Independently-Managed Education: Creating a Robust Education Market by Understanding School Choice Families

by
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B.B.A (with Distinction), Kwantlen Polytechnic University, 2016

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Public Policy in the School of Public Policy Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Approval

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              Creating a Robust Education Market by
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Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

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or

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or has conducted the research

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Abstract

BC independent school enrolment has steadily increased over four decades. This study is the first in a generation to survey parents to understand why this is, who chooses independent schools, and evaluate what to do about it. The overwhelming majority of independent school parents are very satisfied with their independent school. Of the many reasons given, nearly all parents agree their independent school offers a supportive and nurturing environment that is motivating for and instills confidence in students, thanks to outstanding teachers and excellent administration. BC’s independent schools serve diverse families and communities, and meet demand for pedagogical variations and emphases unmet by public schools. This paper presents evidence and policy options for expanding educational choice in BC through Scholarship Tax Credits (STCs), Autonomous Public Schools (APS), and recommends a voucher-like Education Savings Account (ESA) that reroutes education funds to parents (for students), allowing for a fully tailored education experience.

Keywords: School Choice; Characteristics of Independent School Families; Reasons for Choosing Independent School; BC School Enrolment Trends; Education Marketplace; BC Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)
Acknowledgements

I want to sincerely thank Dr. Deani Van Pelt for her constant encouragement over the past two years and for being a tireless pioneer in this field. I also want to thank Dr. Derek Allison for reviewing an earlier draft, Sazid Hasan at the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training for his advice and assistance in interpreting government data, and my supervisor, Dr. Dominique Gross, for her great patience and guidance. To my children, Arbutus and Berend: Thank you for all the late-night encouragement, and may anything I accomplish be a stepping stone for you. And, most of all, to my beloved wife, Krista: Your love and sacrifice mean more than you know. This project would not have happened without all of you.
To Richard Allan Hunt

(December 3, 1947 – February 13, 2019)
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## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACSIBC</td>
<td>Association of Christian Schools International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMG</td>
<td>Associate Member Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS</td>
<td>Autonomous Public School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCSP</td>
<td>British Columbia Performance Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCTF</td>
<td>British Columbia Teachers’ Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAIS</td>
<td>Canadian Accredited Independent Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CISBC</td>
<td>Catholic Independent Schools of British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSI</td>
<td>Christian Schools International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL</td>
<td>Distributed Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Education Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Education Savings Account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FISA</td>
<td>Federation of Independent School Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>First Nation(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>International Baccalaureate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISABC</td>
<td>Independent Schools Association of British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAIS</td>
<td>National Association of Independent Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCGS</td>
<td>National Coalition of Girls Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCSBC</td>
<td>Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDABC</td>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGO</td>
<td>Scholarship Granting Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STC</td>
<td>Scholarship Tax Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABS</td>
<td>The Association of Boarding Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

“Who chooses independent schools and why?” A number of studies have explored this research question, but few have followed up with the question: “And what to do about it?” This study is the first in over a decade in Canada – and the first in four decades in British Columbia (BC) – to survey parents to understand school choice. But unlike previous studies, this paper moves beyond the “who” and “why” to analyze policy options for independently-managed education.

Divergent Enrolment Trends

BC independent school enrolment has increased annually for over 40 consecutive years, tripling in volume from 23,691 in 1977/78 to 85,696 in 2018/19. At 13% of the province’s total K-12 student population, BC has the highest share of independent school enrolment in Canada, nearly double the national average. However, given lengthy waitlists at most BC independent schools, enrolment could be higher.

Defining the Independent School Landscape

BC’s independent schools are highly heterogenous, and serve many unmet needs in the K-12 system. This may be why independent school demand has and continues to outpace supply. Broadly, they fit into three school types that are themselves highly diverse: elite, specialty, and religious. For funding purposes, schools are officially classified into one of four numbered groups, receiving up to 50% government funding for operating expenses. Although the current funding model annually saves taxpayers at least $6,606 per student, it fails to target low-income families.

Public School Challenges

BC public schools face considerable challenges, ranging from school closures to limited resources in overcrowded districts to unmanageable classrooms to minimal satisfaction levels to safety risks. Although some districts are underfunded, inflation-adjusted per-student public school spending has increased 11.3% over the past decade, despite a 7.2% decline in public school enrolment. Money is not the issue, as “spending more money within an institutional system that sets poor incentives will not improve student performance” (Woessmann, 2001). It is time to improve the institutional environment in which schools function, and to discover and understand BC independent school parents and the determinants of school choice in the province.
Policy Problem and Stakeholders

Too few alternatives exist to meet the diverse needs, values, and preferences of students and parents unmet by public schools. In addition to parents and students, teachers and taxpayers are also key stakeholders for consideration in policy formation.

Methodologies

My primary methodology is a parent survey that replicates Van Pelt et al. (2007), while being heavily informed by the most recent literature. With 608 parents from 19 representative independent schools, using an online questionnaire, I test whether Van Pelt’s Ontario findings hold true in BC twelve years later. This leads to the secondary methodology: a literature review of similar research, to confirm the survey’s reliability.

Survey Results: Who Chooses Independent School and Why

My research findings indicate that independent school students’ needs and parents’ preferences are better met at independent schools than public schools. BC’s independent schools serve diverse religious, cultural, and regional communities, as well as meet demand for pedagogical variations and emphases unmet by public schools. Consequently, independent schools meet more than just students’ educational needs. More than public schools, independent schools better emulate the Canadian mosaic of belonging, tolerance, and diversity. Nearly half of independent school parents were born outside Canada; yet, the Canadian-born are nearly three times more likely than other British Columbians to describe their ethnicity as “Canadian”. Fully 92% of respondents are active in their community, in an average two groups, associations, or organizations. They are 1.7 times more likely to vote but are neither more nor less likely to be political activists or members of a political party. If “diversity is our strength,” independent schools are an integral element of the Canadian social fabric.

BC independent schools are not bastions of privileged posterity. Over 50% of independent school parents have made major financial and life changes to afford the cost of school, even though tuition for about one-third of families is approximately the same cost as the average out-of-school kids ice-hockey program. The overwhelming majority of independent school parents attended public school, so their children are “first generation” independent schoolers. Of families currently enrolled in independent school, for every one that switched from another independent school, three came from public school.
Parents choose independent schools for a multitude of diverse reasons, but virtually all independent school parents have the following in common: Their independent school offers a supportive and nurturing environment that is motivating for and instills confidence in students, thanks to outstanding teachers and excellent administration. This is especially true of non-religious independent school families. Those who choose religious schools would agree, but they also emphasize the importance of faith, school safety, character development, trustworthy curriculum, morals, and values. However, both expressed considerable dissatisfaction with public schools. Conversely, 91% of independent school parents are so satisfied with their independent school they are strongly likely to recommend it.

Policy Objectives, Criteria, and Options

Three public policy options will meet the one-year objective of increasing educational choice in the short-run and the long-run objective of expanding the number of and enrolment in independently-managed education:

1. Scholarship Tax Credits (STCs) will give low-income household students equal opportunity to access BC’s independent schools, without costing taxpayers anything extra, as all the funds will come from dollar-for-dollar tax-deductible donations from individuals, couples, and businesses.

2. Autonomous Public Schools (APS) will bring the strength, opportunity, and benefit of independent schools to the public system. Free tuition, lottery enrolment, and high accountability standards will help ensure the best quality of taxpayer-funded, independently-managed schooling is made available to BC public school students.

3. Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) will make pre-existing public K-12 education funds available directly to all school-age British Columbians. ESAs will provide the demand necessary to sustain a seemingly endless variety of customizable and personalized à la carte educational products and services in a robust education marketplace that meets students’ individualized needs, without burdening taxpayers with any additional costs. Moreover, ESA deposits can be rolled over to save for postsecondary, while incentivizing efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and quality control.

Evaluated based on six relevant criteria – equity, efficiency, effectiveness, safety, stakeholder acceptance, and cost – ESAs have the greatest advantages and least disadvantages, and are therefore recommended.
Chapter 1.

Introduction

“Who chooses independent schools and why?” A number of studies have explored this research question (Erickson, 2017), but few have followed up with the question: “And what to do about it?” This study is the first in over a decade in Canada – and the first in four decades in British Columbia (BC) – to survey parents to understand school choice. But unlike previous studies, this paper moves beyond the “who” and “why” to analyze policy options for independently-managed education.

Although this paper is the first of its kind, it brings together the work of other scholars. The background research builds on the work of Allison et al. (2016). The primary methodology replicates Van Pelt et al.’s (2007) survey of independent school parents in Ontario. And the policy options borrow generously from the most recent school choice literature. Taken together, this paper presents the case for creating a robust education market in BC, to solve the public policy problem of too few public school alternatives to meet the diverse needs, values, and preferences of Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) students and parents in BC.

Chapters two through four set the stage for the policy problem, by exploring divergent enrolment trends, defining the independent landscape and regulatory environment, and identifying challenges within public schools. Based on this, Chapter 5 identifies the policy problem with its key stakeholders. In chapters six and seven, the primary analytical methodology is presented and the problem is analyzed, respectively, using a parent survey of BC independent school students. The survey looks at both the characteristics of independent school families and the reasons parents choose independent schools. In Chapter 8, a literature review compares the survey results to similar studies. Based on the primary and secondary analyses of the problem, chapters nine through eleven present three policy options, six criteria for their evaluation, an analysis of the options, and recommendations.
Chapter 2.

Divergent Enrolment Trends

This chapter sets the groundwork for the paper by presenting divergent trends in Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) student enrolment in public and independent schools. Beginning with a Canada-wide provincial comparison, it narrows to the province of BC, which is the focus for this paper.

Table 1 presents the volume and proportion of students across Canada by education type, for the most recent year national data is available. The vast majority are in public schools, followed by independent schools. At 13%, BC has the highest share of independent school enrolment in Canada, which is almost double the average in Canada, at more than double that of the largest jurisdiction, Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2018a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Type</th>
<th>Public Schools</th>
<th>Independent Schools</th>
<th>Homeschool</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>5,117,328</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>401,784</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>557,625</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>83,469</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>652,272</td>
<td>94.2</td>
<td>27,534</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>180,696</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>4,575</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>183,015</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>13,815</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>2,006,703</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>138,324</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>1,210,698</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>128,043</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>97,842</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>1,134</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>118,566</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>3,603</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>20,007</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nfld. and Labrador</td>
<td>66,183</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>5,343</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>8,337</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>10,041</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada (2018a)

In BC, independent school enrolment has grown every year since 1977, when access to partial government funding for qualifying independent schools began (MoE,
From 1977/78 to 2018/19, enrolment more than tripled from 23,691 to 85,696. Concurrently, the number of BC public school students has remained relatively unchanged across this period, with a decline in the past two decades, as shown in Figure 1. As a share of total enrolment, public school enrolment has declined nine percentage points, from 95.7% in 1977/78 to 86.7% in 2018/19, as presented in Figure 2 (MoE, 2019a; FISA-BC, 2018a).

Independent school enrolment would be even larger if lower-income families had better access. Parents value the opportunity and autonomy to select a school that they believe is the right fit for their child(ren). This is especially important for lower-income households (Catt & Rhinesmith, 2017). For example, the Children First School Trust Fund in Ontario, received 34,000 applications to place 1,494 children from lower-income

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1 Before 1977, independent schools were unfunded and unregulated, although in existence since 1858 (MoE, 2011).

2 Sources: 1977/78 to 2016/17 data is compiled, with sources and notes, by FISA-BC (2018a; 2018b). Following their approach, 2017/18 to 2018/19 data is the enrolment head-count, not FTE, for all facility type and all grades for school-age students (not adults) from the MoE (2019a).
households in the independent school of their choice (Hepburn, 2008). Amongst rich and poor families, demand for independent schooling greatly exceeds supply.

![Enrolment 1977/78 and 2018/19](image)

**Figure 2: Share of total BC school enrolment, 1977/78 and 2018/19**

Sources: FISA-BC (2018a, 2018b), MoE (2019a)

In addition, this increase in independent school enrolment could be even greater, as the majority of BC independent schools are over-capacity. On average, the “normal” waitlist – particularly in the Lower Mainland – is equivalent to 14% of a school's total student population (Clemens, 2012), even though the number and size of independent schools have considerably increased over the last four decades (FISA-BC, 2018b; FISA-BC, 2018c).

In summary, BC independent school enrolment growth has increased uninterrupted for over 40 consecutive years, tripling in volume across that period. At 13% of the province’s total K-12 student population, BC has the highest share of independent school enrolment in Canada, nearly double the national average. However, given lengthy waitlists at most BC independent schools, enrolment could be higher.
Chapter 3.

Defining BC Independent Schools

BC independent schools are growing – both in absolute numbers and relative to public schools – but what exactly are independent schools? This chapter defines them, including different types of funding and regulation, by navigating BC’s complex independent school landscape.

3.1. Types of independent schools

BC independent schools are highly heterogenous, broadly fitting into three school types: elite, specialty, and religious (Allison et al., 2016). However, these three categories are themselves highly diverse. Each individual school’s emphasis, location (e.g. urban or rural), grade years offered (e.g. elementary or secondary), funding, and school size vary considerably.³

Elite schools – defined as university preparatory schools with membership in at least one of the following associations: the Independent Schools Association of British Columbia (ISABC), Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS), The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS), National Coalition of Girls Schools (NCGS), or National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) – account for 29 of BC’s 367 independent schools, or 7.9%. Eight of these are boarding schools. Even though elite schools resemble the prevailing “private school” stereotype, they make up just 16% of BC’s total independent school student population, as shown in Table 2.

