4) Somewhat Important; (5) Very Important; and (6) Critical Factor. Consensus was achieved on 14 of the 23 items.

When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for a school where my son/daughter will learn to love learning and the mindset will be that the sky is the limit.

Consensus was reached with the Delphi Panel indicating that a critical factor in choosing a school is that children are taught to love learning and take hold of the mindset that the sky is the limit. Eight of the fifteen participants rated this (6) “Critical Factor.” Five participants rated this item (5) “Very Important” and the remaining two chose a rating of (4) “Somewhat Important.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (6) “Critical Factor” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for a school that promotes love for Christ and others, in addition to academic learning.

Consensus was reached that it is very important that the school of their choice would extend beyond academic learning by promoting love for Christ and others. Seven of the
fifteen participants rated this (6) “Critical Factor” and seven rated this item (5) “Very Important.” The remaining participant chose a rating of (4) “Somewhat Important.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (5) “Very Important” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for a school that not only taught my child but, also, demonstrates love for them.

Consensus was reached among the panel participants that it is very important that the school of their choice demonstrates love for their children. Eight of the fifteen participants rated this item as (6) “Critical Factor” with the remaining seven participants choosing (5) “Very Important.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (5) “Very Important” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for a school that was concerned about the whole development of my child, not just the academic side.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that it is very important that the school of their choice addressed the whole development of the children – the physical, spiritual, as well as, the intellectual. Nine of the fifteen participants rated this item as (5) “Very Important” with the remaining six participants choosing (6) “Critical Factor.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (5) “Very Important” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.
When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for a school where it is apparent that the students are well disciplined.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that it is very important that students are well disciplined in any school in which they would enroll their children. Twelve of the fifteen participants rated this item as (5) “Very Important” with the remaining three participants choosing (6) “Critical Factor.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (5) “Very Important” with an interquartile range of 0 reflecting the minimal variance within the responses.

When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for a school where my child would freedom to worship and to talk about God freely.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that a critical factor in their choosing a school is finding a place where their children can freely worship and talk about God. Eight of the fifteen participants rated this item as (6) “Critical Factor” .Six participants selected a rating of (5) “Very Important” and the one remaining participant rated this item (4) “Somewhat Important.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (6) “Critical Factor” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.
When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for a school where the teachers are concerned about the success of my child.

Consensus was reached among the Delphi Panel that a critical factor in choosing a school is that the teachers are concerned about the success of my child. Ten of the fifteen participants rated this item as (6) “Critical Factor.” The five remaining participants selected a rating of (5) “Very Important.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (6) “Critical Factor” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for a school where my child would have interaction with children from other God-fearing homes.

Consensus was reached that in the ideal school, it is very important for their children to interact with children who also come from God-fearing homes. Seven of the fifteen participants rated this item as (5) “Very Important.” Five participants selected a rating of (6) “Critical Factor” and the remaining three participants rated this item (4) “Somewhat Important.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (5) “Very Important” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that the school has an “open door” policy for parents and stresses and encourages parental involvement.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that a critical factor in their choosing a school is
that there is an “open door” policy and that parents are encouraged and expected to be involved with the school. Eight of the fifteen participants rated this item as (6) “Critical Factor”. Six participants selected a rating of (5) “Very Important” and the remaining participant rated this item (4) “Somewhat Important.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (6) “Critical Factor” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that the school is family-oriented.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that in choosing a school it is very important that the school is family-oriented. Nine of the fifteen participants rated this item as (5) “Very Important.” Five participants selected a rating of (5) “Critical Factor” and the remaining one participant rated this item (3) “Minimal Importance.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (5) “Very Important” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that the school provides a safe environment.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that a critical factor in their choosing a school is that it provides a safe environment. Ten of the fifteen participants rated this item as (6)
“Critical Factor” and the remaining five participants selected a rating of (5) “Very Important” Consensus was achieved with the median being (6) “Critical Factor” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that the teachers are qualified and have experience in the classroom.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that a critical factor in their choosing a school is that the teachers are qualified and have classroom experience. Ten of the fifteen participants rated this item as (6) “Critical Factor” and the remaining five participants selected a rating of (5) “Very Important” Consensus was achieved with the median being (6) “Critical Factor” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that good relationships are established between the school, parents and child.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that in selecting a school it is important that strong relationships exist between the school, the parents and their children. Seven of the fifteen participants rated this item as (6) “Critical Factor.” Six participants selected a rating of (5) “Very Important” and the remaining one participant rated this item (4) “Somewhat Important.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (5) “Very Important” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.
When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that the school has a reputation for having a strong and consistent academic program.

The Delphi Panel reached consensus that a critical factor in their choosing a particular school is that it have reputation for having a strong and consistent academic program. Eight of the fifteen participants rated this item as (6) “Critical Factor”. Six participants selected a rating of (5) “Very Important” and the remaining one participant rated this item (1) “Did Not Even Consider.” Consensus was achieved with the median being (6) “Critical Factor” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting small, yet measurable, variance within the responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Interquartile Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A school where my son/daughter will learn to love learning and the mindset will be that the sky is the limit.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school that promotes love for Christ and others, in addition to academic learning.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school that not only teaches my child but, also demonstrates love for them.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school that is concerned about the whole development of my child, not just the academic side.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school where it is apparent that the students are well disciplined.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school environment where my child would have freedom to worship and to talk about God freely.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school where the teachers are concerned about the success of my child.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school where my child would have interaction with children from other God-fearing homes.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school with an “open-door” policy for parents and stresses parental involvement.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school that is family-oriented.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school that provides a safe environment.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school where teachers are qualified and have classroom experience.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued

Table 4.3 Level of Agreement on Components of an Ideal Educational Program
Table 4.3 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good relationships are established between the school, parents and child.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has a reputation for having a strong and consistent academic program.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Items For Which Consensus Was Not Achieved

Consensus was not achieved on 13 (40%) of the 60 position statements analyzed by the Delphi Method. Consensus was considered having not been achieved when less than 80% of the participants’ responses to a given item fell within two categories on a six-point Likert scale. Items not achieving consensus fell within two broad categories Looking Beyond the Public School System and Components of an Ideal Educational Program.

Non-Consensus on Looking Beyond the Public School System

.Each item in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree; (3) Neutral/Undecided; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree; and (6) Was of No Concern. Consensus was not achieved on four of the nineteen items in Looking Beyond the Public School System section.

I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education because I believe that there is more of an emphasis on learning in the non-public sector.

Of the fifteen panel participants, six rated this item (4) “Disagree,” five selected (2) “Agree,” three selected a rating of (3) “Neutral/Undecided,” and the remaining one identified with (1) “Strongly Agree.” The median response was (3) “Neutral/Undecided” with an interquartile range of 2.0 reflecting the variance within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.
I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education because I believe that non-public schools have a safer environment.

Of the fifteen panel participants, seven rated this item (2) “Agree,” four selected (1) “Strongly Agree,” two selected a rating of (3) “Neutral/Undecided,” and the remaining two identified with (2) “Disagree.” The median response was (2) “Agree” with an interquartile range of 2.0 reflecting the variance within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.

I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education because I feel more secure knowing that they are in a school with children who share many of the values that are taught in our home.

Of the fifteen panel participants, eight rated this item (2) “Agree,” three selected (1) “Strongly Agree,” three selected a rating of (3) “Neutral/Undecided,” and the remaining one identified with (4) “Disagree.” The median response was (2) “Agree” with an interquartile range of 1.0 reflecting the variance within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.

I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education because I want a school that requires students to wear uniforms.

Of the fifteen panel participants, four rated this item (2) “Agree,” four others selected (3) “Neutral/Undecided,” three selected a rating of (1) “Strongly Agree,” three participants rated the item with (6) “It Was of No Concern,” and the remaining one identified with (4) “Disagree.” The median response was (3) “Neutral/Undecided” with an interquartile range of 2.0 reflecting the variance within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.
Non-Consensus on Components of an Ideal Educational Program

The first three items in this section were rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale
being (1) Definitely, (2) Most Likely Yes; (3) Probably Yes; (4) Probably Not; (5) Most
Likely Not and (6) Definitely No. The last six items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale
with the scale being (1)”Did Not Even Consider,” (2)” No Importance,” (3)”Minimal
Importance,” (4)”Somewhat Important,” (5)” Very Important,” and (6)”Critical Factor.”
Consensus was not achieved on 9 of the 23 items in the *Components of an Ideal
Educational Program* section.

When looking to choose a school for my child I look for a Christian school (not a
particular denomination).

Six of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (4) “Probably Not,” three chose
(5) “Most Likely Not,” two participants chose (1) “Definitely” and another two chose (4)
“Probably Yes.” The remaining participant chose (2) “Most Likely Yes” and one
participant did not complete this item. The median response was (4) “Probably Not” with
an interquartile range of 1.5 reflecting the dispersion among items. Consensus was not
achieved.

When looking to choose a school for my child I look for a Seventh-day Adventist school
regardless of other available options.

Five of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (1) “Definitely,” three chose
(2) “Most Likely Yes,” three others chose (3) “Probably Yes” and two selected (4)
“Probably Not.” Of the two remaining participants one rated this item (5) “Most Likely
No” and the other rated it (6) “Definitely No.” The median response was (2) “Most Likely Yes” with an interquartile range of 3.0 reflecting the dispersion within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.

When looking to choose a school for my child it was important to enroll my child in the school that is connected to the congregation where I worship.

Four of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (2) “Most Likely Yes,” three chose (3) “Probably Yes,” two chose (1) “Definitely” and two selected (4) “Probably Not.” Of the four remaining participants two rated this item (5) “Most Likely No” and the other two rated it (6) “Definitely No.” The median response was (3) “Most Likely Yes” with an interquartile range of 3.0 reflecting the dispersion within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.

When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for an educational setting where my son/daughter could feel comfortable and free to learn at his/her pace.

Seven of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (5) “Very Important.” Four rated it as (6) “Critical Factor” and the remaining four chose (4) “Somewhat Important.” The median response was (5)”Very Important” with an interquartile range of 2.0 reflecting the variance. Consensus was not achieved.
When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for an educational program which would be geared to my child’s learning style (auditory, visual, etc.). Five of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (5) “Very Important.” Four rated it with (6) “Critical Factor,” four others chose (4) “Somewhat Important” and the remaining participant indicated (1) “Did Not Even Consider.” The median response was (5)”Very Important” with an interquartile range of 2.0 reflecting the variance. Consensus was not achieved.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that the school teaches the values and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. Six of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (6) “Critical Factor.” Five rated it as (5) “Very Important,” two chose response chose (4) “Somewhat Important,” one selected (3)”Minimal Importance” and the remaining one rated it (2)”No Importance. The median response was (5)”Very Important” with an interquartile range of 2.0 reflecting the variance within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that there are a number of Black / African-American students enrolled. Six of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (4) “Somewhat Important.” Four rated it as (5) “Very Important,” three identified response (3) “Minimal Importance,” one
considered it (2)“No Importance” and the remaining participant selected (1) “Did Not Even Consider.” The median response was (4)“Somewhat Important” with an interquartile range of 2.0 reflecting variance within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that my child would experience having an African-American teacher to serve as a positive role model. Five of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (5) “Very Important.” Three rated it as (4) “Somewhat Important,” three others identified response (3) “Minimal Importance” and the remaining two participants considered it (2) “No Importance.” The median response was (4)“Somewhat Important” with an interquartile range of 2.0 reflecting variance within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.

When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that my child would experience having a male teacher.

Five of the fifteen panel participants rated this item with (2) “No Importance.” Four rated it as (4) “Somewhat Important” and two participants selected response (6) “Critical Factor.” Of the two remaining participants, one considered it (3) “Minimal Importance” and the remaining participant selected (1) “Did Not Even Consider.” The median response was (4)“Somewhat Important” with an interquartile range of 3.0 reflecting variance within the responses. Consensus was not achieved.
Components of an Ideal Educational Program: Non Delphi-Method

Delphi Panel members assessed potential schools for specific components as they made decisions regarding which schools to enroll their sons/daughters. Each item (position statement) in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Did Not Consider, (2) No Importance, (3) Little Importance, (4) Somewhat Important, (5) Very Important, and (6) Critical Factor. The following results were obtained using basic descriptive statistics.

Components rated as (5) Very Important or (6) Critical Factors were categorized as having “High Importance”; components rated as (3) Little Importance or (4) Somewhat Important were categorized as having “Some Importance”; and, items rated as (1) Did Not Consider or (2) Not Important were categorized as “No Importance.” In choosing a school for their son or daughter:

Having a strong math and science program was considered to be of “high importance” to 67%, the majority of the panel participants. Twenty percent considered having a strong math and science program to have “some importance” and the remaining 13% rated it as of “no importance.”

Having opportunities to learn beyond the classroom was considered to be of “high importance” to 54% of the panel participants. Thirty-three percent considered these opportunities to have “some importance” and the remaining 33% rated it as “no importance.”
Having *a strong emphasis on reading and writing* was reported to be of “high importance” for 67% of the Delphi Panel. Twenty percent found it to be of “some importance” and the remaining 13% considered it to be of “no importance.”

Having *a variety of extra-curricular activities including sports* was considered to be of “high importance” to 47% of the panel participants. Another 40% found having these activities to be “somewhat important,” while 13% found this to be of “no importance.”

Having *community service or service learning as part of the educational offerings* was reported as having “high importance” to 47% of the panel. Thirty-three percent thought it to be “somewhat important” and 20% found it to be of “no importance.”

Having *established traditions that build community* was considered of “high importance” by 60% of the Delphi Panel. Twenty percent found having these traditions to be “somewhat important” and the remaining 20% found it to be of “no importance.”

Having *a diverse student population* was considered to be of “high importance” to 53% of the panel participants. Thirty-four percent found this to be “somewhat important” with the remaining 13% reporting diversity to be of “no importance.”
Having a music and arts program was reported as having “high importance” by 54% of the Delphi Panel. Thirty-four% considered it of “some importance” and the remaining 13% felt it was of “no importance.

Having a manageable student to teacher ratio was considered of “high importance” to 73% of the panel participants. Fourteen percent reported it to be of “some importance” and the remaining 13% thought the student-teacher ratio was of “no importance.”

Having a location that was in close proximity to home or to work was found to be equally divided (33.3%) between each of the three categories “high, some or no importance.”

Learning of prior complaints against the teachers or school was of “high importance” for 54% of the panel. Thirty-three percent considered this information to have “some importance and 13% regarded it as being of “no importance.”

Considering the discipline practices of the school was considered to be of “high importance” to 86% of the panel participants. Six percent of the participants found this to be of “some importance” while another 6% considered it to be of “no importance.”
Having access to educational resources such as textbooks, technology, etc. was considered to be of “high importance” to 86% of the Delphi Panel. Thirteen percent felt this was of “no importance” and the remaining 7% thought this was of “some importance.”

Challenges in Finding the Ideal School
Delphi Panel members reported barriers and difficulties that arose while they were involved in deciding in which school to enroll their sons/daughters. Each item (position statement) in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neutral/Undecided, (4) Disagree, (5) Strongly Disagree, and (6) Did Not Consider. The following results were obtained using basic descriptive statistics.

Items rated as being (1) Strongly Agree or (2) Agree are reported as challenges experienced by the Delphi Panel. Based on the responses from the 15 Delphi Panel participants, the percent reporting they encountered challenges and barriers while selecting a school were:

- No barriers and challenges existed 40%
- Uncertainty due to the rate of teacher/staff turnover 40%
- The high-cost of tuition 34%
- The ability to address the specific learning needs of children 33%
- Finding teachers that hold the same high expectations 33%
- The availability of extra-curricular activities, including sports 27%
Lack of organization on the part of the school(s)  26%
Lack of supplemental educational resources to assist students  20%
The daily distance we travel to and from school  20%
The time it took to visit the different schools  13%

Providing Christian Education
Delphi Panel members, acknowledging the sacrifices that are sometimes required in order to provide Christian education for their children, reported ways in which their family has or is willing to sacrifice. Each item (position statement) in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Definitely Yes, (2) Probably Yes, (3) Maybe, (4) Probably Not, (5) Absolutely Not, and (6) I Don’t Know. The following results were obtained using basic descriptive statistics.

Items rated with (1) Definitely Yes or (2) Probably Yes are reported as sacrifices the Delphi Panel has already or is willing to experience in order to provide Christian education for their sons and daughters. Based on the responses from the 15 Delphi Panel participants, the percent indicting their past or future willingness to make sacrifices in order to provide Christian education for their sons and daughters was:

Made Christian education a priority even with limited income  80%
Provide my own transportation to and from school  74%
Delayed major purchases in order to finance Christian education  60%
Perform services for the school to offset tuition and fees  53%
Serve on one of the various school committees, boards, etc.  46%
Relocate to be closer to the school 40%
Take out loans in order to cover tuition and related expenses 40%
Take on a second job to help to cover expenses 40%
Move to another school district/location within Columbus 27%
Send my child to boarding school 14%
Work at night to be available during the day 14%
Delayed relocation because I am so satisfied 13%

Choosing Re-Enrollment
Delphi Panel participants reported that they evaluated their child’s current school experience when making the decision to re-enroll or change schools for the next school year. Each item (position statement) in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Did Not Consider, (2) No Importance, (3) Minimal Importance, (4) Somewhat Important, (5) Very Important, and (6) Critical Factor. The following results were obtained using basic descriptive statistics.

Items rated as (5) Very Important, and (6) Critical Factor are reported as factors that panel participants consider when choosing whether or not to re-enroll. The Delphi Panel participants found the following factors important based upon their child’s experience:

- Has my child been encouraged to do his/her best? 87%
- Visible academic growth 87%
- Visible spiritual growth 87%
- Appropriate pace of learning 80%
Challenging and stimulating educational program 80%
Child’s degree of comfort and satisfaction 80%
Child’s academic performance 80%
Integration of God into daily program 80%
Time spent with the teacher 73%
Has my child’s unique learning needs been met? 73%
Social Development 73%
Nature of peer influence 67%
Reinforcement of SDA beliefs and practices 66%
Child’s participation in special events/programs 60%
Level of exposure to computer technology 60%
Availability of extra-curricular activities 47%

The 15 Delphi Panel participants found the following factors important based upon their experience as a parent with the school:

   Teachers’ qualifications and teaching style 87%
   Rapport between teachers and students 80%
   Presence of a Christian atmosphere 80%
   The overall quality of the educational program 74%
   Effectiveness of communication with teachers 73%
   Nature of interaction with staff throughout the school 67%
   Communication between school and parents beyond classroom 67%
   Information / perceptions from other families 34%
The 15 Delphi Panel participants found the following factors important regarding their observation of the institutional measures of the school:

- Preparing students to be academically competitive: 80%
- Management of student behavior and discipline: 80%
- Commitment to stated mission and standards: 77%
- Student body performance on assessment measures: 73%
- Enforcement of safety measures: 73%
- Educational standards in line with the State of Ohio: 60%
- Teacher to student ratio: 60%
- Maintenance of the physical plant: 60%
- Degree of diversity: 40%
- Degree of staff turnover: 46%

**High School Options**

In considering their plans for their sons/daughters secondary education, Delphi Panel members, indicated which type of high school programs they were most likely to enroll their daughters/sons upon their graduation from middle school. Each item (position statement) in this section was rated on a 6-point Likert scale with the scale being (1) Definitely Yes, (2) Probably Yes, (3) Maybe, (4) Probably Not, (5) Absolutely Not, and (6) I Don’t Know. The following results were obtained using basic descriptive statistics.
Items rated as (1) Definitely Yes or (2) Probably Yes are reported here as the anticipated choices the Delphi Panel participants will make at the point their sons / daughters reach high school.

- Seventh-day Adventist high school: 73%
- Christian academy (any faith): 40%
- Private high school: 34%
- Home school: 20%
- Traditional public high school: 20%
- Charter high school: 20%
- Seventh-day Adventist boarding academy: 14%

In addition to the type of high school, 80% of the Delphi Panel stressed their need to determine the strength of any potential high school’s science and technology curriculum. In a different vein, 73% of the panel participants indicated that exploring how fairly African-American students had been treated in a given high school would be a critical / very important factor to consider. Similarly, 60% indicated it would be important to know if the African-American students who attended in the past had maintained their racial identity.

**Making the Decision for Church / Faith-Based Schooling**
In this section, Delphi panel participants identified the individuals who also played a role in making the decision for their sons/daughters current school. Each item (position statement) was rated on a “Yes/No” scale. Table 4.4 reports panel members' indication of other key individuals who also participated in the decision-making process.
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<th>No</th>
<th>Missing Data</th>
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<td>11 (73%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Child</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Husband and I</td>
<td>12 (80%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Husband Made Final Decision</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>12 (80%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Family Member(s)</td>
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<td>11 (73%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of My Church Family</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Board Member(s)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>13 (87%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher(s) at My Child's School</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Individuals Involved in Decision-Making Process for Faith-Based School
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the study, its limitations, and offers recommendations for future research efforts.