Specialty schools are more complex. Allison et al. (2016) define specialty schools as having either a special curriculum emphasis (e.g. athletics, music, technology, etc.), distinct pedagogical approach (e.g. Montessori, Waldorf, etc.), or specific student population (e.g. special needs, gifted, etc.). When including First Nation (FN) independent schools, BC has 143 schools (38.9%) that meet this definition and they enrol 15,285 students (17.5%). This count falls to 72 specialty schools (19.6%) enrolling 5,607 students (6.4%) when excluding for-profit, international student oriented, special education, etc.

³ Median BC independent school enrolment is 151 students.
Distributed Learning (DL) (e.g. online schools, home-based education that is connected and accountable to a school), and FN schools.

Religious schools are the largest independent school type, as they typically attract families from both inside and outside their faith. There are 186 religious schools and 10 DL religious schools in BC, comprising 53.3% of independent schools and 66.5% of BC’s independent school student population (58,266 of 87,583). Enrolment is driven by both a desire to preserve a religious identity and to reap the secular benefits of a religiously-oriented education, and thus, even in jurisdictions outside BC where overall independent school enrolment is falling, there is strong demand for religious schooling (Pelz & den Dulk, 2018). In terms of socioeconomic status, the after-tax household income of religious school families is comparable to the average public school family (Clemens et al., 2017; MacLeod et al., 2017; Van Pelt et al., 2007). This is typical of religious schools across North America (Bulman, 2015, p. 108). For a description of the various school associations, see Appendix A.

Table 2: Number of BC independent schools and students, by stratum, 2018/19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-boarding</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>15,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinct emphasis or curriculum</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montessori or Waldorf</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (int’l-oriented, for-profit)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL (non-religious)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>58,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian (Catholic)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>21,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian (non-Catholic)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic/Muslim</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (religious)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL (religious)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>87,583</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s calculations based on MoE (2018/19) data and school-by-school research.
3.2. Funding, classification, and regulation of BC independent schools

Of Canadian provinces, BC arguably has the most balanced and robust approach to independent school funding and regulation. There are very few limitations to opening and operating an independent school in the province, unless government funding is desired. Regulations increase in number and specificity in proportion to funds received from the provincial government, but the basic requirements are straightforward and common sense. At a minimum, all BC independent schools are subject to the provincial Independent School Act of 1989 and its basic certification requirements. These minimum requirements are specified in Section 1 of the Schedule of the Act, which states that schools cannot practise, promote, or foster racism, religious intolerance, violence, or sedition, and they must abide by the laws of the land (Independent School Act, 2018, p. H-18).

3.2.1. Funding groups

There are four official designations of BC independent schools, defined by their funding formula and corresponding regulatory structure. (For a detailed description of funding and regulation for all four funding groups, see Appendix B.) Group 1 and Group 2 receive per-student taxpayer-funded grants up to 50% and 35% of operating expenses, respectively, and must be non-profits. Group 3 and Group 4 do not receive taxpayer funding and can be for-profit. No designations receive capital funding (e.g. funds for building-projects). Table 3 cross-tabulates the funding groups with the three school types previously discussed, and Table 4 shows enrolment by funding group.

Table 3: School type by funding group, 2018/19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elite</th>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>245^4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors tabulation from MoE (2018/19)

^4 The MoE Group 1 total is 244, but I have double-counted one school as it perfectly matches both the Elite and Religious school definition, so for my sample data, either stratum is appropriate.
Table 4: Number of BC independent schools and students, by MoE Group, 2018/19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Average Enrolment</th>
<th>Median Enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>66,789</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>17,628</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2,622</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>87,583</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors tabulation from MoE (2018/19)

3.2.2. MoE budget and student allocation

The basic allocation public school operating grant is $7,423 per student ($7,468 for 2019/20), plus additional supplements that can reach up to $38,800 ($42,400 in 2019/20) for physically dependent or deaf/blind students. Schools receive per-pupil operating grants for students in Grade 9 and under, but for Grade 10 through Grade 12 funding is on a per-course basis, ranging from $212 ($215 in 2019/20) for partial-credit courses to $423 ($430 in 2019/20) for full four-credit courses (MoE 2018b; 2019b). The total MoE operating budget is over $5.3 billion, which averages out to $10,678 per student (MoE, 2019b). Adding capital expenditures, the total MoE budget is over $6.3 billion, accounting for nearly 12% of the provincial budget (Ministry of Finance, 2019, p. 100). When adding in all BC government expenses for elementary and secondary education, it reaches nearly $7.3 billion forecasted for 2018/19 (Ministry of Finance, 2019, p. 101). When including all expenses, per-student spending in public schools is $11,656, as of 2015/16 (the most recent estimation) (MacLeod & Emes, 2019, p. 9 & 11).

3.2.3. Taxpayer savings

On average, independent schools receive one dollar in operating grants for every $2.31 of public school operating grants. Put differently, independent school students save taxpayers 57 cents on the dollar. February’s MoE Service Plan estimates a total $426.3 million in independent school operating grants for 2018/19 (MoE, 2019c, p. 8); which, given that up to 84,417 students (all Group 1 and 2 enrolment, including DL) may be eligible for funding (MoE, 2018/19), independent school operating grants average about $5,050 per student.\(^5\) However, the median grant is likely considerably lower, as the tens

\(^5\) $426.3 million (MoE estimated total independent school operating grants 2018/19) / 84,417 (all Group 1 & 2 enrolment incl. DL) = $5,049.93
of thousands needed for each special-needs student skews the mean. Thus, at a minimum, every independent school student saves BC taxpayers at least $6,606 per year.\textsuperscript{6,7}

### 3.3. Controversies surrounding funding and regulation

School choice policies increase the demand for independent schools (Pelz & Dulk, 2018), but for those without the financial means, independent education may be an unreachable aspiration. Unlike many US states, BC does not have a voucher system, scholarship tax credit, or other targeted instruments to directly help low-income families enrol in independent schools. In BC, the funds are directed to the schools not the students (Van Pelt et al., 2017), and household income is not factored into the funding formula. Consequently, better-off families have greater access. For example, a wealthy family attending an elite Group 2 school receives partial taxpayer-funding for their prestigious education, while those who cannot afford even the minimal tuition of a humble Group 1 school (of which there are many) do not receive any upfront government assistance and only have the option of enrolling in a local public school. Albeit, only 16% of independent school students attend elite schools (see Table 2), and when excluding elite school families, independent school families' average after-tax income is only 1.9% higher than the average public school family (Clemens et al., 2017). Still, the current funding model does not target low-income families.

But perhaps a more commonly heard criticism of independent schools is the question: “Why should taxpayers subsidize any private tuition?” This is important to address. Not only do independent schools generate considerable per-student taxpayer savings, but they also lower capital costs and ease pressures like overcrowding. Independent school parents are quite price sensitive, so if BC independent school tuitions rise due to decreased MoE operating grants, students will migrate to public schools. Kamin and Erickson (1981) find school fees are a considerable burden for 40% of independent school parents in BC. Even in the lowest tuition schools, they find a minimal increase in tuition would force nearly half of parents out. Specifically, 62.8% of independent school

\textsuperscript{6} $11,656$ (average public school cost) – $5,050$ (average independent school cost) = $6,606

\textsuperscript{7} These savings do not apply to special education, as it is fully funded, regardless of school choice. See Appendix C for details.
parents say they would likely switch to public school if tuition increased. Given current shortages in public school staffing and resources, this exodus would further burden an already overburdened system.

In summary, BC’s independent schools are highly heterogenous, broadly fitting into three school types that are themselves highly diverse: elite, specialty, and religious. For funding purposes, schools are officially classified into one of four numbered groups, receiving up to 50% MoE operating funding. Although the current funding model annually saves taxpayers at least $6,606 per student, it fails to target low-income families. Independent schools are highly diverse in a number of ways and serve many unmet needs in the K-12 system. This may be why independent school demand has and continues to outpace supply.
Chapter 4.

Public School Challenges

Although independent schools’ diversity in serving unmet K-12 needs may explain its high and growing demand, it still begs the question: Are independent schools necessary? Before asking parents directly, this chapter begins to answer this question by presenting some challenges currently facing BC’s public schools. Such understanding will provide greater policy context and help formulate the precise policy problem.

4.1. Rising costs

Taxpayers have considerable interest in public school alternatives. The first of many reasons for this is cost. Adjusting for inflation, BC per-student public school spending has increased 11.3% over the past decade; of which, 90% is due to increased public school teacher and staff compensation, despite a 7.2% decline in public school enrolment (MacLeod & Emes, 2019). There have been calls for funding reform, and an MoE-commissioned independent review panel recently recommended 22 changes to the MoE funding model (Report of the Funding Model, 2018). However, according to the MoE changes likely will not occur soon (Sherlock, 2018; Potestio, 2018), as the scope and nature of the recommendations have raised concerns from the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) and parent advocacy groups (Culbert, 2018).

4.2. School closures and overcrowded portables

However, rising costs and declining enrolment only tell half the story. School districts face tremendous pressure between competing trade-offs. In rapidly growing cities, like Surrey, the school board must choose between adding portables or hiring teachers (Reid, 2019). They cannot afford both, and even with multiple new schools, they cannot keep up with 1,200 new students annually. Conversely, the nearby Vancouver School Board is considering closing 28 schools, due to a decline of 4,700 students from 2007 to 2017 and another 2,300 expected by 2027 (Miljure, 2019; Jung, 2019). School closures have been central to BC’s education challenges for nearly two decades. In total, 267 public
schools closed from 2002 to 2017 (BCTF, 2019). Rural communities have been particularly ill-affected.

4.3. Managing the unmanageable

Furthermore, the work environment is increasingly challenged with staffing shortages and serious safety concerns. December’s *Report of the Funding Model Review Panel* (2018) notes, “ Virtually all school districts [cite] challenges with recruitment and retention of staff” (p. 65). The BCTF estimates at least 1,000 more teachers are needed (Culbert, 2018). This is challenging when on-the-job violence or bullying has been experienced by 90% of teachers, according to a 2018 BCTF survey (Vikander, 2018). The Greater Victoria Teachers’ Association reports that student violence, even in younger grades against teachers, is “a daily occurrence in some schools” (Grossman, 2019). Moreover, unions believe violence against teachers and education assistants (EAs) is underreported (Hyslop, 2018). Change is imperative, as too many classes are currently unmanageable. These issues are in the forefront as public school teachers’ collective agreement expires June 30th of this year. Consequently, the “threat of strike looms as BC teachers and [the] province appear far apart on big issues” (Sherlock, 2019).

4.4. Satisfaction levels

Satisfaction levels are also of concern. The MoE conducts annual satisfaction surveys on students, parents, and staff in the public school system, and although not condemning, the findings reveal minimal satisfaction levels (MoE, 2017). In particular, public high school students (those above Grade 7) are generally unsatisfied with school, and parents do not believe the public school is adequately preparing their students for the future. Interestingly, the two most recent survey results are blacked-out for a question that asked if parents would like to transfer their child to another school. In each of the three years prior, less than 10% responded that, yes, they would like to transfer, so why the recent black-out? Has there been a major change? Notwithstanding, it is highly probable that, given the opportunity, a much larger number of public school families would prefer independent schooling (Hepburn, 2008).

Bosetti and Pyryt (2007) asked Edmonton and Calgary public and independent school parents, “If you could send your child to any public, private, or religiously affiliated
school of your choice, with tuition paid by the government, would you send your child to the school she/he now attends or to a different school?” Only 53% of public school parents said they would keep their child in their current school, compared to 94% of non-religious independent school parents and 91% of religious school parents (Bosetti and Pyryt, 2007, p. 104). These findings are almost identical to Kamin and Erickson’s (1981, p. 22) BC findings nearly three decades earlier. Similarly, in Ontario, Van Pelt et al. (2007, p. 4) found 94% of independent school parents unsatisfied with public schools. It is not unreasonable to expect similar results in BC today.

4.5. Student safety

Finally, and most importantly, student safety is a critical issue. In Canada, between 1997 and 2017, there were at least 750 cases of sexual offences committed by 714 K-12 personnel against at least 1,272 children (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2019, p. 62). These numbers are understated, as they only include reported crimes. The US Department of Education reports nearly 10% of US students in grades 8 to 11 experience unwanted sexual misconduct from an educator (Shakeshaft, 2004, p. 17-18 & 20). Again, the number is likely higher, as these incidents are self-reported. More disturbingly, the US Government Accountability Office (2010) reports that educators known to be sexual predators, on average, “pass through three different districts before being stopped, and one offender can have as many as 73 victims in his or her lifetime” (Grant et al., 2017, p. 5-6). It is not unreasonable to assume this is also the case in Canada – and BC, specifically. Fully 8% of Canadians self-report being sexually abused before the age of 15 (Burczycka & Conroy, 2017) and, according to the Canadian Medical Association (Afifi, et al., 2014), this rises to 10% by the age of 16 (as cited in Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2018, p. 4). But what about teachers bullying students in a non-sexual nor illegal manner, such as humiliating or verbally abusing students in front of classmates or colleagues? No national studies have been conducted on bullying by educators, despite extensive anecdotal evidence (McEvoy, 2014) and the prevalence of the silencing and marginalizing of alternative views. The aforementioned is not intended to exaggerate limited data but to draw attention to it. Very little research on school safety and violence in BC schools is publicly available, despite extensive anecdotal evidence. This is an important topic for further research. Specifically, data comparing independent relative to public schools would be particularly informative.
In summary, public schools face considerable challenges, ranging from school closures to limited resources in overcrowded districts to unmanageable classrooms to minimal student, parent, and staff satisfaction levels. Additionally, student safety may be at risk. Although some districts are underfunded, inflation-adjusted per-student public school spending has increased 11.3% over the past decade, despite a 7.2% decline in public school enrolment. Money is not the issue, as Woessmann’s (2001) international evidence concludes: “Spending more money within an institutional system that sets poor incentives will not improve student performance.” It is necessary to improve the institutional environment in which schools function.
Chapter 5.

Policy Problem and Stakeholders

The policy problem for investigation is too few alternatives exist to meet the diverse needs, values, and preferences of students and parents unmet by public schools. The demand for alternatives is growing – and has grown, uninterrupted, for over four decades – but supply has been restricted from keeping up. As K-12 education is an economic merit good and of public benefit even when administered privately, non-government education is in the public interest. Therefore, the policy problem is a public – as opposed to private – one. Moreover, this is a current issue with important long-term consequences that, given the myopic nature of individual consumers, will be insufficiently addressed if not as a public concern.

Four key stakeholders are most impacted by this policy problem and any innovations to the system: parents, students, teachers, and taxpayers. Parents want what is best for their children, and they have a right to choose their child’s education (see Appendix D for details). For students, their very lives and futures are at stake. Teachers also have a deeply vested interest in public school alternatives and serving the needs, values, and preferences of those in the K-12 system, as their livelihood depends on it. Even more so, for most teachers, teaching is not “just a job” but a calling. They do what they do because they love to serve and want to make a difference. However, this often conflicts with the interests of teachers’ unions, which ceteris paribus promote behaviour that reduces student performance (Hoxby, 1996; Woessmann, 2001). This leads to the final stakeholder: taxpayers. As K-12 education is of considerable benefit to society not just individual students, taxpayers bear most of its financial burden. Accordingly, it is imperative to consider the effect on taxpayers when analyzing the problem and evaluating policy options.

But the most important stakeholder, and the focus of the analysis, is parents. Specifically, given the large volume and increasing demand for diverse independent

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8 K-12 education is generally viewed as an investment in and by both students and society (see Schultz 1961, 1963; Kiker, 1968; Mincer 1970, 1974; Becker, 1993; as cited in Hanushek, 2002).
schools in BC, it is time to discover and understand BC independent school parents and the determinants of school choice in the province.
Chapter 6.

Primary Methodology: Parent Survey

To understand and remedy the policy problem, hearing directly from parents is imperative. Thus, my research question to parents is, “Who chooses independent schools and why?” I employ two methodologies to answer this and analyze the policy problem. This chapter presents the primary methodology: an analysis of an online survey of parents from a representative stratified sample of randomly selected independent schools in BC. The second approach is presented in Chapter 8, following the survey findings.

6.1. Survey design

The survey design began as a replication of Van Pelt et al. (2007), to test whether Van Pelt’s Ontario findings hold true in BC twelve years later. Following Van Pelt’s approach, many questions are based on the 2016 Census and 2013 General Social Survey to understand participating families’ demographic information, so that the results can be readily compared for analysis (Van Pelt et al. 2007, p. 14). To understand why parents choose independent schools, Van Pelt identified 61 independent school characteristics from examining the North American literature – specifically, Bell (2005), Bosetti (2000), Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families (2004), Davies and Quirke (2005a, 2005b), Erickson (1986), Mirski (2005), Paquette (2000), and Ungerleider (2003), among others. On a four-point scale for each, her questionnaire asked parents two questions: the extent they agreed or disagreed each characteristic influenced their school choice, and whether or not it was a feature in their independent school (Van Pelt et al. 2007, p. 23). Accordingly, I created a pilot questionnaire and updated the list of independent school characteristics to reflect the most recent literature. The pilot found no distinction between the reasons for choosing a school and its features. Some terminology was problematic, too. Pilot respondents were uncomfortable identifying as “elite”, so “university preparatory” is used in my survey. The pilot respondents also found too much similarity between the questions, so a second and third test survey were conducted to further refine the list. The pilot took respondents close to 60 minutes to complete and was refined to 18 minutes before outreach, without losing its essence. A copy of the parent questionnaire is in Appendix E.
6.2. Sampling

To ensure a representative sample of BC K-12 independent school students, the process began with an extensive stratification of all 367 BC independent schools into their respective school associations (many schools are members of multiple associations) and one of three broad categories – university preparatory, specialty, or religious. Preparatory schools are divided into boarding and non-boarding. Specialty schools are categorized into Montessori, Waldorf, performance-oriented (e.g. accelerated learning, schools for the gifted, etc.), DL (non-religious), special education, other (as many specialty schools are truly unique), and FN schools. This last group is excluded from the sample, due to a prohibitively time-intensive additional ethics approval process. Religious schools are further stratified by religion, denomination, and DL (religious). Of note, many schools do not easily fit into one category, either because they are unique or match the description of multiple categories (e.g. Islamic Montessori, non-CAIS preparatory, etc.). Each school is also labelled by region, neighbourhood type, and grades offered (e.g. K-12, elementary only, secondary only, etc.).

6.3. Data collection

Given the aforementioned parameters, initially 37 schools with a combined 9,899 students were randomly selected that, assuming a similar response rate, were proportionately reflective of the BC independent school and student populations. Each randomly selected school was contacted, via email then phone, and asked to invite its entire school-parent population to participate in the online survey. If the Head of School or governing agency agreed, they were emailed an online package to electronically distribute to the parents in their school(s). When a school declined to participate, another school was randomly selected from the respective stratum and approached. However, it took considerable outreach to confirm participation or rejection. It was necessary to contact an additional five schools to secure a sample that collectively mirrors the BC independent school landscape. Of a total 42 schools contacted, 19 agreed to participate in the study.

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9 See Appendix F for more detail on the challenges securing participation and how to improve.
The online survey was administered, and the data collected, securely through https://sfufas.ca1.qualtrics.com. This is a secure SFU website, using the industry-leading Qualtrics survey research platform. Completed surveys and the data taken from them will be electronically preserved for future use in an open-access online repository, stripped of any information that could identify participants to ensure confidentiality. All participating parents and schools remain private, confidential, and anonymous.

6.4. Limitations

The major limitation of the survey is potential response bias in three areas. Although the schools are randomly selected, parents within the invited school population are self-selected. Thus, self-selection bias is an unavoidable limitation, as parents with stronger views may be more compelled to respond than others. Secondly, demographics may bias results, as parents of greater and lesser means may have more or less time or willingness to complete the questionnaire. Lastly, four school groups are not included. A previously secured DL school (large enough to be representative) withdrew last minute. First Nation schools required additional approvals. CAIS schools were participating in a major internal survey project, so none were available, severely limiting university preparatory responses. And no public school parents are surveyed, only current independent school parents, so movement from independent to public school is unaccounted for and possible negative views from former independent school families missed.
Chapter 7.

Survey Results and Analysis

This chapter presents the survey results and a basic analysis, using primarily cross-tabulations and comparisons to Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census and 2013 General Social Survey. The four sections present: (1) the sample data, (2) who chooses, (3) why and how they choose, and (4) a summary of the findings.

7.1. Sample description

From the 19 participating schools, 608 respondents started the survey and 466 completed it, representing 919 and 776 students, respectively. At least 1,025 parents are represented. The median size of participating schools is 151 students, identical to the 151 median size for all BC independent schools. Fully 83% (381/458) of respondents live in a self-described urban or suburban neighbourhood, which is close to the 81% and 86% of Canadians and British Columbians, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2018b). Nearly half (8) of schools that agreed to participate are located in the Lower Mainland, over one-fifth (4) are on the coast – north of West Vancouver to Alaska, or Vancouver Island – and almost three-eighths (7) are in the rest of BC, with a mix of urban, suburban, small-town, and rural throughout. University preparatory and religious schools are underrepresented and overrepresented, respectively, as only 4% of respondents self-identify their school as university preparatory and nearly 87% as religious. A nearly representative 9% identify their school as specialty. First Nation and DL schools are excluded, so the provincial comparison is based off 74,185 independent school students instead of 87,583. Figure 5 shows the representation by grade. Over 11% of participants have a child in Kindergarten, ranging to under 5% with a Grade 12 student, for a mean and median of 7.7% and 7.8% representation per grade, respectively.
7.2. Characteristics of independent school families

Following Van Pelt et al.’s (2007) approach, many questions are based on Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census and 2013 General Social Survey to collect and compare demographic information on the families surveyed. This section presents my findings and analysis of who chooses independent schools in BC.

7.2.1. Parents’ educational background

To begin, the first characteristic I explore is independent school parents’ own K-12 educational background. Fully 84% of parents spent some time in public school themselves in elementary and/or secondary school, with 65% only having attended public school. While 34% attended some independent school, exactly 15% only attended independent school. Only 8% of non-religious school parents did not attend public school. This one-generation transition from public to independent school challenges the notion that “private” schools are bastions of privileged posterity.

Further countering this misconception of exclusivity, for over 68% and nearly 66% of parents, respectively, finding and enrolling in their preferred school was easy. Only 15% expressed difficulty, with less than 2% finding it “very difficult” to enroll and attend their
preferred school, which may speak more to excess demand and short supply rather than elitism.

Notwithstanding, independent school parents are better educated. They are nearly 1.4 times more likely than the average adult British Columbian to have post-secondary education, at 88% versus 64%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2017a). They are three times more likely to have a master’s degree (19% versus 6%), nearly four times more likely to have a medical field degree (3.5% versus <1%), and nine times more likely to have completed high school (or equivalent).

As independent school parents are more likely to be well-educated, they are also overrepresented in professions that require higher education, and therefore, command higher incomes. See Appendix G for details on respondents’ occupations, household income, and family structure.

7.2.2. Paying for school

Tuition is charged in one of three ways – per student (51.5%), per family (28%), and sliding scale (19.5%) – and tuition costs vary considerably. Nearly 33% (149) of parents pay below $4,000 annually per child for independent school tuition, 43% (196) pay between $4,000 to $8,000, and 21% (97) pay $8,000 to $16,000. Of the 28 respondents who pay residence fees in addition to tuition, residence costs below $4,000 annually per student for 37.5% (9), between $4,000 to $8,000 for one-third (8), $8,000 to $16,000 for nearly 17% (4), and up to $56,000 for the remainder. In addition to tuition and residence, 66% (299) spend under $1,000 annually per child on extra costs (such as uniforms, instruments, tutors, school trips, activity fees, etc.), 20.5% (93) spend an extra $1,000 to $2,500, 9% (42) spend an extra $2,500 to $5,000, and the rest spend over $5,000. For perspective, the average Canadian parent with a child in hockey, spends nearly $3,000 per child per season. This average increases to $3,700 per season for children over the age of 10 (Mirtle, 2013). An Ipsos survey found 32% of Canadian parents go into debt to pay for their children’s extracurricular activities, averaging $1,160 annually (Alini, 2018). Although independent school parents likely pay for the same extra-curriculars, the context of these price points shows that independent schooling is likely within reach of more families than often assumed.
However, affording independent school can be a challenge. Over half of parents have made major financial changes to afford tuition. Over 18% (90 of 491) have taken on a part-time job for additional income, 9.6% (47) changed jobs, 8.6% (42) budget differently and make sacrifices, over 2% (11) took out a loan, and nearly 12% (57) find other creative ways to financially support their children’s education. Others rely on the help of others. Some 5.4% (24 of 447) of families receive a bursary, ranging from $500 to $9,000, and 6.4% (29 of 452) receive financial support from another source, like grandparents. Interestingly, many parents referred to the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), which is a government direct-deposit of up to $456.75 per month per child (Canada Revenue Agency, 2018). For many parents, the CCB is around the cost of tuition, so from their perspective, tuition is “free” since they use the CCB to pay for it (their words, not mine).

7.2.3. Cultural and ethnic diversity

Cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity are defining characteristics of independent school families. Beginning with linguistic diversity, independent school parents’ first language is 1.5 times more likely to be foreign, and they are 2.4 times more likely to speak a foreign language most often at home (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Fully 41% of independent school parents have a hearth language other than English, compared to 27.5 of British Columbians. Of the 23 hearth languages represented in the sample, Chinese-Cantonese and Chinese-Mandarin are the most common after English, at 19% and 9%, respectively. The other first languages are each less than 3% of the sample. Of language most often spoken at home, 28% speak a foreign language compared to less than 12% of British Columbians. Again, led by Chinese-Cantonese (15%) and Chinese-Mandarin (8%), the remaining are each 1% or less of respondents, for a survey total of 13 languages spoken at home most often.