The majority of school choice studies are in some way tied to the highly politicized contemporary school choice debate and seek to prove or refute findings surrounding the academic performance of children who live in lower-income urban school districts. It is because of this direct link that much of the existing research is limited to the study of the use of voucher; those that are publicly funded, as well as, vouchers that are privately sponsored. Because the population is so narrowly defined in such studies, school choice literature and scholarship provides a view of African-American families exercising school choice that, in reality, is limited at best.

In an effort to begin to expand the school choice scholarship base, this study explored the decision-making process that African-American families use when choosing faith-based education, families who make choice without the presence of private "scholarships" or state-funded vouchers. African-American families whose children attend faith-based schools can provide valuable information to the school choice dialogue. This is particularly true given that in both the Cleveland Scholarship Program and the
Milwaukee Religious School Choice Program, many families chose faith-based schools rather than private independent schools or public schools in adjacent districts (Holt, 2000; Morken & Formicola, 1999; Sugarman, 1999).

The purposes of this study were three-fold: (1) to explore the underlying rationale for African-American families’ choice to enroll their children in faith-based schools; (2) to explore characteristics or criteria African-American families use when identifying a particular faith-based school; and (3) to determine the relative importance of factors that make-up the ideal educational program in the collective view of the research participants. In order to explore these phenomena, this study was theoretically framed within the Black Feminist Thought / Black Women's Standpoint with the premise being that findings and any resulting conclusions must be informed by individuals who have expertise in the area of study. In this case, African-American families who have made the choice to place their sons and daughters in church related or faith-based schools would stand to have the most expertise in this area of school choice.

This was a descriptive study that utilized the Delphi Method. This research design uses a panel of experts to arrive at a consensus of opinion or a pre-specified level of agreement. The Delphi technique was determined to be an effective method by which to study this phenomenon as it provides a forum for panel experts to better understand the meaning which individual experts bring to their informed opinion. It is the use of anonymous, structured feedback that facilitates this understanding. The end result is a profile of insight, informed by collective experience and perspective, which more accurately
reflects the targeted population than information that may be gleaned from any individual source. Additionally, this insight at the family level can begin to put faces on the many outcome studies that seek to determine patterns of achievement, changes in the racial composition of schools, or changes in the public school system.

Research Question 1

What do African-American mothers believe are the primary purposes of education / schooling for their children?

Initially when addressing this in the open-ended questionnaire, there was a great deal of variation in the responses offered by the individual mothers. However, upon receiving the feedback shared through the second instrument, there was movement across the panel to embrace items that had not initially been stated thus demonstrating the potential for increased awareness and knowledge-sharing that accompanies this type of research process.

The participants strongly identified with the belief that school at this level should cultivate within the children a love for learning. There was also a strong indication that at the kindergarten through 8th grade level there should be high expectations for all students and that schools should seek to meet the needs of all learners.

Another area that was reported to be an important function of schools at this level was that of establishing a sense of connectedness. Participants believed that faith-based schools should strive to establish a sense of connectedness that extended from students,
teachers, staff, parents, church and community. This finding confirms the theory of Coleman (1987) that religious schools, in particular, serve to create a functional community that serves to reinforce similar values that extends beyond the family-school relationship. Perhaps, even more importantly within the African-American community than a sense of community-based connectedness reflects the desire to reclaim the fierce sense of ownership and collective responsibility that operated in the pre-Brown v. Board of Education era (Comer, 1988 McCready, 1996).

Additionally, panel members stated that at this level children should be taught principles that would help them to explore and learn about the world around them and as an result be prepared to become well-rounded individuals who will be an asset to God and society. This desire reflects a level of openness that is in direct contrast to the fear that some school-choice opponents have that faith-based schools and other schools established by “separatist” communities will result in increased bigotry and isolation (Cookson, 1994; Hill, 2003). A recent poll conducted by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan opinion research organization reported that traditional Christians registered concerns about inappropriate content in textbooks, sexuality education, and so forth. Panel members in this study did not raise similar concerns.

In the area of instruction, participants spoke of the importance of their children learning the basic knowledge of core subjects and having a continuous review and building on of new material as students progress from one year to the next. While stressing the value of core knowledge, participants also emphasized the importance of their children having
learning opportunities that extended beyond the basic or core curriculum. Also related to instruction, participants stated the importance of learning at this level being fun and engaging while at the same time stressing the importance that their children be challenged academically and exposed to new ideas and concepts.

Participants indicated that at this level it is also important that students begin to develop strong study habits, as well as, have the opportunity to learn and exercise positive social skills that complement their academic development.

Participants believed wholeheartedly that schools at the K-8th grade level have a tremendous role to play in guiding their children’s spiritual development. They shared that even beyond the need for academic excellence was that their children be taught to know and love the Lord. Similarly, they wanted an education that is biblically based and promotes Christian values and beliefs. They also were seeking an environment where their children would learn how to effectively stand for their beliefs and principles.

While consensus was reached at the pre-determined level for all of the items in this section, there was a small degree of difference for two of the items regarding the strength of agreement as represented by the interquartile range. Interestingly, one of these items fell in the area of spiritual development. While participants unreservedly spoke to the importance of Christian education, the level of agreement for having a Seventh-day Adventist education was not as strong although consensus was achieved that having a denomination-specific education is very important. This degree of difference indicates
that not all participants felt the strong need for Christian education and is potentially valuable information as it indicates that families will possibly consider various Christian schools in the nearby area rather than automatically enroll their children in the school that is connected to their congregation or denomination.

The remaining item that did not achieve the highest level of agreement was the belief that, at this level, schools should provide an education that lays the foundation for all future learning.

Research Question 2

*Why have some African-American families chosen not to enroll their daughters and sons in public schools?*

One of the strongest themes that emerged from the data was that for many participants, the decision not to choose public schools for their sons and daughters was much more a choice for faith-based education than a statement against the public school system. While participants did speak to their desire to limit the non-Christian influences that exist at many public schools and the desire for a more controlled environment, they disagreed with the perception that teachers in non-public schools were better qualified and had more experience. They indicated that a non-public school would be able to pay more attention to their children’s individual needs and have the ability to provide one-on-one assistance if needed. They also expressed concern about wanting an environment where their child could be comfortable and not feel out of place given his or her values and beliefs.
Research Question 3

What are the factors that lead individual African-American mothers to look to faith-based education for their children’s education?

The choice for faith-based education is largely situated in the spiritual development and environment of the school and the related benefits students are expected to receive. Participants believe that the educational program at a faith-based school will provide not only a strong academic foundation but, also a strong foundation for life in general that will have God at the center. There was also a strong desire for an educational program that actively incorporates God and Christian living into the curriculum and is taught by Christian teachers who nurture and genuinely care about the children. The panel members’ spoke of a desire for their children to be in a school where Christian principles are actively enforced and there is consistency between what is practiced in the home and at school. Most importantly, it was stated that families believed that enrolling their sons and daughters in a faith-based school would strengthen their child’s Christian walk and faith in God.

Research Question 4

What specific indicators or criteria do African-American mothers use when considering and selecting an educational program for their children?

When asked to identify the particular criteria they looked for when selecting a school for their children, there were seven components listed as being a critical factor. Participants looked for schools where in addition to a reputation for having a strong and consistent academic program, there is a climate of excellence and a belief that all children can excel. Related to this was the need for the school to have experienced classroom teachers who
truly care about the success of each child. Also considered to be critical factors were a safe environment, an “open door” policy that emphasizes parental involvement and the freedom for children to worship and speak freely about God.

Another factor considered to be very important was the concern for children’s whole development, spiritual, physical, social and intellectual. Participants looked for evidence that there is genuine love and caring for their children and that they are taught to demonstrate Christ’s love for each other. It was also considered very important that their children have the opportunity to interact with children from other God-fearing homes and that the students in the school were well-disciplined. Participants shared that they had looked for a school that was family-oriented and promoted strong relationships between parents, the school and the children.

In addition to those items determined through the Delphi Method, other factors determined to be critical/very important were: 1) a strong math and science program; 2) a strong emphasis on reading and writing; 3) established school traditions that build community; 4) a manageable teacher to student ratio; 5) discipline practices; and, 6) having access to quality educational resources.

Items considered to be of moderate importance were: 1) opportunities to learn beyond the classroom; 2) a diverse student body; 3) music and arts program; and, 4) prior and existing complaints against teachers or the school.
Many of the participants indicated that there is recurring element of school choice as they consider whether to continue with the same faith-based school or to instead remove their child and identify a school or educational option that may better fit the needs of their son or daughter. The following factors were considered critical/very important when participants consider re-enrolling their child from one year to the next.

Over 65% of the panel participants reported considering the following questions about their child’s experience when making considerations to re-enroll:

- Is there visible spiritual growth in my child?
- Is there visible academic growth in my child?
- How is my child’s academic performance?
- Have my child’s learning needs been met?
- Is my child learning at a pace comfortable for him/her?
- Is my child’s social development appropriate for his/her age?
- What type of influence have my child’s peers had on him/her?
- Has my child been encouraged to do his/her best?
- Does my child enjoy attending the school?
- How much time has the teacher spent with my child?

Over 60% of the panel participants reported considering the following questions about their observations as a parent when making considerations to re-enroll:

- Has God been integrated into the daily school program?
- Are Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and practices reinforced?
• How effective has my communication been with my child’s teachers?
• How well do the other staff relate with me as a parent?
• How well has the school communicated with me as a parent?
• How do I view my child’s teacher’s qualifications and teaching style?
• How do I view the overall quality of the educational program?
• How effective is the rapport between teachers and students?
• Is there a Christian atmosphere in the school?

Over 60% of the panel participants reported considering the following questions about their observations of institutional measures of the school when making considering re-enrollment:

• Has the school lived up to its mission and stated standards?
• Are the school’s educational standards in line with the State of Ohio?
• Are the students being prepared to compete academically after leaving the school?
• How does the student body as a whole perform on assessment measures?
• How well is the physical plant maintained?
• Are safety measures enforced?

**Research Question 5**

*What sacrifices are African-American families willing to make in order to secure a quality educational experience for their children?*

It is apparent through the panel participants’ responses that families across the board face some degree of challenge in providing Christian education for their children. There were
a number of ways indicated that families go to great length to ensure their children are educated at a faith-based schools, however, only four of the items were reported by more than 50% of the participants. Three of these are financially focused with 80% panel members reporting that they have made Christian education a family priority even with a limited income. Sixty percent reported having delayed a major purchase in order to finance Christian education and 53% indicate their willingness to perform duties or services for the school to help to offset tuition and related fees. Needing to provide transportation to and from school is the only sacrifice noted that is not necessarily financial in nature.

Limitations

1. Perhaps the main strength of the Delphi Method can also be viewed as its primary limitation. Results are specific to the given context in which they are collected which in this case is an African-American Seventh-day Adventist congregation located in northeast Columbus, Ohio and, would not be necessarily generalizable to another congregation. However, the process itself is one that can be repeated by any number of congregations or other similar community groups.

2. This study focused solely on African-American families whose children were already enrolled in faith-based schools and therefore, may not accurately reflect the views of families with children in traditional public schools, public alternative schools or private independent schools. Additionally, there are a growing number of families who choose to home-school their children. Their views also are not captured in this
study. Should a congregation use this research method as part of a feasibility study to determine whether or not to establish a school, it would be advisable to supplement the research design in a way to elicit the views of families not included otherwise.

3. This research, by design, used mothers as expert-participants. Therefore, the findings, while accurate as the collective view of the mothers, may be gender-specific in nature and not adequately represent the opinions and views of the fathers in the respective families.

4. Lastly, it is impossible to know if the individuals, who chose to not participate or did not complete the process would have introduced different, even conflicting, viewpoints that may have ultimately changed the essence of the findings. A follow-up telephone interview may provide additional data to determine if the findings are indeed representative of those that chose not to participate.
Future Research

1. This study demonstrates that a significant amount of substantive thought and effort has been invested by the participating families. For the most part, this wealth of information will go untapped unless there are clearly established mechanisms for effective communication between those responsible for the direction of the school and the parents of enrolled children. Additional research that identifies schools that elicit and effectively incorporate such information into their ongoing evaluation and program development could provide valuable information to existing and newly established faith-based schools.

2. While this research reflects the decision-making process for a given congregation, there is a great need for similar research to be conducted in a variety of arenas to determine what types of commonalities or differences emerge from looking across congregations, denominations and/or other geographical locations.

3. Given the limited amount of research that looks at individual congregations and families’ desire for Christian education, there is a need for on-going research in this area as churches and other faith-based institutions are encouraged to meet many of society’s needs that have been traditionally regarded as responsibilities of the state. Future research efforts that explore the feasibility of establishing a Faith-Based Education clearinghouse could provide much needed assistance to churches and other
faith organizations desiring to establish or improve existing educational program. Organized efforts might include the dissemination of empirically based research findings, identification of promising practices, and the provision of technical assistance.

4. This study, although focused on Kindergarten-8th grade education, brings to the forefront the concerns that parents in this particular congregation have for being able to identify and secure Christian education at the high school level. While the majority of parents in this study indicated their desire to continue with Christian education for their children as they reached high school, it was apparent that there a widespread perception of limited availability for secondary Christian education. Additional research in this area can explore these perceptions and potentially began to address this impending need.

5. This research study demonstrates the need for effective tools that can be used by congregations and denominations that are plagued with dwindling enrollments in their respective schools, as families become more aware of the Christian education market and the many choices available. Future research in the area of effective marketing and retention strategies for faith-based schools will make an important contribution to the survival of many new and existing schools.
6. There is a great need for the identification of innovative mechanisms by which faith-based schools can benefit from the professional expertise that exists within many postsecondary institutions, both public and private. Efforts to determine the existence and nature of university-partnerships with faith-based elementary and secondary schools would be of value, similar to the partnership that exists between Ohio State University’s Literacy Education and Diverse Settings (M.Ed.) program and the Mt. Olivet Baptist church school in Columbus, Ohio (Seidl & Friend, 2002).

7. It would be beneficial for the ongoing research that is conducted on voucher programs to consistently seek out the voices of the families, letting research participants take a prominent role in shaping the research questions. Additional research that explores families decision-making process would provide vital information to the existing school choice research, particularly given that a significant number of families participating in the Cleveland and Milwaukee voucher programs chose faith-based schools.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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APPENDIX A

PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE & INSTRUCTIONS
I really appreciate your being willing to assist me in my preliminary research on parents’ beliefs and practices regarding school choice for their elementary and middle school-age children. I am particularly interested in the experiences of Black parents who have opted to enroll their children in schools outside of the traditional public school system. It is my intention to use the knowledge and insight gained from your responses and those of other parents to create a grounded survey and conduct a larger scale research project as partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree requirements in Educational Policy & Leadership - Cultural Studies in Education.

Please respond to the following six questions and return your answers to me via e-mail at your earliest convenience. My email address is barnes-wright.1@osu.edu. If for some reason you experience difficulty in responding to this address or need clarification to one of the questions, please feel free to call me at (614) 818-0098. You can respond directly on this page or send your responses as an attachment. If you choose to send an attachment, please save the document in MS Word 6.0 to ensure that I can open and read your document from my computer at home. Please be certain to number your responses.

All responses will be maintained confidentially. In addition, any forthcoming documents or publications will report data anonymously or in summary fashion to reduce the likelihood of any individual responses being attributed to a given respondent. Please indicate in your response if you would like to receive summary information of my findings. Thank you again for your willingness to participate.
QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTION 1: In your opinion, what do you believe to be the primary purpose(s) of education at the elementary middle school level?

QUESTION 2: What are the reasons or factors that you have chosen to look beyond the traditional public school system for educational opportunities for your child (or children)?

QUESTION 3: When you selected your son(s) or daughter(s) current school, what types of characteristics or specific criteria were you looking for in potential educational programs / schools?

QUESTION 4: What type of constraints or barriers, if any, did you encounter in identifying and enrolling your child(ren) in an educational program that met your criteria?

QUESTION 5: To what length were you / are you willing to go to secure the type and quality of educational program that you desire for your child(ren) at the elementary through middle school level?

QUESTION 6: What high school options are you considering for your child(ren) that are now in grades K - 8?

OPTIONAL COMMENTS:
Is there any additional information that you would like for me to have or consider that is in your opinion related to this topic? Please share.

Please list the name, grade, & current school for each of your children in grades K - 12.
1.
2.
3.
4.
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello _________, thanks for agreeing to talk this evening about the research project with which I am involved. Is this a good time for you? It should only take 5 and no more than 10 minutes of your time. (If not a good time, I will ask when I should call back)

The research I am conducting is in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree requirements in Educational Policy & Leadership at The Ohio State University. I am particularly interested in the experiences of families who choose to enroll their children in schools outside of the traditional public school system—particularly church schools—that today are often referred to as faith-based schools.

I am hoping that you will be willing to assist me in this research given that you have elementary or middle school-age children (a child) who are enrolled in a faith-based school instead of your local public school. If you agree, your participation will consist of the completion of a brief questionnaire online and two or three subsequent surveys where you will be asked to rate a series of statements regarding what is important to you in choosing a school for your child.

Your participation will require no more than a total of 1-½ hours of your time spread out over a period of 2 to 4 weeks. You will be able to participate online whenever is convenient for you within 1 week of receipt of the questionnaire/instrument. Your participation will be in four separate sessions as follows:

- **Session I** - completion of a brief (7 questions) questionnaire *(approximately 10 – 15 minutes)*;
- **Session II** - indicate your level of agreement with approximately 25 provided statements about school choice *(approximately 15 to 20 minutes)*;
- **Session III** - reading feedback from other participants, clarifying your viewpoint and determining your level of agreement *(approximately 20 to 30 minutes)*.
- **Session IV** - reading feedback from other participants and again indicating your level of agreement on provided statements *(approximately 20 to 30 minutes)*.

I will maintain your individual responses on disk in a secure location to ensure the confidentiality of your responses. At the conclusion of this study I will maintain only one hard copy of the original data and one copy on a CD in a secured location. All other data will be shredded and destroyed. In addition, any forthcoming documents or publications will report data anonymously or in summary fashion to reduce the likelihood of any individual responses being attributed to a given respondent. After the completion of the project, I will provide summary information to all participants who are interested in the findings.

If you experience difficulty in responding to this address or need clarification regarding the questions, please feel free to call me at (614) 818-0098 or contact me via e-mail.

Lastly, I fully understand that circumstances can and do change, so, if at any point you choose to discontinue your participation in this research project, simply call me or email me and I will remove you from the participants list.
Thank you again for considering participation in this project. Do you have any questions? Is there any additional information I can provide to help you to reach a decision?

**If potential participant agrees:**
Thank you so much. I will provide you with a consent form that you will provide you a written copy of what I have just shared. Once you have read through it, I will ask that you sign it and return to me as an indication of your willingness to participate in this study. Also, please can you give me the email address that you will be using during this study?

Thank you so very much and have a nice day. Should you have additional questions that come up, feel free to email me at or you can reach me at 614-818-0098.

**If potential participant disagrees:**
Oh, I understand but thank you so much for considering this and for allowing me the opportunity to talk to you about it. Thank you and have a nice day/_evening_. Good Bye.
APPENDIX C

EXPERT-PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS
EXPERT - PARTICIPANTS' MARITAL STATUS

- Married: 73%
- Divorced: 11%
- Missing Data: 5%
- Single: 11%

Married: 73%
EXPERT - PARTICIPANTS' OCCUPATIONS

- Student: 11%
- Professional: 61%
- Administrative: 17%
- Homemaker: 11%
EXPERT - PARTICIPANTS: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- High School: 6%
- Attended College: 12%
- Associates: 18%
- Bachelors: 28%
- Graduate / Professional: 24%
- Vocational / Technical: 12%

Diagram showing the distribution of educational attainment among participants.
Participants K-8th Grade Type of School

- Public School: 37%
- Private School: 5%
- Church School: 16%
- Public and Church: 37%
- Missing Data: 5%

134
Number of Children Per Expert-Participant

1 Child: 52%
2 Children: 32%
3 Children: 11%
4 Children: 5%

1 Child: 52%
2 Children: 32%
3 Children: 11%
4 Children: 5%
Children Enrolled Per Faith-Based School

- CAA: 63%
- GCCS: 21%
- LCS: 16%
APPENDIX D

SESSION ONE INSTRUMENT
June 11, 2004

Dear Research Participant:

I appreciate your willingness to assist me in my research on Black / African-American families’ beliefs and practices regarding school choice for their elementary and middle school-age children. I am particularly interested in the experiences of families who have opted to enroll their children in church-affiliated schools. This research is conducted in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree requirements in Educational Policy & Leadership – Social and Cultural Foundations in Education at The Ohio State University under the supervision of Seymour Kleinman, Ph.D., Professor of Education and Donna Ford, Ph.D., Professor of Education.