The diverse languages reflect a rich mosaic of cultural and ethnic backgrounds within independent schools. Nearly half (48%) of independent school parents were born outside Canada, compared to less than a third (31%) of British Columbians (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Of the 33 ethnicities reported in the sample, all but four are well below two% of respondents, and 37% compared to 30% are visible minorities, respectively. Fully 26% of independent school parents are Chinese (18% Cantonese, 8% Mandarin) and over 4% are Filipino compared to less than 12% and 3.5% of British Columbians, respectively. Importantly, this inter-ethnic diversity is reflective of the typical BC independent school.
Only one of the 19 independent schools surveyed maintains a cultural or ethnic identity, and its share of my sample respondents is less than 2%. Perhaps even more strikingly, 52% selected “Canadian” as their ethnicity compared to 19% of British Columbians in the 2016 Census. Could this be indicative of a greater sense of Canadian patriotism held by independent school families?

7.2.4. Civic engagement

Of all Canadians, British Columbians are the most active in their community, and yet independent school families have even greater civic engagement. Fully 92% of respondents (427/466) are active in a group, organization, or association compared to 73% of British Columbians, and on average, independent school parents are members of at least two groups, organizations, or associations (Turcotte, 2015). The most common community involvement, at 59% of independent school parents and over four times the national average (14%), is with a religious-affiliate group. However, when excluding religious school families, religious-affiliate group membership nearly mirrors the 13% of adult Canadians. Involvement in a sports or recreation organization was the second highest response in my survey and identical to Statistic Canada’s 31% (the highest of any group, organization, or association in the General Social Survey). Political party or activist membership was the only other comparable finding, with identical results to Statistic Canada’s 4%. The remaining categories vary considerably from the General Social Survey. The greatest difference is in youth organizations where independent school parents, at 10% of respondents, are twice as active as other Canadians. Fully 27% of independent school parents are members of non-union professional organizations and 22% belong to a union for a combined 49%, well above the 28% in the General Social Survey. Exactly one-quarter of independent school parents, led by specialty (31%) then religious school respondents (24%), are members of a school group, neighbourhood, civic, or community association (e.g. Parent-Teacher Association, alumni association, block parents, etc.), compared to 17% of Canadians.

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10 This is a Statistics Canada category from catalogue 89-652-X of the 2013 General Social Survey (see Section 1 of Turcotte (2015)), so to ensure a like-to-like comparison I have maintained the distinction.

11 Detailed provincial data unavailable.
In terms of voting, 61% (280) of independent school parents participate in every municipal, provincial, and federal election, compared to 36% of British Columbians (Slepian, 2018; CivicInfo BC, 2018). Fully 87% (400) vote at least somewhat often. Only 5% (25) never vote. For context, the highest voter turnout for any federal or BC provincial election was 79.4% in the 1958 federal election, and average voter turnout in the last five federal and BC provincial elections was 62.8% and 55.5%, respectively (Archer, 2018; Elections BC, n.d.; Elections Canada, 2015, 2018). Municipal turnout is rarely over 40% (Slepian, 2018).

7.2.5. School-to-school mobility

Of 537 participating families, 47% (253) previously enrolled in another school. Of the 253 who previously enrolled elsewhere, 73.5% (186) have had children attend public school. This is critically important. Of families currently enrolled in independent school, for every one that switched from another independent school, three came from public school.

7.3. Parental reasons for choosing independent schools

But why do parents choose? My questionnaire lists 47 reasons for choosing a school and asks respondents, on a four-point scale, the extent to which they agree or disagree each reason influenced their school choice. Double-weight is given to strong-intensity sentiment of very important and not important, and I further weight by the provincial distribution of each school type (19% weighting for university prep, 12% specialty, and 69% religious). Additionally, I ask about external influencers, the most important reason (which can be outside the 47), and school satisfaction.

7.3.1. Ranking 47 reasons why parents choose

Table 5 presents the overall top 10 reasons parents choose, followed by the top five for the three respective school types in Table 6. Ranking first overall, “This school offers a supportive, nurturing environment for students” is the only response ranked in the top five across every school type – first for specialty and second for the others. Safety ranks second overall and first for religious school families. Character development ranks third both overall and for religious schools. Curriculum trust and whole-child education round out fourth and fifth overall, respectively.
Table 5: Top 10 ranking of important characteristics in choosing current independent school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Question: &quot;This school...&quot;</th>
<th>Weighted</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>offers a supportive, nurturing environment</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>is a safe school</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>emphasizes character development</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>has curriculum we trust</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>educates the whole child</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>instills confidence in the students</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>is well administered</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>motivates students</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>has outstanding quality teachers</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>students seem happy</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Top 5 ranking of important characteristics, by school type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Preparatory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.2. Unexpected result: Safety means trusting staff and curriculum

Reviewing parents’ open-ended responses reveals a relationship between safety and curriculum. Based on the literature and Van Pelt’s findings, I understood school safety to refer to a lack of bullying. However, of the 207 families who changed schools and have “safe school” as a very important (88%) or somewhat important (12%) consideration in their decision, 58% (120) had concerns with both the curriculum and the teachers or administration at their last school, while only 47% (98) had concerns with bullying. Of the 381 overall respondents with trusting the curriculum as a very important factor in choosing their independent school, 99% (378) also have “safe school” as a very important (360) or somewhat important (18) consideration. Conversely, 98.5% (406) of those who believe “safe school” is a very important factor also have “We trust the curriculum at this school” as either very important (360) or somewhat important (46) in choosing their independent school. Both cross-tabulations are statistically significant at a 99.9% confidence level, with a p-value below 0.00001. (In other words, there is a less than one in 100,000 chance the results occurred by chance.) With identical statistical significance, 70.6% (113) of families who left public school identified curriculum concerns as very important (79) or somewhat important (34) in choosing their current independent school.

Of the 157 who left public school, 72% (113) identified curriculum concerns as very important (79) or somewhat important (34) in choosing their current independent school. More generally, 80% (125) of parents who have had a child in public school express disappointment with public schools as either a very important (87) or somewhat important (38) reason for choosing their current independent school (p < 0.00001 in all cases).

7.3.3. The most important reason for choosing independent school

When asked open-endedly the most important consideration in choosing their independent school, 43% (176) gave a single reason. For the remaining 57% (237), it was a combination of factors, so the data needed to be organized before analysis. Of 413 responses, 883 different reasons were given, which I collapsed into 62 categories before scoring. Of the 62 open-ended categories, Table 7 shows a ranking of the top 10. Excluding responses with religious references, the top “most important” reason is identical

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12 See Appendix H for details.
to the top-ranking characteristic in Table 5: “This school offers a supportive, nurturing environment for students”. Including all responses, the most important reason is: “Reinforces our faith or religious beliefs”.13

Table 7: Top 10 “most important” considerations in choosing independent school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Summary of Specific Response</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Share of Responses</th>
<th>Share of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Reinforces” our faith or religious beliefs</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Religious, or faith-based, education</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Christian&quot;</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supportive, nurturing environment for students / &quot;Atmosphere&quot;</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Supports our family's values</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>&quot;Values&quot;</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Individualized attention / &quot;Treated as an individual&quot; / &quot;Recognizes uniqueness&quot;</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Safe school / &quot;Safety&quot; / &quot;trust&quot;</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>“Quality education” / &quot;Excellence&quot; / &quot;Good, strong education&quot;</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note the difference in rank between a large list of important characteristics (Table 5) and “the most important” characteristic (Table 7). The top two Table 5 rankings – “This school offers a supportive, nurturing environment for students” and “This is a safe school”, respectively – fall to fourth and ninth in Table 7. They are important to almost everyone, but not necessarily the most important. Similarly, 98% of parents believe it is important the school is well administered, ranking seventh in Table 5, but less than 1% consider it most important. Conversely, “This school reinforces our faith or religious beliefs” ranks 39th in the Table 5 dataset (too low to appear in the table) but rises to first in Table 1. Even in religious schools, this is not a high ranking consideration, but it is the single most important factor by a considerable margin.

However, although the distinctiveness in Table 7 provides interesting and critical insights, many of the 62 most important reasons can naturally be grouped together for a more generalized analysis. Table 8 ranks a curated short list of general reasons. Here, the four religious-reference categories and three values-reference categories are

13 For an explanation of why all religious responses are not collapsed into one category, see Appendix H.
combined (and controlled for double-counting). This process applies to the entire list of 62, resulting in five like-to-like combinations. The remaining categories are under “Other”. The most important general reason for choosing an independent school remains the family’s values or religion.

Table 8: “Most important” general reasons in choosing independent school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Most Important Reason</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Share of Reasons</th>
<th>Share of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Values or religion</td>
<td>209.0</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student experience</td>
<td>180.0</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Public school reference (negative)</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>339.5</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>883.0</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>213.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.4. External influences on parents’ choice

Another reason why parents choose a particular independent school is the sources that influence their decision. As shown in Table 9, “Friends or relatives” is by far the most common response to both how parents first heard about the school and what source(s) strongly influenced their choice, at 42% (194/461) and 26% (243/936), respectively.

Table 9: Top 5 ways parents discovered school and what influenced their choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>External Influence</th>
<th>First heard about school through...</th>
<th>Source(s) that strongly influenced choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Friends or relatives</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other word-of-mouth</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A school ranking or review site (e.g. CompareSchoolRankings.org, etc.)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Church / temple / synagogue / etc.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The school’s official website</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.5. Satisfaction

Over 91% (407) of parents are highly likely to recommend their school, with less than 1% (3) unlikely to promote it. This high parent satisfaction rate is reflected in how parents’ involvement with their children’s education has changed. Since switching from public to independent school, 54% communicate more often with teachers (87/160), 47%
participate in or attend school activities more often (75/159), and 35.6% volunteer at the school or in community service more (57/160).

### 7.4. Summary of findings

In summary, five main points can be drawn from the findings. These are the key insights to inform policy.

First, my research findings indicate that independent school students’ needs and parents’ preferences are better met at independent schools than public schools. BC’s independent schools serve diverse religious, cultural, and regional communities, as well as meet demand for pedagogical variations and emphases unmet by public schools. Consequently, independent schools meet more than just students’ educational needs. More than public schools, independent schools better emulate the Canadian mosaic of belonging, tolerance, and diversity. Nearly half of independent school parents were born outside Canada; yet, interestingly, the Canadian-born are nearly three times more likely to describe their ethnicity as “Canadian”. Fully 92% are active in their community, in an average two groups, associations, or organizations. They are 1.7 times more likely to vote but are neither more nor less likely to be political activists or members of a political party. If “diversity is our strength,” independent schools are an integral element of the Canadian social fabric.

Second, BC independent schools are not bastions of privileged posterity. Over 50% of independent school parents have made major financial and life changes to afford the cost of school, even though tuition for about one-third of families is approximately the same cost as the average out-of-school kids ice-hockey program. The overwhelming majority of independent school parents attended public school, so their children are “first generation” independent schoolers. Of families currently enrolled in independent school, for every one that switched from another independent school, three came from public school.

Third, parents choose independent schools for a multitude of diverse reasons. Parents choosing schools for university preparation most strongly weight teacher quality and academic excellence. Those who choose specialty schools prioritize schools where the students seem happy, that encourage understanding and tolerance, and that offer
individualized attention. Parents who choose religious schools particularly emphasize the importance of faith, school safety, character development, trustworthy curriculum, morals, and values. Non-religious school families are more likely to have tried public school. Of those who came from public school, most expressed disappointment with public school and, in particular, concerns with safety and curriculum. However, amongst all school groups, there is considerable dissatisfaction with public schools. Safety is also a foremost concern for parents of all three school types.

Fourth, parents first heard about their school and were influenced in their decision primarily through friends, relatives, and various other word-of-mouth. Fully 91% are so satisfied with their school they are strongly likely to recommend it, making almost all independent school parents strong word-of-mouth brand ambassadors.

Fifth, all three school types offer high quality education by adding value in different ways. However, very importantly, virtually all independent school parents have the following in common: Their independent school offers a supportive and nurturing environment that is motivating for and instills confidence in students, thanks to outstanding teachers and excellent administration. This strongly echoes Van Pelt et al.’s (2007) findings, which leads to the secondary methodology: a literature review for comparison.
Chapter 8.

Secondary Methodology: Literature Review

This chapter confirms the reliability of the survey results and analysis, with a second methodology that employs a literature review of similar studies that identify who chooses independent schools, and why and how they choose.

8.1. Who chooses

BC independent school parents are far more diverse, compared to typical British Columbians. Bosetti and Gereluk (2016) write: “Two of the primary aims of school choice policies are to accommodate and support ethnocultural diversity” (p. 114). This is also what Bedrick and Burke (2018) find of school choice families in Florida. More broadly, this is also echoed in BC’s K-12 goals, as stated in the MoE’s recent independent review panel’s Report of the Funding Model (2018), “Curious, passionate learners who value diversity and become productive members of society are the graduates [BC] needs” (p. 6, 34). This is why educational choice is so important.

The greater likelihood for independent school parents to participate in community organizations and elections is another critical finding, confirmed by Van Pelt et al. (2007), Pennings et al. (2012, 2014), and Green et al. (2016, 2018). The family culture of independent school households indicates a considerably greater propensity towards a wide variety of active civic engagement. This refutes a common argument made against independents schools, especially religious schools, that adverse social outcomes will result if all students do not receive the same “common school” education, and thus inflict a dangerous and unnecessary risk to our society and democratic institutions. Further calming such fears, despite their substantially higher voting participation, independent school parents are neither more nor less likely to be political activists or members of a political party. They are not a political threat to anyone. Not surprisingly, this greater civic engagement confirms a growing body of evidence from North America’s largest sample of Christian school graduates and administrators, the Cardus Education Survey (Pennings et al., 2012, 2014; Green et al., 2016, 2018). The latest edition finds BC independent
school graduates are 2.2 times more likely than public schoolers to volunteer, are far more financially generous, and are just as politically active (Green et al., 2018).

My findings also confirm the decades-long shift from public to independent schooling. Not only are the overwhelming majority of independent school parents public-schooled, but many previously had their children in public school as well. At least one child attended public school at some point for 32% and 31% of families in Van Pelt et al. (2007) and Bedrick and Burke’s (2018) samples of Ontario and Florida parents, respectively, which is comparable to my 35%.

8.2. Why parents choose

The multitude of reasons for choosing an independent school are even more diverse than the schools themselves. Kamin and Erickson (1981) and Bosetti (2004) found 147 and 22 reasons for parents’ school choice, respectively. Both included public and non-public school parents in their sample, and they found public school choice centres on convenience and school location, while non-public school families are looking for a particular educational experience. For non-religious independent schools, strict discipline then academics were by far the most important reasons for choosing a school in 1978, but by 2002 smaller class size, shared values and beliefs, and teaching style were all ranked as more important than academic reputation. For religious schools, religion/spirituality was the top reason in 1978, as was shared values and beliefs in 2002. Bosetti and Pyryt (2007) and Van Pelt et al. (2007) echo this, as well as academics’ importance to nearly all parents but not the most important reason for any school type. As Kraushaar (1972) and Davis (2011) also find, parents choose an independent school because they believe it provides a better education for their children, but “better” is defined differently by different families.

In my survey results, academic emphasis ranks lower than expected (18th overall, 8th university prep, 23rd specialty, 18th religious). In Van Pelt (2007), “This school emphasizes academic quality” ranked second and sixth for academically-defined and religiously-defined schools, respectively. Moreover, it is the underlying assumption in countless studies comparing school results that improving academic performance is the purpose of school choice. Not that academic quality is unimportant, as it ranks in the top half for all three school types in my sample, but clearly it is not a primary factor in most BC parents’ independent school choice. Kelly and Scafidi (2013) and Bedrick and Burke
find the same thing in Georgia and Florida, respectively. In the latter, student performance on standardized tests was the least important factor for parents.

My survey’s findings that over 91% of independent school parents are highly likely to promote their school is nearly identical to at least four surveys of Canadian parents – Kamin and Erickson’s (1981) survey of 993 parents with children in 121 BC schools, Bosetti’s (2004) survey of 1,500 parents from 29 Alberta schools, and Van Pelt et al.’s (2007) survey of 919 parents from 38 Ontario schools conducted in 1978, 2002, and 2006, respectively, as well as Bosetti and Pyryt (2007). Two recent surveys of American parents – Kelly and Scafidi’s (2013) survey of 962 Georgia parents and Bedrick and Burke’s (2018) survey of 14,752 Florida parents conducted in 2013 and 2017, respectively – also confirm similar independent school satisfaction.

8.3. How parents choose

Bedrick and Burke (2018) and Bosetti (2004) find social networks – e.g. friends and neighbours – are the top source of information parents use in selecting a school, and depending on the non-public school type, Bosetti (2004) finds 13% to 19% use school “[comparisons] of improvement in school student achievement scores” (p. 394-396) in making their decision. Both are comparable to my sample. Friends or relatives were the top source for first hearing about and deciding on the school of choice, and 15% of my sample respondents selected school ranking/review websites as a strong influence.

8.4. Further considerations

Although my survey focuses on parents and their school-age children, taxpayers and teachers also need to be considered in formulating policy. For example, before dismissing academic performance as a policy priority based on the survey results and supporting literature, this section briefly reviews the literature on the economic implications of school choice policy – and academic performance, in particular.

Calls for education reform have long been predicated on the necessity to improve economic competitiveness in today’s globalized economy (National Commission, 1983). Education plays a key role in developing human capital – any nation’s greatest potential resource – and is thus a key ingredient in creating a recipe for economic growth (Hanushek
& Woessmann 2007, 2015). Critically, Hanushek et al.'s (2008) research shows that maximizing economic potential is about “having a substantial cadre of high performers [and] bringing everyone up to a basic level of performance”, so optimizing economic output is about both equity and learning outcomes. From 1964 to 2003, three-quarters of the variation in different countries’ per-capita GDP growth could be attributed to their international achievement test scores. Specifically, Hanushek and Woessmann (2016) find, “differences in math and science achievement can fully account both for the stunning growth performance of the East Asian miracle countries and for the disheartening growth performance of Latin American countries” (as cited in Woessmann, 2016, p. 28).

Student performance is a key explanatory variable of economic growth (Hanushek et al., 2008; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010; Hanushek et al., 2016). Woessmann estimates, using pooled data of over one million students’ PISA test results in 42 countries from 2000 to 2009, that going from no to full autonomy in academic content can significantly increase student achievement by up to 53% of a standard deviation (Woessmann, 2016, p. 24). Accountability, autonomy, and choice also lead to statistically significant better non-cognitive outcomes (Wöbmann, et al., 2007, p. 53-57).

In summary, BC independent school parents are more diverse and civicly engaged than other British Columbians, and most attended public school growing up. The reasons for choosing a school are even more diverse than the schools themselves, but all choice parents want a better education for their children; albeit, “better” means different things to different families. Notably, academic performance is less important to parents than often assumed. Especially for economically-correlated disciplines, like math and science, this is problematic, and why parent-oriented policies should not be populist in nature but balance parental preferences with expert knowledge. Math and science achievement scores are the key explanatory variable of economic growth since 1960, so as a society, our future well-being is dependent on prudent education policy today.
Chapter 9.

Policy Objectives and Options

This chapter presents three policy options based on the analysis of the survey results. All policies are predicated on strengthening parental choice and assume uninterrupted funding of Group 1 and 2 independent schools.

9.1. Objectives

The purpose of the British Columbia K-12 school system is stated in the School Act (1996), “to enable all learners to become literate, to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.” This goal is best realized in a democratic and pluralistic fashion, where individual potential, knowledge, skills, and healthy attitudes are best nurtured – namely, in independent schools. The 91% of highly satisfied independent school parents agree. Accordingly, the long-term objective is to increase the number of and enrolment at independently-managed schools, with a one-year objective of increasing educational choice options for BC families.

9.2. Policy 1: Scholarship Tax Credit (STC) program

The first option is to introduce the Equal Opportunity in School Choice for Low-Income British Columbians Act, or “Scholarship Tax Credit” (STC) program, based on (1) the best practices of existing STC programs in the US and (2) two pieces of model legislation from the American Legislative Exchange Council (2017) and Cato Institute (n.d.), respectively. The STC program allows individuals, couples, and businesses to fund the K-12 independent school of choice for students of limited means, through non-profit scholarship-granting organizations (SGOs).14 In exchange, donors receive a charitable tax receipt. This policy option directly meets the objective of expanding school choice and,

14 SGOs are also known as scholarship funding organizations (SFOs) or student scholarship organizations (SSOs), in the US states of Florida and Georgia, respectively. Pennsylvania has multiple types of such organizations under various names.
given the success of similar programs in the US, is very likely to also meet the long-term objective.

SGO scholarships must prioritize: (1) BC children/youth in care, (2) students with household income below 140% of the poverty line (as, in terms of household income, they are the most disproportionately underrepresented, at less than 12% of families, in BC independent schools),\textsuperscript{15} (3) students of household incomes below the provincial average\textsuperscript{16} (approximately between 140% and 220% of the poverty line), and then (4) siblings of current scholarship recipients. All household income calculations will be based on the average of the most recent three years, to minimize “gaming” the system. Once priority students receive funding under this program, they will remain eligible and first-priority for continued funding until they complete high school or turn 21 years old, regardless of household income. After all priority applicants have received funding, any “eligible student”, as defined by the Independent School Act (i.e. school-age British Columbians), may be a scholarship recipient.

To maximize the number of STC student recipients, a dollar-for-dollar tax credit can be claimed by individuals, couples, or businesses (proprietors, partners, or corporations) on donations made to their SGO of choice. SGOs must use at least 90% of contributions for scholarships, select recipients based on transparent criteria (that, at minimum, follow the aforementioned priority student selection process), and directly pay recipients’ independent school tuition, upon parental authorization. Donors will not be allowed to select or specify a student recipient – known as “swapping”. To minimize the risk of artificially-inflated tuition prices resulting from this program, scholarships will be capped at the average per student public school operating cost ($10,678) and may not exceed the price of the independent school’s tuition.

9.3. **Policy 2: Autonomous Public Schools (APS)**

The second option brings choice to the public school system, by introducing autonomous public schools (APS). APS (pronounced “apps”) are bespoke public

\textsuperscript{15} The poverty line in BC is about $20,000 for singles and $40,000 for a family of four (Government of British Columbia, n.d.).

\textsuperscript{16} BC’s average annual household income per couple family is $87,630 (Statistics Canada, 2016b).
schools managed at the school level and accountable directly to the provincial MoE, not the district school board. Fully taxpayer-funded and fully autonomous, some may reflect Alberta’s charter schools, UK’s specialist schools, Netherlands’ “Steve Jobs” schools, or something completely original. Their autonomy will allow for innovation and adaptability but be balanced with greater accountability to the public. Importantly, APS can help directly address the issue of school closures, particularly in urban settings, like Vancouver.

For APS, accountability means following the Independent School Act (“Act”) Group 1 and 2 school regulations, with a few additions. Like independent schools, any Ministry-certified teacher with 10 students can start an APS (after an inspection verifies the MoE’s standards are met), and APS will also not be eligible for capital funding grants from the MoE. But while Group 2s are subject to one annual inspection and external evaluations every two years, new APS will have at least twice the accountability with one to three surprise inspections and external evaluations annually for the first three years. After the first three years, Group 1 standards will take effect, with inspections every two years and external evaluations every six years. Not capping the number of APS is key to policy success, as demonstrated by the most successful charter jurisdictions in the US (Ziebarth, 2019), and what has held Alberta’s charters back all these years.

APS will also be required to participate in annual third-party assessments, with clear goals set by external exit exams. Both norm- and criterion-referenced tests should be employed, as they serve opposite purposes. Norm-referenced tests measure growth and mitigate the risk of “teaching to the test”, while criterion-referenced tests measure proficiency. Both are essential and not mutually exclusive. For curriculum, APS will focus on MoE learning outcomes but with the freedom and flexibility to use diverse curriculum and content to achieve them. For funding, APS will receive full operating funding on a per-student basis – approximately $10,678 per student – and, thus, cannot charge tuition nor reject eligible applicants, if space is available.

9.4. Policy 3: Education Savings Account (ESA) program

The final option gives educational freedom to all school-age British Columbians, through a universal-access Education Savings Account (ESA). ESA programs are a new
and exciting educational-choice policy at the top of the legislative agenda in many US states,\textsuperscript{17,18} and thus, this option borrows generously from the ESA policy literature.\textsuperscript{19} The BC ESA program will reroute education funds to accommodate a fully customizable learning experience for individual students, incentivizing efficiency without additional taxpayer expense. Using a debit card or online equivalent from a registered bank account, parents can pay for allowable education expenses.\textsuperscript{20} Unused funds will roll over, allowing families to save for future educational purposes. The rollover in tandem with a variety of educational options incentivizes parents to focus on opportunity cost and resourcefulness, in addition to quality. Using pre-existing K-12 resources to fund postsecondary education is a quadruple win, as it (1) increases postsecondary opportunity for students (particularly for low-income families), (2) stretches provincial budget dollars for K-12 and advanced education, (3) strengthens the economy by investing in human capital, and (4) benefits society at large (as postsecondary students are more likely to be responsible citizens).

Importantly, ESAs add no additional cost to taxpayers. ESAs will be provincially funded at 90\% of the existing $7,468 per student basic allocation operating grant, plus additional supplements as warranted. In the five operating ESA programs in the US, administrative expenses range from 3 to 6\% of funding, resulting in a four to seven point margin of safety to cover any unexpected costs.

ESAs’ flexible programming requires an agile regulatory regime that embraces a robust education marketplace. Markets work best when there is sufficient demand to entice both market entry and a robust supply-side response. This is why it is imperative


\textsuperscript{18} State ESAs should not be confused with 529 plans or Coverdell ESAs, which were both a part of the 105\textsuperscript{th} US Congress’ Taxpayer Relief Act (1997; 26 US Code § 529, n.d.; 26 US Code § 530, n.d.). Although Sections 529 and 530 of the Internal Revenue Code now allow funds to be used for K-12 education, their intent was as college savings plans.

\textsuperscript{19} Specifically, this policy option brings together the best of Burke (2013), Bedrick et al. (2016), Butcher and Burke (2016), Bailey (2017), Malkus (2017), McShane (2017), Peshek (2017), and Robinson (2017).

\textsuperscript{20} Education expenses include but are not limited to: tuition, tutoring, therapy, online programs, individual courses, textbooks, curricula and related materials, software and educational subscriptions, equipment (e.g. computer), school supplies and consumables, extracurricular activities, college entrance exam fees, educational field trips, RESP contributions or other postsecondary savings account contributions, postsecondary tuition, and any fees for the management of the ESA.
ESA eligibility includes all school-age British Columbians, and MoE involvement is limited to bare-essentials regulation, such as monitoring for bad actors. But even this can be supported cost-effectively by market mechanisms, like crowdsourced rating and review apps and websites that not only help ESA participants gauge an offering’s quality and value but also help identify potential bad actors. SGOs are strategically positioned to provide such platforms, and will be authorized as the frontline support to work directly with families and schools in best utilizing their ESAs. SGOs further add value by increasing demand. In Florida, for example, their ESA program reached its cap – the largest of any state – in its first year, unlike other programs, because SGOs raised awareness about ESAs.