Your participation will consist of the following and will require no more than a total of 1-½ hours of your time spread out over a period of 2 to 4 weeks. You will be able to participate on-line whenever is convenient for you within 1 week from receiving the questionnaire / survey instrument. Your participation will be in three separate sessions * (with the possibility of one additional session, depending on the responses collected in sessions II and III). A description of each session follows:

- **Session I** - completion of a brief (8 questions) questionnaire (approximately 10 – 15 minutes);
- **Session II** - indicate your level of agreement with approximately 30 provided statements about school choice (approximately 15 - 20 minutes);
- **Session III** - reading feedback from other participants, clarifying your viewpoint and re-determining your level of agreement (approximately 20-30 minutes).
- **Session IV** - reading feedback from other participants and again indicating your level of agreement on provided statements (approximately 20-30 minutes).

Please be advised that all of your responses will be considered confidential and I will maintain your individual responses in a secured location to ensure the privacy of your responses. At the conclusion of this study I will maintain one hard copy of the original data, a copy saved on CD and one electronic copy all kept in a secured location. All other data will be shredded and destroyed. In addition, my dissertation, as well as, any forthcoming publications will report data anonymously or in summary fashion to reduce the likelihood of any individual responses being attributed to a given respondent. I will also make the summary information of the findings available to you at the conclusion of the study.
I fully understand that circumstances can and do change, so, if at any point you choose to discontinue your participation in this research project, simply notify me by email or you may call me at the phone numbers listed above. Or, you can reach my advisers via e-mail at Dr. Donna Ford at Ford.255@osu.edu or Dr. Seymour Kleinman at Kleinman.1@osu.edu.

Lastly, I am also enclosing an “Informed Consent” form, which I need you to read, sign and return to me at your earliest convenience. You can send it to my campus address that is listed above or to my home address: 2159 Sumac Loop South, Columbus, OH 43229. Now, scroll down to the next page and begin the electronic questionnaire. I look forward to beginning this dialogue with you.

Respectfully,

Lenora Barnes-Wright
Lenora Barnes-Wright
Ph.D. Candidate
The Ohio State University
School of Educational Policy & Leadership

Cc: Informed Consent Form
    Session I – Preliminary Questionnaire
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I, Janice Sebrina Doe, give my consent to participate in this research entitled:

IN SEARCH OF SATISFACTION:
Black / African-American Families’ Choice for Faith-Based Schools

Lenora Barnes-Wright, Co-Investigator, has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected length of participation, which is a total of 1 ½ hours time spread out over a period of 2 to 4 weeks. She has also informed me of alternative procedures, e.g., use of paper and pencil and US Mail, instead of online communication, if I choose.

I have been provided the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I am fully aware that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without any prejudice.

I have been informed that my individual responses will be maintained in a secured location to protect the confidentiality of my responses and that any forthcoming research reports or publications will report the data anonymously or in summary fashion to reduce the likelihood of any individual responses being attributed to a given participant.

I am aware that if I have questions or concerns I can contact Lenora Barnes-Wright at 614-818-0098 or via E-mail at barnes-wright.1@osu.edu or Donna Ford, Ph.D. who is the Co-Principal Investigator and her dissertation co-adviser at ford.255@osu.edu.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and understand this consent form and my signature is given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me for my reference.

Signed: _____________________________ Date: ________________

(Participant’s Signature)

Signed: Lenora Barnes-Wright Date: ________________
On-line Questionnaire Instructions

Please respond to the following eight questions and return your answers to me via e-mail at your earliest convenience and no later than Sunday, June 20, 2004. As you reply, feel free to expand on your responses; the questionnaire is formatted to allow you as much room for your responses as you like. Simply place your cursor on the shaded area following each question and click. You will be allowed to continue typing in your response until it is complete.

Your responses will be compiled with other participants and summarized as position statements that you will rate in Sessions II and III. None of the position statements will include your name or any identifying information. There are two ways in which you can send me your responses:

1. You may type your responses directly on this questionnaire and then return it as an e-mail attachment. If you respond directly on the following document REMEMBER TO SAVE your changes to the document using the “SAVE AS” command and naming your document (your first and last name) prior to sending it back to me.

   OR

2. You may send your responses as a separate e-mail message. If you choose to answer separately, please be certain to NUMBER YOUR RESPONSES accordingly.

If you experience difficulty in responding online or need clarification regarding the questions, please feel free to call me at (614)818-0098 or contact me via e-mail at barnes-wright.1@osu.edu.
SESSION I – Online Questionnaire

QUESTION 1: In your opinion, what do you believe are the primary purposes of education at the elementary and middle school level?

QUESTION 2: What are the reasons or factors that you chose to look beyond the public school system for educational opportunities for your child (or children)?

QUESTION 3: When you selected your son(s) or daughter(s) current school, what types of characteristics or specific criteria were you looking for in potential schools / educational programs that you considered?

QUESTION 4: What type of constraints or barriers, if any, did you encounter in identifying and enrolling your child (ren) in a school / educational program that met your criteria?

QUESTION 5: To what extent were you / are you willing to go to secure the type and quality of educational program that you desire for your child (ren) at the elementary through middle school level? (Example: Moved to another school district; sent my children to boarding school; sold one of my automobiles to cover costs, etc.)

QUESTION 6: Once you identified a particular school and enrolled your child (ren), what types of criteria do you consider when deciding whether or not to continue in the same school / educational program?
QUESTION 7: What high school options are you considering for your child (ren) that is now in grades K - 8?

QUESTION 8: Please identify other key individuals who were involved in identifying and choosing the school(s), which your child (ren) attends? Briefly describe the nature of this involvement.

In the following space, please list the name(s) of your child (ren), their grade level(s) and school(s), which they attended during the 2003-2004 school year.

Demographic Information:

Your Name:
Your Occupation:
Your Marital Status:

Educational Attainment:

☐ High School  ☐ Attended College  ☐ Associate Degree
☐ BA/BS.  ☐ Graduate / Professional School
☐ Technical / Vocational Program

What type of school(s) did you attend in grades Kindergarten through 8? (Check all that apply)

☐ Public School  ☐ Private School
☐ Church / Faith-Based School  ☐ Home School
CONGRATULATIONS!

You have now completed Session I. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences. Now, please don’t forget to SAVE your responses and return your completed questionnaire by Sunday, June 20, 2004 to:

barnes-wright.1@osu.edu

Also, please make a note to check your e-mail in approximately 5 to 7 days for Session II. Session II will consist of a list of statements that you will rate according to your level of agreement (e.g., Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). It should take you no longer than approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to e-mail me or call me at: (614) 818-0098.
IN THE MIDST OF YOUR BUSY DAY

Take time out for yourself. Relax and have a cup of tea. Then, once you have a spare moment, please remember to return your completed questionnaire. Again, thank you so much for agreeing to participate.

Lenora Barnes-Wright

Reminder postcard sent to panel participants who did not return the Session One instrument by the target date.
APPENDIX E

COLLECTIVE RESPONSES TO SESSION INSTRUMENT I
COLLECTIVE RESPONSES TO SESSION I INSTRUMENT

QUESTION 1: In your opinion, what do you believe are the primary purposes of education at the elementary and middle school level?

At the elementary and middle school level, it is important for my child to learn basic knowledge of core subjects e.g., reading, math, writing, science, proper grammar.

It is important for my child to learn appropriate social behaviors during K – 8.

At this level, it is important for school to prepare young students for life so that they will be able to achieve their dreams.

School at this level is to nurture and provide direction for future achievements.

My child’s education should prepare him/her for future education at the college/university level.

At this level I feel that the emphasis should be on reading.

My child’s education should prepare him/her for the world that exists beyond school.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should develop a solid foundation that prepares him/her for high school.

At the elementary and middle school level, it is important for my child to first be taught to love the Lord.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should expose my child to all areas of learning, e.g., math, science, reading, the arts, Bible, etc.

At the elementary and middle school level, it is important for my child to be taught values and beliefs of the SDA/Christian life and Biblical principles.

It is important for my child to be taught by teachers who share my values and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should prepare him/her for success to today’s world.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should prepare him/her for success in the world to come.
QUESTION 1 (continued):

My child’s K – 8th grade education should help him/her to achieve proficiency in the core academic subjects.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should establish and reinforce good study habits.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should prepare him/her for high school curriculum.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should provide an opportunity to learn and exercise social skills.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should to a foundation that will help him/her to continue learning through high school and college.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should primarily provide Christian education.

My child’s K – 8th grade education should primarily help him/her to develop into a mature well-rounded member of society.

Education at this level should challenge my child’s mind and expose him/her to new ideas.

Education at this level should teach fundamental concepts that will be needed in future learning.

Education at this level should introduce information to students in a manner which they can understand and learn.

Education at this level should provide the basic concepts and a foundation for success in high school and beyond.

Education at this level is primarily build fundamental skills for continued learning.

Education at this level should build fundamental skills in social functioning.

Education at this level should help my child learn to stand firm on their beliefs/principles.

Education at this level should provide the basic concepts and a foundation for success in high school and beyond.
QUESTION 1 (continued):

I believe teaching children general or basic knowledge is the purpose of elementary and middle school level education.

Education at the K-8th grade level should focus on teaching children basic knowledge.

Education at the elementary and middle school level should lay the foundation for all future educational pursuits.

Education at this level should be both age appropriate and geared to a child’s learning style (auditory, visual, etc.)

Education at this level should be hands-on, engaging and fun.

An ideal educational program will allow children to explore many different types of learning opportunities (foreign languages, music, the arts, community service / service-learning, leadership, etc.)

I look for an educational program that will help my child become a well-rounded individual who will be an asset to both God and society.

Education at the K-8th grade level should teach principles of learning that will help them to learn about the world around them.

Education at the K-8th level is to provide a continuous review of fundamental concepts learned and to continue to build up on these core lessons.

Education at this level should cultivate a desire for learning; meet the education needs of all students; maintain high expectations of all students; create a community that encompasses students, community and family; and, provide a nurturing environment for intellectual development that is safe, caring and positive.

QUESTION 2: What are the reasons or factors that you chose to look beyond the public school system for educational opportunities for your child (children)?

I want God to be a part of every phase of her education.

I want my child to be in a school where what s/he learns about God can be inclusive of our faith without introducing conflicting beliefs.

I looked for a school where my child would be comfortable.
QUESTION 2 (continued):

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because public schools don’t teach about God.

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because of the many non-Christian influences that exist in many public schools.

It is important for my child to go to school with children who share some of their struggles of living a Christian life so they will not feel alone in this.

I believe that attending a church/faith based school will help to strengthen my child’s Christian walk and faith in the Lord.