To prevent fraud and the misuse of funds, five measures will be taken. Firstly, all participating families will receive an ESA Policy Handbook that clearly identifies what are and are not allowable expenses. Secondly, ESAs will be subject to regular and random individual account audits. Thirdly, the Ministry of Finance will contract with a bank or insurance company to create surety bonds required by all ESA participants (to pay for a collection agency to recover misappropriated ESA funds). Fourthly, to avoid the many problems that arise when the regulator is also the administrator (e.g. conflict of interest in regulating and managing one’s competition), the Ministry of Finance, not MoE, will direct-deposit quarterly student grants into parent-managed ESAs. And lastly, parents will be required to submit receipts and report ESA expenditures and allocations to the Ministry of Finance. The MoE already monitors and administers grant-funding on a per-student basis, so the additional administrative burden is minimal. In terms of accountability for academic outcomes, third-party norm- and criterion-referenced tests will be administered, as previously discussed.
Chapter 10.

Criteria for Evaluating Policy Options

To evaluate the policy options in determining the best recommendations to meet the objectives, six equally weighted criteria – equity, efficiency, effectiveness, safety, stakeholder acceptance, and cost – are presented in Table 10, based on the survey analysis. For comparing policy options, each criterion has its own measures and is scored on a scale from a low of 1 to high of 3. All policies are choice- and parent-oriented and require regulatory amendments or brand new legislation; therefore, freedom and administrative complexity are not separately included as evaluative criteria.

10.1. Equity: Ensuring access and equal opportunity

Universal education is about access for all. A common critique of independent schooling is the potential exclusion of some students. Increasing access to the education of choice meets the long-term objective and improving access for underserved populations will help considerably in achieving the short-term objective, as it matches the BC MoE’s current priorities (Report of the Funding Model, 2018). However, access for all, naturally, should not exclude or penalize gifted students (see Bosetti & Gereluk, 2016, p. 31), so policies will be evaluated based on both targeting underserved populations as well as the measure of increased enrolment in public school alternatives for all students, on a three-point scale, with a low of 1 to high of 3.

10.2. Efficiency: Expected economic impact

If a policy option is expected to improve BC’s economic output, the policy will be highly salient and contribute to both objectives. Similarly at a microeconomic level, if a policy option clearly improves students’ earning potential, parents will be supportive of it and thus support the objectives. Lastly, retarding economic growth, and limiting students’ career prospects are all commonly voiced concerns around education reform. Accordingly, this criterion scores each policy on the same 1 to 3 scale, based on the two measures of GDP per-capita growth and student’s estimated lifetime earnings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universality of education</td>
<td>Does policy allow access for all school-age British Columbians, while ensuring access for underserved families?</td>
<td>Strongly increases enrolment for all students &amp; targeted to underserved 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately increases enrolment for all &amp; targeted to all ................2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low impact on enrolment and/or targeted to only a subset .............1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficiency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected economic impact</td>
<td>Does policy strengthen economy &amp; students' earning potential?</td>
<td>Strongly increases GDP per capita &amp; students’ lifetime earnings.........3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately increases GDP per capita or students’ lifetime earnings......2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Little to no impact on GDP per capita or students’ lifetime earnings...1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected impact on academic</td>
<td>Does the policy improve academic outcomes?</td>
<td>Strongly improves PISA &amp; BCPS assessment results.........................3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately improves PISA &amp; BCPS assessment results..........................2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Little to no impact on PISA &amp; BCPS assessment results....................1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting students</td>
<td>Does policy protect students &amp; teachers?</td>
<td>Strongly reduces reports of bullying/abuse against students &amp; teachers 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately reduces reports of bullying/abuse against students/teachers 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Little to no impact on bullying/abuse against students &amp; teachers......1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder Acceptability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected acceptance from</td>
<td>Is policy acceptable to parents, students, teachers, &amp; taxpayers?</td>
<td>Strong support from all four key stakeholders..............................3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>key stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate support from most stakeholders.................................2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low support from most stakeholders...........................................1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected impact to MoE</td>
<td>How much will policy save in reduced MoE expenses?</td>
<td>Strongly decreases MoE expenses...............................................3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budget</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately decreases MoE expenses............................................2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Little to no MoE savings......................................................1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10.3. Effectiveness: Improving academic performance

Academic performance is the standard measure of education policy effectiveness for jurisdictional comparisons, so each option will be evaluated accordingly. British Columbians are proud of their consistent leading academic performance in international rankings (PISA, 2015; O’Grady et al., 2016). It is also a primary component of BC’s purpose for K-12 schooling. So, although academic performance is not a top consideration of independent school parents, it is a critical measure of policy effectiveness. Without improved academic performance the public will not accept the immediate and long-term objectives. Each policy is scored on the 1 to 3 scale based on its expected impact on the two measures of international PISA and BC Performance Standards’ (BCSP) assessment results.21

10.4. Safety: Protecting students and teachers

Given parents’ overwhelming concern with school safety and the clear priority of the supportive and nurturing learning environment it creates, safety is its own evaluative criterion. For students, safety not only means the absence of bullying from other students, but also protection from teachers and contentious curriculum, as these are major concerns raised by parents.22 Lastly, teacher safety is also critically important, as previously discussed in Section 4.3, so safety is evaluated on the 1 to 3 scale with reports of bullying or abuse against both students and teachers as the measure.

10.5. Stakeholder Acceptability: Balancing interests

Key stakeholders’ acceptance of a policy is essential for its viability. A policy with limited acceptability will be unsuccessful. Based on the stakeholders discussed in Chapter 5, each policy will be evaluated on a 1-to-3 scale measured from expected low to strong support, respectively, of parents, students, teachers, and taxpayers.

21 For details on these assessment measures, see links in PISA (2015) and BCPS (n.d.).
22 Curriculum concerns raised by survey respondents typically refer to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) 123 or other sexual education (“sex-ed”) that parents deem age-inappropriate, offensive, or immoral.
10.6. Cost: Expected fiscal effect

Rising MoE inflation-adjusted per-student costs are an important consideration, especially given popularly-held misconceptions of independent school funding, as discussed in sections 4.1 and 3.3, respectively. Therefore, cost is a critical evaluative criterion, and will be measured based on MoE per-student savings on the same three-point scale, with minimal to high savings scoring a 1 and 3, respectively.
Chapter 11.

Analysis of Policy Options

This chapter assesses the policy options using the criteria in Table 10, to provide and justify a policy recommendation, which is presented in Table 11 at the end of the chapter.

11.1. Analysis of Policy Option 1: STCs

In evaluating STCs, the 23 STC programs in 18 US states – with a combined 275,000 active students – are examined, as they provide ample evidence of what does and does not work.

**Equity:** In Florida, the largest STC program in the US with over 108,000 students, “Recipients are primarily non-white students from low-income families—often with household incomes well below the poverty line” (Bedrick & Burke, 2018). In New Hampshire, 74% of STC program parents report that without the scholarship they cannot afford tuition (Bedrick, 2014). All five studies of STC programs show positive parent satisfaction (Cott et al., 2019), as it effectively targets underserved populations. Although the policy option will technically be open to all school-age British Columbians, the prioritized ranking of potential scholarship recipients limits access, so it scores 2/3.

**Efficiency:** Independent school students not only earn more (DeAngelis, 2018b) but they academically outperform their public school peers (Frenette & Chan, 2015). Therefore, as student performance is a key explanatory variable of economic growth (Hanushek et al., 2008; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010; Hanushek et al., 2016), STCs should also benefit the economy. Thus, STCs score a full 3/3.

**Effectiveness:** Fully 97% of Florida STC parents are satisfied, including 80% very satisfied, with their children’s academic progress at their scholarship school, compared to only 4% very satisfied and 33% satisfied with their public school (Forster & D’Andrea, 2009). In New Hampshire, 68% of STC program students’ academic performance improved after receiving the scholarship (Bedrick, 2014). Non-cognitive outcomes strongly improve, too (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Bedrick & Burke, 2018). Interestingly, there
are also empirical studies that measure the effects of STC programs on public school academic outcomes, and again, they are positive (Figlio & Hart, 2014; Rouse et al., 2013; as cited in Cott et al., 2019). Also, public school test scores rise when there are more independent schools (DeAngelis, 2018a). However, Florida’s “[STC program] participation is associated with [only] small improvements in reading and mathematics, relative to public school students,” and the presence of the STC program only modestly improves public school performance (Figlio, 2011), garnering a score of 2.5/3.

Safety: DeAngelis and Dills (2018) find US states with voucher programs – which for the purposes of evaluating safety are comparable to STCs – see a decline in adolescent suicides, and independent schooling reduces the number of mental health issues an individual will experience. In Georgia, over half of STC program parents chose their independent school for “improved student safety”, ranking it second highest of top-three reasons (Kelly & Scafidi, 2013). Safety is also a top-three reason for Florida STC parents (Bedrick & Burke, 2018). When asked to list all the school qualities that led them to choose their child’s school, Indiana STC parents rank “safe environment” second, and they rank it third for “most important reason” (Catt & Rhinesmith, 2017). In all three states, parents are highly satisfied with their chosen independent school, so it logically follows that STC programs improve student safety. Teacher safety also improves. Specifically, physical and verbal abuse of teachers, disrespect for teachers, and widespread disorder in the classroom are less likely to occur at choice private schools (DeAngelis & Lueken, 2019). Consequently, it scores 3/3.

Stakeholders: With STCs, parents’ complete freedom to choose their independent school allows them to not only select the school with the teachers, values, and curriculum of best fit but students can also leave at any time, giving them much stronger influence over safety issues than they have at public schools. Taxpayers also benefit, as discussed below. In terms of job security, voucher programs increase teacher salaries and employment (DeAngelis & Shuls, 2018; Hensvik, 2012; Jackson, 2012; Vedder & Hall, 2000). However, some public school teachers may be opposed to a policy that expands independent school, so teacher support is scored as moderate, for a total of 2.75/3.

Cost: In terms of cost, Bedrick (2014) presents the findings of studies from the three largest STC jurisdictions: Florida, Arizona, and Pennsylvania. The Florida program
yields $1.44 in private funding for every dollar of forgone corporate income tax revenue, for a total annual net taxpayer savings of $32.6 million (VanLandingham, 2010). Or, put differently, STCs save 31 cents on the dollar. In Arizona and Pennsylvania, the annual net savings are $44.5 million to $186.2 million (North, 2009; Butcher, 2014) and $472 million (LeFevre, 2011), respectively. In total, 17 empirical studies have measured the fiscal effects on taxpayers and public schools of a combined 11 STC programs. In all 17, the effects are positive (for a full list of citations see Cott et al. (2019, p. 55-58)). Additionally, STCs do not require any capital outlays, so it scores 3/3.

11.2. Analysis of Policy Option 2: APS

In evaluating APS, charter school research is used for comparison, as charter schools are the largest type of autonomous public school enrolling 3.2 million students in 44 US states (David & Hesla, 2018; Candal et al., 2018) and around 9,000 students in Alberta (Bosetti et al., 2015), providing over two decades worth of data.

Equity: If APS receive more applications than they have open seats, they must accept families based on a lottery, regardless of background. This is important in ensuring true access for all, and why “rather than harming disadvantaged students, accountability, autonomy, and choice appear to be tides that lift all boats” (Woessmann, et al., 2009, p. xi). Clemens et al. (2018) also find, “charter schools are particularly effective at improving the performance of “underserved” groups such as lower-income students and ethnic minorities” (p. i). However, non-discrimination does not equate guaranteed access, and this policy does not target underserved populations. Moreover, the lottery system, although necessary to ensure equity (given capacity constraints), is simultaneously a barrier that strictly caps access, so the enrolment impact is moderate, scoring 1.5/3.

Efficiency: Given APS’ expected superior outcomes versus typical public schools (Woessmann, 2001; Wöbmann et al., 2007; Woessmann, 2016) and the resulting increase to economic growth (Hanushek et al., 2008; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010; Hanushek et al., 2016), this option is expected to strongly increase GDP per capita. In terms of average lifetime earnings, charter schools produce a 53% greater average
return-on-investment\(^{23}\) than typical public schools (DeAngelis et al., 2019, p. 9), scoring a full 3/3.

**Effectiveness:** As discussed in Section 8.4, Woessmann estimates going from no to full autonomy in academic content can significantly increase student achievement by up to 53% of a standard deviation (Woessmann, 2016, p. 24). Bosetti et al. (2015) find in a thorough literature review of 44 studies on Alberta’s charter schools that charters enhance student learning outcomes, when controlling for socio-economic differences. Accountability, autonomy, and choice also lead to statistically significant better non-cognitive outcomes (Wöbmann, et al., 2007, p. 53-57), resulting in a full 3/3.