I believe that the atmosphere in the private schools is more conducive to learning than in public schools.

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because my child’s school does not tolerate behavior that goes against the Word of the Lord.

In my child’s school doing well is expected because doing their best glorifies God.

I feel more secure knowing that they are in a school with children and teachers who share many of the values that are taught in our home.

The education that exists in the private sector is superior to that that exists in the public sectors in Columbus and the surrounding areas.

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because I believe that there is more of an emphasis on learning in the non-public sector.

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because I believe that non-public schools have a safer environment.

I believe that the teachers in non-public schools are more qualified and experienced.

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because I want my child to have religion as part of his/her curriculum.

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because to minimize my child’s exposure to the negative aspect of non-Christian behavior and lifestyle.
QUESTION 2 (continued):

I chose to look beyond public schools to reduce my concerns about food being served to my child that differs with my dietary beliefs.

It is important for my child to go to a school that will train my child according to Biblical principles.

I chose not to enroll my child in public schools because I wanted him/her to be in an environment that supports my morals and value system.

I chose to place my child in his/her school because of the Christian environment, which incorporates God into the educational program.

I chose to look beyond public schools because I wanted a school where my child would be exposed to Christian beliefs.

I chose to look beyond public schools I wanted a more controlled environment for my child.

I chose to look beyond public schools because I wanted academic excellence for my child.

I chose to look beyond public schools I wanted a Christian environment.

I chose to look beyond public schools I wanted a school that would pay closer attention to my child’s needs.

I chose to look beyond public schools so that my child could receive one-on-one help.

I believe that non-public schools will help my child tap into his/her potential.

I chose to look beyond public schools because public schools cannot be Christ-centered.

I chose to look beyond public schools because I wanted a school that taught basic academic skills along with Christian principles.

I chose to look beyond public schools because I want my child to learn Christian principles at home and at school.

I chose to look beyond public schools I want my child to be in a school where Christian principles are actively enforced.
QUESTION 2 (continued):

I chose to look beyond public schools because I want my child to not feel out of place as a Christian.

I chose to look beyond public schools because a school where prayer and spiritual programs occur on a regular basis.

I chose to look beyond public schools because I want a school where the teachers are Christian.

I chose to look beyond public schools because I want a school where there are Christian teachers who genuinely care about my child.

I chose to look beyond public schools because I want a school where there are high standards and expectations for the students.

It is important to me that the school I choose for my child requires students to wear uniforms.

I chose to look beyond the public schools because God has been taken out of the public schools.

It is important that the influences my child experiences in the 8 – 10 hours way from me are similar to those that they receive at home morally and spiritually.

I know that in church school my children will receive a strong foundation for a successful life with God at the center.

Providing my child with Christian education is the most important factor in my choosing a school for him/her.

I want an educational environment that will nurture my child.

I want an educational environment where my child will be encouraged to succeed.

It is important that what my child learns at school is consistent with our spiritual life and beliefs at home.

I choose to look beyond the public schools in order to limit conflict with some of the holidays, festivities that are celebrated in the public school system.
QUESTION 3: When you selected your son(s) or daughter(s) current school, what types of characteristics or specific criteria were you looking for in potential schools / educational programs that you considered?

The public school system has not been able to meet my children’s spiritual needs. I am more interested in finding an educational system that meets and values their spiritual needs.

I chose an educational setting where my son/daughter could feel comfortable and free to learn at his/her pace without being condemned in any way for not being just like the other children.

I want a school where my son/daughter will love learning and have the mindset that the sky is the limit.

I looked for a school that would have male teachers on staff.

I wanted teachers who would teach my child how to be Christ-like in addition to academic learning.

I wanted a school that not only taught my child but, also, loved them.

I wanted a school that was concerned about the whole development of my child not just the academic side.

I wanted an environment that demonstrated love.

I looked for a school with proven academic success primarily in reading and math.

I looked for a school that was in close proximity to either my home or job.

Before choosing a school, I took a tour of the school and asked for reports about the school’s standings.

I looked for complaints against the school or teachers.

I checked out how discipline would be handled by teachers and staff.

It is important for me that the school has an “open door” policy for parents.

It is important that the school has an emphasis on learning.

It is important that the school provides a safe environment.
QUESTION 3 (continued):

It is important that the teachers are qualified and have experience in the classroom.

It is important that the school teaches values and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist faith.

It is important that the teachers are concerned about the success of my child’s education.

It is important to me that there were a considerable number of African American students.

I placed my child at his/her current school in order to support the new school my church opened.

It is important that my child receive a quality education that will allow him/her to be competitive with students from other quality schools.

It is important to me that my child would experience having an African American teacher to serve as a positive role model.

It is important that my child be in an educational environment that has strong traditions that build a sense of community.

It is important that my child is in an educational program that is college-preparatory.

I looked for a school that has a reputation for having a strong and consistent academic program.

It was important to me that my child attended a Christian school, not necessarily SDA.

I looked for a school that had a full music program, band, orchestra, strings, vocal, etc.

I looked for a school that was family oriented --a group of people who wanted the same things for my children as I did.

I looked for a school where it is apparent that the students are well disciplined.

I looked for a school with a diverse student population.
QUESTION 3 (continued):

Enrolling my children in an Adventist school is something I will do without a doubt.

I looked for a school that would include Bible study.

I specifically looked for the following criteria:

- Strong math and science program
- Bible memorization
- Field Trips
- Strong emphasis in writing
- Creative ways to present the curriculum
- Caring faculty
- Extracurricular activities – variety
- Community service opportunities
- Music and art
- Cooperation and team skills
- A school that emphasized and encouraged parental involvement
- Unlimited access to textbooks
- Manageable ratio of students to teacher
- A user friendly curriculum
- Environment that promotes love for Christ and others.

I looked for a school environment where my child would have freedom to worship and to talk about God freely.

I wanted a school where my child would have interaction with other children from God-fearing homes.

I wanted a school where there would be a good relationship between the school, parents and child.

I looked for a school that will meet their spiritual, physical and mental needs. Also, an educational environment that will prepare my children for service within the church, community and world, for the Lord.
QUESTION 4: What type of constraints or barriers, if any, did you encounter in identifying and enrolling your child(ren) in a school / educational program that met your criteria?

One barrier I encountered was uncertainty of teaching staff because of too many changes in staff.

I did not encounter any barriers or difficulties identifying or enrolling my child in his/her school.

The main barrier that I encountered while identifying a school/educational program was time.

I would say that money is a barrier; the best schools generally have high tuition costs.

The major difficulty I experienced had to do with money.

Lack of available supplemental educational equipment to assist my child was a barrier.

The high cost of tuition was a barrier for my family.

The distance we have to travel to and from school each day is a barrier.

I had difficulty identifying a school that had extra curricular activities including sports.

One barrier was that there was not enough organization.
The lack of a range of activities was a barrier for my family.

My experience has shown me that many Christian schools do not address the unique needs of children who are exceptional (gifted/talented, attention-deficit/hyperactive, dyslexic, hearing impaired, visually impaired, etc.)

Families who have students with exceptional learning needs (gifted/talented, attention-deficit/hyperactive, dyslexic, hearing impaired, visually impaired, etc.) are at a disadvantage in church / faith-based schools.

Educators who do not hold the same expectations that I hold, therefore, I reassess each year and make a determination on my children’s success that school year.
QUESTION 5: To what extent were you / are you willing to go to secure the type and quality of educational program that you desire for your child(ren) at the elementary through middle school level? (Example: Moved to another school district; sent my children to boarding school; sold one of my automobiles to cover costs, etc.)

I served on one of the various committees, boards, etc. as a demonstration of my commitment to Christian education.

If I could not find a faith-based school to meet the needs of my child, I would seek out a private school with no religious affiliation.

I believe strongly in Christian education to ensure that children remain in the church. I transferred my membership to another congregation for tuition assistance benefits. By doing this I received additional tuition assistance, but became alienated from the church (congregation) that I loved and missed the family bonding that comes with attending church as a family. I did this for 6 years.

Christian education is the best gift a parent could ever give his/her child(ren) regardless of the sacrifice.

I am willing to or did relocated to be closer to the school my child attends.

I am willing to take out loans in order to finance my child’s Christian education.

I am willing to take on a second job in order to finance my child’s Christian education.

I am willing to volunteer my services in order to help secure my child’s education.

I work at night in order to be available for my son/daughter and the school.

I have considered moving to another school district/location.

I have delayed relocation (closer to family, professional advancement, etc.) because I am so satisfied with the school my son/daughter attends.

Even with limited family income, it has been important that my child is receiving a Christian education.

Transporting my child to and from school each day without the school providing transportation.
QUESTION 5 (continued):

My family has delayed major purchases (home, new automobile, etc.) in order to secure Christian education.

I am willing to go to any length in order to have my children receive a SDA education.

I am willing to send my child to boarding school in order to secure the type of educational program that my family seeks.

QUESTION 6: Once you identified a particular school and enrolled your child (ren), what types of criteria do you consider when deciding whether or not to continue in the same school / educational program?

I would assess whether my child had encouraged and supported to perform at his/her best.

When determining to continue my child’s enrollment at his/her school, I look at the curriculum and accompanying teaching methods.

I would determine if the school/teacher had been able to meet the unique learning needs of my son/daughter.

When determining to continue my child’s enrollment at his/her school, I look to determine if the educational requirements and standards are established by the State of Ohio Board of Education.

When determining to continue my child’s enrollment at his/her school, I look at how aggressively the school is preparing the students to compete academically as they progress through the grade levels.

When determining to continue my child’s enrollment at his/her school, I look to see if the students in the school are meeting required testing requirements (proficiency, graduation, etc.).

When determining to continue my child’s enrollment at his/her school, I look to see if there has been academic growth.

When determining to continue my child’s enrollment at his/her school, I look to see if there has been spiritual growth in his/her social skills.
QUESTION 6 (continued):

When determining to continue my child’s enrollment at his/her school, I look to see if there has been growth.

I look to see if my child’s social needs are being met.

I determine if my child is learning at a pace that is good for him/her.

I determine if my child is being challenged and stimulated by the educational program.

I consider how often the staff is changing.

Parent/Teacher communication is an important consideration in determining if my child continues at his/her school.

I assess whether my child is being motivated to achieve educational excellence.

I assess if my child likes the school and enjoys being a student there.

I evaluate if the staff is instilling my son/daughter the values and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

I evaluate if the school is providing a Christian atmosphere in comparison with public schools.

I assess the overall quality of the educational program as my child has experienced it.

I evaluate the school’s tuition and fees.

I consider the diversity represented within the school.

I consider the teachers’ qualifications and teaching style.

I reassess our transportation needs as a family.

I consider if God is part of the daily educational program.

I consider if my child has been able to participate in special events/programs/opportunities.

I consider what extra-curricular activities are available, e.g., sports, music lessons.
QUESTION 6 (continued):

I assess my child’s exposure to computer technology as part of his/her education.
I evaluate what types of habits and behaviors my child gets from his peers at school.

I assess whether there is good rapport between teachers and students.

I evaluate how much time the teacher is taking with my child.

I assess if the school seems to remain dedicated to its mission.

I evaluate how the school has managed student behavior and discipline.

I look to see if the school has maintained the standards and criteria for which I initially chose to enroll my son/daughter.

I consider how well my children are learning (Grades, test scores, etc.).

I consider information other parents share with me.

I consider how well my child has adjusted.

Communication between home and school is an important consideration in determining if my child continues at his/her school.

A willingness on the part of staff to work with parents and children to achieve success is an important consideration in determining if my child continues at his/her school.

I consider if my child has a growing love for the gospel and is preparing for Jesus return.

Teacher to student ratio, curriculum, costs, transportation, physical plant appearance & upkeep, safety, all support staff who are a representation of the school.

QUESTION 7: What high school options are you considering for your child that is now in grades K-8?

I expect to send my child to a Christian high school.

I am considering sending my son/daughter to a Christian Boarding School for high school.
QUESTION 7 (continued):

I am considering sending my son/daughter to a Christian / Faith-Based Academy for high school.

I am considering sending my son/daughter to a private (non-faith based) school for high school.

I want to send my son/daughter to a high school that promotes Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and values.

I want to send my son/daughter to a high school that is strong in science and technology.

I want to send my son/daughter to a high school that is accepting and treats African-American students fairly.

I want to send my son/daughter to a high school where my son/daughter’s will maintain his/her racial identity.

I will send my child to a public high school.

A public high school experience will prepare my child for adult life in which they can interact with both Christians and non-Christians.

If I cannot send my son/daughter to a Seventh-day Adventist high school then I will choose another Christian high school.

I will send my son/daughter to Mt. Vernon Academy.

I will send my son/daughter to Mt. Vernon Academy if daily transportation is provided.

I will send my son/daughter to Liberty Christian School.

I will send my son/daughter to Greater Columbus Christian School if it extends to Grade 12.

I will send my son/daughter to Worthington Christian School.

My child does not want to attend public high school.

I am praying my child’s current school will have added on a high school by the time s/he reaches high school.

I am considering moving to a location that has a high school of our faith.

I plan to enroll my son/daughter in Learning Unlimited Village Academy.

I want to continue my son/daughter’s education in a Seventh-day Adventist high school if financial assistance is available.
QUESTION 7 (continued):
I am uncertain what high school option I will choose for my son/daughter

Since I believe strongly in the importance of parental influence my children will remain at home through high school. I will look for a Christian high school that is local but unfortunately does not represent all of my beliefs.

QUESTION 8: Please identify other key individuals who were involved in identifying and choosing the school(s), which your child (ren) attends? Briefly describe the nature of this involvement.

My child was actively involved in helping to choose the church/faith-based school he/she attends.

My husband, we are both educators who have also been administrators so are able to use our past experience as guidance.

My husband was involved in the process of choosing the church school our son/daughter attends.

My husband’s mother has always talked about the importance of Christian education (not necessarily Adventist, but Christian. I believe it is important for schools to reinforce what is taught at home –but the foundation needs to come from the home.

My husband and I together identified and chose the church school where our child attends.

I made the decision to enroll my son/daughter in a church school without input from anyone else.

My sister helped me to identify and choose the church school my son/daughter attends.

Friends helped me to identify and choose the church / faith-based school my child attends.

My husband /child’s father and together identified and chose the church school where our child attends.

Members of my church family were involved in my decision to enroll my son/daughter in a church/faith-based school.

A member of the School Board where my child attends was very helpful and encouraging when I wanted to send my children to their school but was concerned about the costs.
QUESTION 8 (continued):
My husband made the final decision where my child would be enrolled in school.

Friends helped me to identify and choose the church school my child attends.

A colleague/friend who teaches in a Christian school encouraged me to send my child to Christian schools.

One of the teachers where my child attends school was instrumental in my decision to enroll my child in a church/faith-based school.
APPENDIX F

SESSION TWO INSTRUMENT
Hello, I hope your summer has been wonderful and you've been able to take advantage of some of these absolutely perfect days over the past month. I am writing to thank you again for the thought and insight that you shared in your responses to my earlier questionnaire.

I am writing to alert you that I am sending out the next instrument within 24 hours. I apologize for the longer time period than I had anticipated. It took somewhat longer to obtain a number of the initial responses because a number of folks were out of town, swamped at work, etc. But, I allowed the extra time because the basis of my research is that you, the parents who have already made the decision to enroll your sons and daughters in church-school, are the true experts; it will be your collective beliefs and values that inform the results.

The format of the next instrument will be simple and straightforward; there will be a list of statements and you will simply check the box that indicates your level of agreement with the statement.

Once again, I thank you so much for your willingness to assist me with my dissertation research. Your participation will help to better inform churches and other faith-based organizations across denominations as they seek to provide quality Christian education for the families they serve.

Sincerely,

Lenora Barnes-Wright

Lenora Barnes-Wright
Ph.D. Candidate,
School of Educational Policy and Leadership
The Ohio State University
**SECTION A: The Purposes of Kindergarten – 8th Grade Education**

1. **At the elementary and middle school level, an ideal educational program should . . .**

   Cultivate a desire for learning.
   - [ ] Definitely true
   - [ ] True for the most part
   - [ ] I’m undecided
   - [ ] Not true, for the most part
   - [ ] Not True
   - [ ] This is not important to me

   Meet the needs of all students.
   - [ ] Definitely true
   - [ ] True for the most part
   - [ ] I’m undecided
   - [ ] Not true, for the most part
   - [ ] Not True
   - [ ] This is not important to me

   Establish and maintain high expectations for all students.
   - [ ] Definitely true
   - [ ] True for the most part
   - [ ] I’m undecided
   - [ ] Not true, for the most part
   - [ ] Not True
   - [ ] This is not important to me

   Create a sense of connectedness that includes students, teachers & staff, parents, church and community.
   - [ ] Definitely true
   - [ ] True for the most part
   - [ ] I’m undecided
   - [ ] Not true, for the most part
   - [ ] Not True
   - [ ] This is not important to me
Lay the foundation for all future educational pursuits.

- Definitely true
- True for the most part
- I’m undecided
- Not true, for the most part
- Not True
- This is not important to me

Teach principles of learning that will help the students to learn about the world around them.

- Definitely true
- True for the most part
- I’m undecided
- Not true, for the most part
- Not True
- This is not important to me

Provide continuous review of fundamental concepts that have been taught and continue to build upon these core lessons as students progress from one grade to the next.

- Definitely true
- True for the most part
- I’m undecided
- Not true, for the most part
- Not True
- This is not important to me

Be hands-on, engaging and fun.

- Definitely true
- True for the most part
- I’m undecided
- Not true, for the most part
- Not True
- This is not important to me

Prepare its students to be well-rounded individuals who will be an asset to both God and society.

- Definitely true
- True for the most part
- I’m undecided
- Not true, for the most part
- Not True
- This is not important to me

2. At the elementary and middle school where my child is enrolled, it is important to me that my child . . .

Is learning basic knowledge about core subjects e.g., reading, writing, math, science, social studies and language arts.

- Definitely true
- True for the most part
- I’m undecided
- Not true, for the most part
- Not True
- This is not important to me
| **Have regular opportunities to learn and exercise his/her social skills.** |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Definitely true | True for the most part | I’m undecided | Not true, for the most part | Not True | This is not important to me |

| **Is learning to develop good study habits.** |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Definitely true | True for the most part | I’m undecided | Not true, for the most part | Not True | This is not important to me |

| **Above all be taught to love the Lord.** |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Definitely true | True for the most part | I’m undecided | Not true, for the most part | Not True | This is not important to me |

| **Is being receiving an education that is Biblically- based and promotes Christian values and beliefs.** |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Definitely true | True for the most part | I’m undecided | Not true, for the most part | Not True | This is not important to me |

| **Is taught Seventh-day Adventist values and beliefs.** |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Definitely true | True for the most part | I’m undecided | Not true, for the most part | Not True | This is not important to me |

| **Is challenged academically and exposed to new ideas and concepts.** |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Definitely true | True for the most part | I’m undecided | Not true, for the most part | Not True | This is not important to me |

| **Is learning how to stand firm on his/her beliefs and principles.** |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Definitely true | True for the most part | I’m undecided | Not true, for the most part | Not True | This is not important to me |

| **Experiences various types of learning opportunities beyond the basic or core subject areas (foreign languages, computer technology, music, the arts, community service / service-learning, leadership, etc.)** |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Definitely true | True for the most part | I’m undecided | Not true, for the most part | Not True | This is not important to me |
3. I chose to look beyond the public school system for my child’s education because . . .

I looked for a school where my child would be comfortable and not feel out of place as a Christian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I wanted to limit the non-Christian influences that exist in many public schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I believe that non-public schools will help my child tap into his/her potential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because I believe that there is more of an emphasis on learning in the non-public sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I chose to look beyond public schools for my child because I believe that non-public schools have a safer environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I believe that the teachers in non-public schools are better qualified and experienced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
I chose to look beyond public schools I wanted a more controlled environment for my child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. I chose to enroll my child in a church /faith-based school because . . .