**Safety:** In addition to better non-cognitive outcomes – like higher levels of morale and commitment, less disruptive behaviour, less tardiness, and a healthier disciplinary climate (Wöbmann, et al., 2007, p. 53-57) – DeAngelis and Dills (2018) reveal jurisdictions with public charter schools see a decline in adolescent suicides. Statistically significant at a 90% level of confidence, DeAngelis and Lueken (2019) find teachers are 40 percentage points less likely to be physically abused, racial tensions are 30 percentage points less likely, and gang activity is 19 percentage points less prevalent at public charter schools. The only other studies that have looked at the effect of public charter schools on reducing crime are Deming (2011) and Dobbie and Fryer (2015), which both find strongly positive effects, for a full 3/3.

**Stakeholders:** DeAngelis and Shuls (2018) find public charter schools strengthen teachers’ job security, due to moderate positive effects on both teachers’ salaries and the number of teaching jobs through reduced monopsony power. Similarly, Jackson (2012) finds nearby public schools raise teacher compensation after a charter school opens. Taxpayers also benefit, as described below. However, although APS increase parents/students’ choice, its lottery enrolment system means not everyone that wants to enroll will be able to. It is equitable but sure to leave many parents and students upset; therefore, it only scores 2.5/3.

\(^{23}\) Return-on-investment is measured by one’s average lifetime earnings compared to the total revenues invested in his/her K-12 education.
Cost: On average, charter schools are 40% more cost-effective than typical public schools,\(^\text{24}\) (DeAngelis et al., 2019, p. 9), and eliminate capital expenditures, garnering 3/3.

### 11.3. Analysis of Policy Option 3: ESAs

ESA legislation has passed and ESA programs are active in six and five US states, respectively, with a combined 19,000 active students. Because they are so new, evidence for evaluating ESAs is less extensive than STCs and APS.

**Equity:** ESAs are not limited by physical capacity (e.g. classroom seats) and do not favour one group over another (e.g. low-income households over “middle-class”). They provide truly universal access for all school-age British Columbians. All eligible students will receive the basic allocation and have equal access to the education market. However, given the MoE’s supplement formula, underserved students will qualify for more funding. Moreover, ESAs overcome for parents the large hurdle in price between public schools and alternative options (Malkus, 2017), so they are particularly advantageous for low-income families, receiving a full 3/3.

**Efficiency:** The demand caused by the aforementioned universal access will prompt development on the supply side and “[create] a competitive marketplace for K-12 education at scale” (Malkus, 2017). Widespread market adoption will result in short-term disruptions but result in a vastly expanded industry (strengthening the economy) while yielding previously unimaginable benefits to everyday consumers (McShane, 2017). An ESA, by design, is ultra-efficient. It “allows education to be nimble, adapt to changes, and constantly improve through micro experiments that do not need to apply to an entire school system” (Peshek, 2017). So long as the regulatory system is correspondingly flexible, the seemingly endless unique needs of diverse students will be met by the customization of supply, as “actors differentiate and optimize in meeting [students’] needs” (Bailey, 2017).\(^\text{25}\)

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\(^{24}\) Cost-effectiveness is measured by the difference between charter and typical public schools in math and reading test scores per $1,000 spent per student.

\(^{25}\) For estimates of the fiscal effects, economic impacts, and social benefits of ESA program proposals in Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas see Trivitt and DeAngelis (2017), Flanders and DeAngelis (2018), DeAngelis and Flanders (2018), and DeAngelis and Wolf (2016), respectively.
Moreover, ESAs allow students to focus on their strengths and specialize sooner, resulting in enhanced earning potential, so it scores a full 3/3.

**Effectiveness:** ESAs hold great potential to dramatically improve the K-12 educational experience and outcomes, but as previously discussed, the flexible nature of ESAs requires a flexible regulatory system that welcomes a bottom-up, robust supply-side response of educational providers, in order to be successful (Bailey, 2017; McShane, 2017). Assuming such conditions are met, there is very positive qualitative research from parents and providers, as well as survey data, pointing to the effectiveness of ESAs (Finley, 2017; Enlow & Chartier, 2017). Parents using ESAs in Arizona and Mississippi report extraordinarily high levels of satisfaction with their children’s current education compared with their previous public school (Butcher & Bedrick, 2013; Kittredge, 2016). With the right balance of strong-as-possible accountability with as-little-as-necessary regulation, ESAs will “afford parents unprecedented flexibility to find high-quality schools and services for their children” (Bedrick et al., 2016), scoring a full 3/3.

**Safety and Stakeholders:** In addition to the growing body of evidence showing the positive affect educational choice has on safety, ESAs go one step further by putting both students and parents at the centre of K-12 education (see Jeynes, 2005; Dufur et al., 2013; and Olsen & Fuller, 2008 as cited in Finley (2017)). To date, no educational policy option has greater potential to reduce all kinds of bullying and abuse, as well as curriculum concerns, than ESAs. For teachers, too, the dynamic market created from a truly universal-access ESA program will create opportunities unimagined today. In the long-run, the benefit to teachers should be extraordinary, as the high-paying Korean education market suggests (Coulson, 2017). Consequently, safety scores a full 3/3. However, in the short-run, the teacher profession may experience disruption as BC transitions into an ESA market, but taxpayers will save on moderately lower operating costs and 100% capital-cost savings; therefore, this option scores 2.5/3 for stakeholders.

**Cost:** The incentive to consider opportunity cost and save for future educational purposes means lower average MoE operating-grant expenses, as DeAngelis’ (2018b) research has found. However, an exact estimate is unavailable, so its operating-grant savings score is moderate. ESAs, like STCs and APS, also eliminate capital expenses, so it totals 2.5/3.
11.4. Recommendations

The policy evaluation is summarized in Table 11, which presents a matrix of the scores. Although all three options score well, ESAs (17/18) have the advantage compared to STCs (16.25) and APS (16), and thus Policy 3 is recommended. ESAs best meet the short-term objective of immediately increasing educational choice options for BC families with school-age children, and this option will best increase independently-managed education enrolment in the long-run.

ESAs are also the most feasible for a one-year timeframe, as in the five states that have implemented them, they are the fastest growing educational choice policy instrument ever. This is largely thanks to unprecedented popularity with legislators and the public (Enlow & Chartier, 2017). ESA parents are extraordinarily satisfied, primarily because ESAs are all about fit and educational choice, not school choice per se. The “best” school, curriculum, or pedagogy for one person or group may be the opposite of what is best for another. This is at the root of why the current education system requires reform. One size does not fit all.

However, long-term, all three policies should be implemented, as they have different strengths and weaknesses. STCs are an independent school solution, APS are a public school solution, and ESAs are a hybrid of both sectors that also incorporates homeschool elements. All three options can be introduced together or separately, as they are complementary but can also stand alone. However, if only one can be introduced, ESAs have the edge.
Table 11: Analysis results matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1: STCs</th>
<th>2: APS</th>
<th>3: ESAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity in targeting underserved students</td>
<td>Targets underserved students (3)</td>
<td>No targeting of underserved (1)</td>
<td>Targets underserved students (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity in enrolment access for all students</td>
<td>Lowest enrolment impact (1)</td>
<td>Moderate enrolment impact (2)</td>
<td>Highest enrolment impact (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity total</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>3+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on GDP per-capita growth</td>
<td>Strong economic impact (3)</td>
<td>Strong economic impact (3)</td>
<td>Strong economic impact (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on students’ lifetime earnings</td>
<td>High ROI (3)</td>
<td>High: 53% better ROI vs public school (3)</td>
<td>High ROI (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA/BCPS improvement</td>
<td>Moderate (2)</td>
<td>Highest (3)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-cognitive impact</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness total</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student safety</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>Highest (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher safety</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent acceptance</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>Moderate (2)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student acceptance</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>Moderate (2)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher acceptance</td>
<td>Moderate (2)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>Low (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxpayer acceptance</td>
<td>High (2)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
<td>High (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder total</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating grant savings</td>
<td>High: saves $0.31 on the dollar (3)</td>
<td>Highest: saves $0.40 on the dollar (3)</td>
<td>Moderate (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital-cost savings</td>
<td>Eliminates capital expenses (3)</td>
<td>Eliminates capital expenses (3)</td>
<td>Eliminates capital expenses (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL /18</td>
<td>16.25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 12.

Conclusion

BC’s independent schools serve diverse religious, cultural, and regional communities, as well as meet demand for pedagogical variations and emphases unmet by public schools. Consequently, independent schools are an integral element of the Canadian social fabric. This is why educational choice is so important. Every student, family, and school are different, and students’ needs and parents’ preferences are better met through independently-managed education than public schools.

The purpose of the British Columbia K-12 school system, as stated in the School Act, is best realized in a democratic and pluralistic fashion where individual potential, knowledge, skills, and healthy attitudes are best nurtured. The 91% of highly satisfied independent school parents agree: Their independent school offers a supportive and nurturing environment that is motivating for and instills confidence in students, thanks to outstanding teachers and excellent administration.

Policy Option 3, ESAs, best match the aforementioned and meet the one-year objective of increasing educational choice options for BC families and expanding the number of and enrolment in independently-managed schools in the long-run, and thus, solves the policy problem of too few alternatives meeting the diverse needs, values, and preferences of students and parents. ESAs allow for a robust supply-side response to the strong and growing demand for public school alternatives, in a way that balances parental preferences with expert research.
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Appendix A:

BC Independent School Associations

In BC, 297 out of 367 independent schools are members of the Federation of Independent School Associations British Columbia (FISABC).26 All FISABC schools are members of at least one of six other associations, with some schools affiliated with multiple associations. All 29 FISABC elite schools belong to the Independent Schools Association of British Columbia (ISABC), 134 are specialty or religious schools with the Associate Member Group (AMG), 27 are religious schools with the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSIBC), 76 are religious schools with Catholic Independent Schools of British Columbia (CISBC), 14 are religious schools with Seventh Day Adventist British Columbia (SDABC), and 37 are religious schools with the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC).

Some BC schools are also members of one or more associations outside of the province. A total of 22 elite schools are also members of Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS), eight elite schools are with The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS), three elite schools belong to the National Coalition of Girls Schools (NCGS), one elite school is a member of the prestigious National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), 23 religious schools are members of Christian Schools International (CSI), and a total of 16 schools from all three school types – elite, specialty, religious – are International Baccalaureate (IB).

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26 Independent schools and membership data are from the MoE (2018/19), as of November 2018.
Appendix B:

BC Independent School Funding Groups

There are four official designations of BC independent schools, defined by their funding formula and corresponding regulatory structure. Group 1 schools may receive up to 50% government funding for per-student operating costs. Presented in Table 3, religious schools are almost entirely Group 1 schools, as are nearly half of specialty schools. Distributed Learning (DL) schools\(^{27}\) can fit into the Group 1 designation, but receive 63% operating grants. To classify as a Group 1 school, an independent school’s per-student operating costs cannot exceed that of local public schools, and they must meet the extensive additional requirements imposed on government-funded schools. A few of these additional requirements include incorporating a wide range of government-mandated curriculum, hiring only government-certified teachers, participating in government assessments (both for students and the school as a whole), and at least half the students enrolled must be “eligible students” (school-age BC residents whose parents are either Canadian citizens or permanent residents). As of September 30, 2018, there are 66,789 students enrolled in 244 Group 1 schools, with a median school size of 193 students, as shown in Table 4.

Group 2 schools’ per-student operating expenses can exceed that of local public schools, but Group 2 schools only qualify for a maximum 35% operating grant and up to 44.1% for Group 2 DL. Other than that, Group 2 schools must meet all the requirements of Group 1 schools. Most elite schools – 25 of 29 – are Group 2 schools. Albeit, specialty schools are the most prevalent Group 2 schools, as shown in Table 3. First Nation schools can fit into either the Group 1 or Group 2 designation, but receive 100% government funding. One is Group 1, and 29 of BC’s 30 first schools are Group 2. There are 17,628 students enrolled in 77 Group 2 schools, with a median enrolment of 101 students per school, as shown in Table 4.

Group 3 schools receive no government funding and are only required to meet the most basic Section 1 requirements for all independent schools. To qualify as a Group 3

\(^{27}\) Distributed Learning (DL) refers to homeschooling through a supervising school authority. This is also known as "distance learning" or “Distance Ed".
school, at least half the students enrolled must be eligible students, and the school must undergo a government inspection every two years. Group 3 schools can be for-profit companies. Twenty-two Group 3 schools – 14 religious and eight specialty – are on the BC Ministry of Education (MoE) list, but three Group 3 religious schools have been subtracted from Table 3 and Table 4, due to zero enrolment as of September 30, 2018. With 544 students in 19 schools, Group 3 median enrolment is 25 students, as shown in Table 4.

Group 4 schools can also be for-profit companies and do not receive government funding, but they differ from Group 3 schools in three ways. Firstly, they are primarily composed of international or interprovincial students. Secondly, they must be bonded: $5,000 per student or $100,000, whichever is greater (MoE, 2018a). Thirdly, Group 4 schools have additional regulatory requirements similar to, although not quite as extensive as, Group 1 and 2 schools (Independent School Act, 2018). The overwhelming majority of Group 4 schools are for-profit, international student oriented, university preparatory schools. However, they do not meet the literature’s “elite” definition, as none are members of an elite school association. As they match the specialty school definition, I have categorized all 24 as specialty in Table 3. There are 2,622 Group 4 students, and median school enrolment is 78, as shown in Table 4.
Appendix C:

Funding for Special Education

Special education is fully funded, regardless of school choice. Group 1 and 2 schools receive the same per-student funding as public schools for Level 1, 2, and 3 special-needs students (MoE, 2018c; 2019d).\(^{28}\) In 2010/11, the most recent publicly-available official breakdown (to my knowledge), special education grants accounted for 12.4\% of the total independent school funding budget (MoE, 2011). It would be very interesting to see how comparable this is to today, and in particular, the breakdown of how this is allocated to the 8,243 special-needs independent school students (MoE, 2019a). Based on conversations with principals, I expect when excluding special-needs, per-student funding is around $4,300 and $3,000 for Group 1 and 2 schools, respectively, on average. However, this is anecdotal evidence and needs to be confirmed.