I wanted a school that would pay closer attention to my child’s needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I wanted a school where my child would receive one-on-one help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I know that in church school my children will receive a strong foundation for a successful life with God at the center.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I feel more secure knowing that they are in a school with children who share many of the values that are taught in our home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I believe that attending a church/faith based school will help to strengthen my child’s Christian walk and faith in the Lord.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I want a school where high standards and academic excellence are expected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Was of No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
It is important for my child to be taught by teachers who are Christians.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral/Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    Was of No Concern

It is important that what my child learns at school is consistent with our spiritual life and beliefs at home.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral/Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    Was of No Concern

I chose to place my child in his/her school because of the Christian environment, which incorporates God into the educational program.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral/Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    Was of No Concern

I want my child to be in a school where Christian principles are actively enforced.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral/Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    Was of No Concern

I want a school where there are teachers who will nurture and genuinely care about my child.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral/Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    Was of No Concern

I want a school that requires students to wear uniforms.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral/Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    Was of No Concern
SECTION C: Components of an Ideal Educational Program

5. When looking to choose a school for my child . . .

- I look for a Christian school (not particular denomination).
  - Definitely [ ]
  - Most Likely Yes [ ]
  - Probably Yes [ ]
  - Probably Not [ ]
  - Most Likely No [ ]
  - Definitely No [ ]

- I look for a Seventh-day Adventist school regardless of other available options.
  - Definitely [ ]
  - Most Likely Yes [ ]
  - Probably Yes [ ]
  - Probably Not [ ]
  - Most Likely No [ ]
  - Definitely No [ ]

- It was important to enroll my child in the school that is connected to the congregation where I worship.
  - Definitely [ ]
  - Most Likely Yes [ ]
  - Probably Yes [ ]
  - Probably Not [ ]
  - Most Likely No [ ]
  - Definitely No [ ]

6. When looking for the ideal school for my child, I specifically looked for . . .

- An educational setting where my son/daughter could feel comfortable and free to learn at his/her pace
  - Did Not Consider [ ]
  - No Importance [ ]
  - Minimal Importance [ ]
  - Somewhat Important [ ]
  - Very Important [ ]
  - Critical Factor [ ]

- A school where my son/daughter will learn to love learning and the mindset will be that the sky is the limit.
  - Did Not Consider [ ]
  - No Importance [ ]
  - Minimal Importance [ ]
  - Somewhat Important [ ]
  - Very Important [ ]
  - Critical Factor [ ]
A school that promotes love for Christ and others, in addition to academic learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A school that not only taught my child but, also, demonstrates love for them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A school that was concerned about the whole development of my child, not just the academic side.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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</table>

An educational program, which would be geared to a child’s learning style (auditory, visual, etc.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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</table>

A school where it is apparent that the students are well disciplined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
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</table>

A school environment where my child would have freedom to worship and to talk about God freely.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A school where the teachers are concerned about the success of my child.

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<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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</thead>
</table>
A school where my child would have interaction with children from other God-fearing homes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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</table>

7. When selecting a school for my child, it was important for me that...

The school has an “open door” policy for parents. Stresses and encourages parental involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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The school is family-oriented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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The school provides a safe environment.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The teachers are qualified and have experience in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The school teaches the values and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist faith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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</thead>
</table>

There are a number of Black/African-American students enrolled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
My child would experience having an African American teacher to serve as a positive role model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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</table>

My child would experience having a male teacher.

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<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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</table>

Good relationships are established between the school, parents and child.

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<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
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</table>

The school has a reputation for having a strong and consistent academic program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. I specifically evaluated the following criteria for each school I considered:

- **Strong math and science program**
  
  | Did Not Consider | No Importance | Little Importance | Somewhat Important | Very Important | Critical Factor |
  
- **Opportunities for beyond the classroom**
  
  | Did Not Consider | No Importance | Little Importance | Somewhat Important | Very Important | Critical Factor |
  
- **Strong emphasis on reading and writing**
  
  | Did Not Consider | No Importance | Little Importance | Somewhat Important | Very Important | Critical Factor |
  
- **Extracurricular activities – variety**
  
<p>| Did Not Consider | No Importance | Little Importance | Somewhat Important | Very Important | Critical Factor |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Did Not Consider</th>
<th>Not Importance</th>
<th>Little Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community service opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditions that build community</td>
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<tr>
<td>A diverse student population</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Music and arts program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manageable ratio of students to teacher</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close proximity to either my home or job</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints against the school or teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discipline practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to educational resources, e.g., textbooks, computers, Internet, lab equipment, reference materials, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SECTION D: Challenges in Finding the Ideal School

9. During the process of finding a school and subsequently enrolling my child, the barrier or difficulties I experienced were related to . . .

- Finding teachers that hold the same high expectations for my child that I do.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral/Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Was of No Concern

- A degree of uncertainty because of the many changes in the teaching staff.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral/Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Was of No Concern

- The time it took to visit and check out the different schools.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral/Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Was of No Concern

- The high cost of tuition.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral/Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Was of No Concern

- The lack of available supplemental educational resources available to assist my child.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral/Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Was of No Concern

- The distance we have to travel to and from school each day.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral/Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Was of No Concern
Finding a school that would have a range of extra curricular activities including sports.

- [ ] Strongly Agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Neutral/Undecided
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Was of No Concern

The lack of organization on the part of the school.

- [ ] Strongly Agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Neutral/Undecided
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Was of No Concern

Finding a Christian school that addresses the specific learning needs of my child. (e.g., gifted / talented, dyslexia, performing at a much higher grade level, reading difficulties, attention-deficit disorder, hyperactivity, behavioral problems, hearing or visual impairments, etc.)

- [ ] Strongly Agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Neutral/Undecided
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Was of No Concern

I did not encounter any barriers or difficulties when identifying or enrolling my child in his/her school.

- [ ] Strongly Agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Neutral/Undecided
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Was of No Concern

---

SECTION E: Securing Christian Education

10. In order to secure the type of education I want for my child, . . .

I serve on one of the various committees, boards, etc. as a demonstration of my commitment to Christian education.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

I am willing to (or did) relocate to be closer to the school my child attends.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know
I am willing to take out loans in order to finance my child’s Christian education.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

I am willing to take on a second job in order to finance my child’s Christian education.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

I am willing to perform services for the school in order to help offset my child’s tuition costs.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

I work at night in order to be available for my son/daughter and their school during the daytime.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

I have considered moving to another school district/location within Columbus.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

I have delayed relocation (closer to family, professional advancement, etc.) because I am so satisfied with the school my son/daughter attends.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

Even with limited income, my family has committed to make Christian education a priority.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know
I have been willing to take my child to school (or arrange for transportation) because no transportation is provided.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

My family has delayed major purchases (home, new automobile, etc.) in order to finance Christian education.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

I am willing to send my child to boarding school in order to secure the type of educational program that my family seeks.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

I transferred my membership to another congregation in order to be eligible for tuition benefits for my child.

- [ ] Definitely Yes
- [ ] Probably Yes
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Probably Not
- [ ] Absolutely Not
- [ ] I Don’t Know

SECTION F: Choosing Re-Enrollment

11. When determining whether to continue my child’s enrollment at his/her school, the following considerations regarding my child’s experience with the school are important for my family:

Has by child been encouraged and supported to perform at his/her best?

- [ ] Did Not Even Consider
- [ ] No Importance
- [ ] Minimal Importance
- [ ] Somewhat Important
- [ ] Very Important
- [ ] Critical Factor
Have the unique learning needs of my son/daughter been met?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Does my child demonstrate academic growth?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Do I see spiritual growth in my child?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Has there been growth in my child’s social skills?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Is my child learning at a pace that is good for him/her?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Is my child being challenged and stimulated by the educational program?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Does my child like the school and enjoy being a student there?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor
Has my child has been able to participate in special events/programs/opportunities?

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

What extra-curricular activities are available, e.g., sports, music lessons?

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

Has my child been exposed to computer technology as part of his/her education?

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

What sorts of habits and behaviors has my child picked up from his peers at school?

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

How well my child is performing academically (grades, test scores, etc.)?

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

How much time the teacher has taken with my child?

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

Has God been a part of the daily educational program?

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor
12. When determining whether continuing my child’s enrollment at his/her school, the following considerations regarding my experience with the school are important for my family:

The overall quality of the educational program as my child has experienced it.

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

My child’s teachers’ qualifications and teaching style.

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

How effective communication has been with my child’s teacher.

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

My interaction with staff school-wide.

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

Communication between the school and parents (beyond the classroom).

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor

Whether there is good rapport between teachers and students.

Did Not Even Consider  No Importance  Minimal Importance  Somewhat Important  Very Important  Critical Factor
Whether the school is providing a Christian atmosphere in comparison with public schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did Not Even Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Information other parents share about their experiences with the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did Not Even Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. When determining whether continuing my child’s enrollment at his/her school, the following institutional measures of the school are important considerations for my family:

Has the school remained dedicated to its stated mission and standards?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did Not Even Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How has the school managed student behavior and discipline?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did Not Even Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What degree of diversity is represented within the school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did Not Even Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How often does the staff change?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did Not Even Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Are the school’s educational requirements /standards are in line with the State of Ohio?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did Not Even Consider</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Minimal Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Critical Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Is the school preparing students to be academically competitive?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

How well is the student body performing on various assessment measures (standardized tests, report cards, etc.)?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

What is the teacher to student ratio?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Is the physical plant maintained well?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

What safety measures are regularly taken and enforced by the school?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Has there been any change in our ability as a family to meet the costs of tuition and related fees?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor

Has there been any change in our transportation needs as a family?

- Did Not Even Consider
- No Importance
- Minimal Importance
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important
- Critical Factor
## SECTION G: High School Options

14. At the point my son/daughter reaches 9th grade, the high school option(s) I will most likely consider will be . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Definitely Yes</th>
<th>Probably Yes</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>Probably Not</th>
<th>Absolutely Not</th>
<th>I Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A traditional public high school</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A charter high school</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A SDA high school</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Christian academy</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>A SDA boarding academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>A private high school</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home School</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. In choosing the high school which my son/daughter attends, I will also consider...

- How strong the curriculum is in science and technology.
  - Not Important
  - Minimal Importance
  - Somewhat Important
  - Important
  - Very Important
  - Critical Factor

- Whether or not African-American students are treated fairly.
  - Not Important
  - Minimal Importance
  - Somewhat Important
  - Important
  - Very Important
  - Critical Factor

- If African-American students who attended in the past years have maintained their racial identity
  - Not Important
  - Minimal Importance
  - Somewhat Important
  - Important
  - Very Important
  - Critical Factor

16. Key Individuals Who Assisted In The Selection of My Child’s School...

- I made the decision to enroll my son/daughter in his/her school without input from anyone else. Yes ☐ No ☐

- My child was actively involved in the selection of his/her school. Yes ☐ No ☐

- My husband /child’s father and I selected my child’s school. Yes ☐ No ☐

- My husband made the final decision where my son/daughter would be enrolled in school. Yes ☐ No ☐
Extended family member(s) helped me to choose the school that my son/daughter attends. Yes ☐ No ☐

Friends helped me to identify and choose the school my child attends. Yes ☐ No ☐

Members of my church family helped in the decision to enroll my son/daughter in a church/faith-based school. Yes ☐ No ☐

A School Board member of my child’s school was instrumental in my decision to enroll my son/daughter. Yes ☐ No ☐

One of the teachers where my child attends was instrumental in my decision to enroll my son/daughter. Yes ☐ No ☐

CONGRATULATIONS!

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