\(^{28}\) In 2018/19, special-needs Level 1, 2, and 3 funding was $9,800, $19,400, and $38,800, respectively (MoE, 2018c, p. 3). This will increase to $10,250, $20,200, and $42,200 in 2019/20, respectively (MoE, 2019d, p. 3).
Appendix D:

Parental Rights in Education

Do parents have a right to choose their child’s education in Canada? The complexity and controversy surrounding this issue warrants a discussion beyond a simple “Yes”. This appendix presents three perspectives for understanding the basis of parents’ freedom, right, and authority to choose where and how their children are educated. First, parents’ rights as first educators are explored as a timeless and universal principle. Second, the educational rights of parents are presented as a core value that defined Canada’s founding and continues to define what it means to be Canadian today. And third, the enshrinement of parental rights into international law, with accompanying affirmation by the Supreme Court of Canada, is specified. In short, parental rights and educational freedom are not novel but deeply rooted from antiquity to Confederation to modern UN declarations.

Parental Rights as a Universal Principle

To whom do children belong? Melissa Moschella, in her book by that title, presents strong evidence of the timeless and universal principle that parents are both the custodian and trustee of their children, bearing the primary and ultimate authority and responsibility for their care, including education (2016). Basic life skills and values are taught and “caught” at home. Naturally, this is where education begins. Even in the animal kingdom one can observe parents as first educators. Although one can readily observe this principle in nature, the ancients understood the need to codify it into law. Both the Hammurabic Code and Mosaic Law place children under the care of their parents, not the State, until they are old enough to care for themselves. Aristotle and Aquinas further affirm this natural parent-child relationship, and the duty to educate that follows (see Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.12, 1161b16; Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 10, a.12, q. 57, a.3-4; as cited in Moschella 2016, p. 25-26).
Parental Rights as a Foundational Canadian Value

Parental rights are deeply entrenched in the Canadian psyche. Canada’s diverse education landscape, specifically in terms of state-funded independent religious schools for minorities, was a critical theme at Confederation. In 1860s Canada, most schools were church-based and varied considerably by denomination across provinces (Dodek 2016, p.79). This led to the constitutional enshrinement of education legislation as the exclusive domain of each provincial legislature. This contrasts sharply with the federal government’s jurisdiction over education legislation in England and the United States, our closest and most influential allies. Section 93 of the Constitution Act (1867) protects the rights of minority Catholics and Protestants in Ontario and Quebec, respectively, to their own independent state-funded schools; albeit, in the latter these rights were abrogated by Quebec’s Constitutional Amendment (1997). Section 93 was also extended to BC and PEI upon joining Confederation in 1871 and 1873, respectively (Dodek 2016, p. 79). Comparable alternatives were also provided to other provinces as they were added to the Dominion, like Section 17 of the Alberta Act (1905).

Not only was taxpayer-funded independent schooling a practical necessity to unite a highly diverse people, but it was also central to Canada’s Constitution because of the fact it is at the core of what it means to be a free society. Three of the most influential thinkers on the Fathers of Confederation – John Locke, Edmund Burke, and John Stuart Mill – had much to say on the matter (Ajzenstat 2003, 2007, 2010; McKinnell, 2018). John Locke defended parental rights using natural law. In direct opposition to the absolute sovereignty of the State espoused in the doctrine of the divine right of kings, John Locke – the “Father of Liberalism” – argued that parents, not the State, have authority over their young children, not because children are subservient to parents, but because of the duty “incumbent on [parents] to take care of their off-spring, during the imperfect state of childhood” (Locke 1689; 1.6, 2.58). Parental sovereignty is natural. Thus, the State’s relation to children, in English common law dating as far back as 1608, is as the parent of last resort, the parens patriae (“parent of the nation”), to “replace parents in extreme cases…[when judged that they] have failed in their custodial obligations” (Ng, 2012).

A full century after Locke, Edmund Burke – the “Father of Conservatism” – in his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1791) observed that families form the foundation of society and are independent of the State. Even Rousseau, Burke’s antithesis,
acknowledged this in stating that the family is the only truly natural “society” or association (Rousseau 1762, 1.2). To Burke, respecting familial autonomy yields order, while infringing on it breeds chaos. It is from the love of family, Burke argued, “by which we proceed towards a love [of] country and to mankind” (Burke 1791, paragraph 75). Is this not the purpose of education, to make good citizens?

This helps explain why Locke believed the first familial duty – and thus the premise of parental sovereignty – is the education of children. (Consequently, it logically follows that parents’ explicit authority over their children naturally ceases when “the business of education is over” (Locke 1689, 2.69).) Nearly two centuries after Locke, John Stuart Mill argued for parental freedom in school choice, within the context of compulsory education (1859, p. 97):

If the government would make up its mind to require for every child a good education, it might save itself the trouble of providing one. It might leave to parents to obtain the education where and how they pleased, and content itself with helping to pay the school fees of the poorer classes of children, and defraying the entire school expenses of those who have no one else to pay for them. The objections which are urged with reason against State education, do not apply to the enforcement of education by the State, but to the State’s taking upon itself to direct that education: which is a totally different thing. That the whole or any large part of the education of the people should be in State hands, I go as far as any one in deprecating. All that has been said of the importance of individuality of character, and diversity in opinions and modes of conduct, involves, as of the same unspeakable importance, diversity of education. A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another: and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government, whether this be a monarch, a priesthood, an aristocracy, or the majority of the existing generation, in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body.
Parental Rights as International Law

The United Nations (UN) has also addressed the matter. As Cameron, Carpay, and Kitchen (2017, p. 6-7) point out, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1948) states in Article 26(3): “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children,” and Article 16(3) of the *Universal Declaration* also states: “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.” The UN’s *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (United Nations, 1966) repeats Article 16(3) of the *Universal Declaration* verbatim in its Article 23(1), and Article 18(4) of the *International Covenant* reaffirms “respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.” Canada was not only a signatory of the *International Covenant*, but the Supreme Court of Canada, in *Loyola* (2015, para. 65), affirms it is applicable in Canada. Parental rights are further affirmed in Articles 5, 14, and 18 of the UN’s *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989).

In summary, parents’ freedom, rights, and authority as first educator are deeply rooted in Western civilization, from antiquity to the Canadian founding to modern UN declarations.
Appendix E:

Parent Questionnaire

Q1 Please indicate your relationship to your child/children who are attending/attended independent school.

- Mother
- Father
- Legal guardian

Q2 What grade is/are your child/children in?

- Child 1 _____________________________
- Child 2 _____________________________
- Child 3 _____________________________
- Child 4 _____________________________
- Child 5 _____________________________
- Child 6 _____________________________
- Child 7 _____________________________
Q3 Please indicate your marital status.

- Married
- Common Law
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Not Applicable

Q4 Who was the primary decision-maker in choosing this independent school?

- Me
- My spouse/partner
- Both my spouse and I
- My child/children
- All of the above
- Other
Q5 Which of the following broad categories best describes your school?

- University preparatory
- Specialty
- Religious

Q6 Have any of your children previously attended another school? (If NO, please skip ahead to Question 7.)

- Yes
- No

Q6a If YES to the above, have any of your children attended a public school?

- Yes
- No
**Q6b** If YES, since switching from a public to independent school, how has your involvement with your child(ren)’s education changed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>More Often</th>
<th>Same Frequency</th>
<th>Less Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I volunteer at the school or in community service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in or attend school activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help with homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help with math homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make use of online educational resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q0c. Please indicate the importance of each of the following in choosing your child(ren)'s current independent school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At our last school, we had concerns with the curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At our last school, we had concerns with our child's safety (e.g. bullying)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At our last school, we had concerns with the teachers or administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were disappointed with public schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were disappointed with another independent school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were disappointed with our homeschooling experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q7 How important were the following characteristics in choosing your child(ren)'s independent school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This school emphasizes academic quality</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school offers individualized attention</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school motivates students</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school is well administered</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school offers frequent, detailed, and open reporting of student progress to parents</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates are typically accepted at the universities of their choice</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school has good student discipline</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school offers a unique educational focus</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school has outstanding teachers</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school offers a supportive, nurturing environment for students</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Somewhat Important</td>
<td>Somewhat Unimportant</td>
<td>Not Important</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school accommodates the particular needs of our child(ren) in a way that other schools cannot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The teachers in this school regularly assign homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school has a good, long-standing reputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>This school has clear admission standards</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school teaches students to think critically and independently</td>
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<tr>
<td>This school sets high expectations for students</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This school recognizes student success</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school provides valuable networks to our family and child(ren)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school community gives our family a sense of belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our child(ren) wanted to attend this school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q7b Here are 17 more characteristics. How important were they in selecting your child(ren)’s independent school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This school has additional activities before and/or after regular classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school offers a broad appreciation of the arts and culture</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school educates the whole child</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school offers opportunities unavailable in local public schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school values collegial relationships amongst staff members</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school is flexible and responsive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The class sizes are small</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students at this school seem happy</td>
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<tr>
<td>This school is less expensive than others we considered</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Somewhat Important</td>
<td>Somewhat Unimportant</td>
<td>Not Important</td>
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<tr>
<td>Of the schools we considered,</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>this school is one of the</td>
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<tr>
<td>closest to our home</td>
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<tr>
<td>The transportation options</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>are convenient (e.g. bus,</td>
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<tr>
<td>carpooling)</td>
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<tr>
<td>This school instills</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>confidence in the students</td>
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<tr>
<td>The staff at this school</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>have a collaborative approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>to problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school’s principal</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>provides strong leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other members of our family</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>typically attend this school</td>
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<tr>
<td>or one like it</td>
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<tr>
<td>We knew other families with</td>
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<tr>
<td>children at this school</td>
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<tr>
<td>A teachers strike is unlikely</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>to occur at this school</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Q7c.** Just 11 more! In choosing your child(ren)'s independent school, how important were the following factors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This school reinforces our faith or religious beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>This school values parent-teacher collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is a safe school</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This school emphasizes character development</td>
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<tr>
<td>This school welcomes children from diverse backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>This school supports our family's values</td>
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<tr>
<td>In this school parents participate in decision making</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This school has outstanding quality teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school encourages understanding and tolerance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This school teaches right from wrong</td>
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<tr>
<td>We trust the curriculum at this school</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Q7d What was the MOST important consideration in choosing your independent school? (It can be one of the previously listed characteristics or something else.)
Q8 How did you first hear about your child(ren)’s independent school?

- Parent attended school
- Friends or relatives
- Other word-of-mouth
- Google search
- Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Community event
- Church / temple / synagogue / etc.
- Other community organization
- Flyer/brochure or direct mail
- Newspaper / magazine
- Other educational institution (e.g. pre-school, daycare, other independent school, etc.)
- A school association website (e.g. CAIS, FISA, etc.)
- A school ranking or review site (e.g. CompareSchoolRankings.org, RateMyTeachers.com, OurKids.net, etc.)
- Other internet source
- Other

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Q9 What source(s) strongly influenced your choice of independent school? Please select all that apply.

- Parent attended school
- Friends or relatives
- Other word-of-mouth
- Google search
- Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- The school’s official website
- A school association website (e.g. CAIS, FISA, etc.)
- A school ranking or review site (e.g. CompareSchoolRankings.org, RateMyTeachers.com, OurKids.net, etc.)
- Other internet source
- Community event
- Church / temple / synagogue / etc.
- Other community organization
- Flyer/brochure or direct mail
- Newspaper/magazine
- Other educational institution (e.g. pre-school, daycare, other independent school, etc.)
- Other ____________________________
Q10 If your child(ren) was not enrolled in their current independent school, where would they be educated?

- Another independent school
- Public school
- Homeschool

Q11 How easy or difficult was it for you to find the preferred school for your child(ren)?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

Q12 How easy or difficult was it for your child(ren) to enroll and attend your preferred school?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult
Q13 To financially support your child(ren)'s K-12 education, which of the following have you done? Please select all that apply.

- [ ] Changed jobs
- [ ] Taken on a part-time job or other job for additional income
- [ ] Taken out a new loan
- [ ] Other ________________________________
- [ ] Not applicable

Q14 Which of these best describes the neighbourhood in which you live?

- [ ] Urban
- [ ] Suburban
- [ ] Small Town
- [ ] Rural

Q15 Which of these best describes the neighbourhood where you grew up (or lived in during your most formative early years)?

- [ ] Urban
- [ ] Suburban
- [ ] Small Town
- [ ] Rural
Q16 Where did you go to school?

☐ Public school

☐ Independent ("private") school

☐ Homeschool

☐ Some public and independent

☐ Some public and homeschool

☐ Some independent and homeschool

☐ All of the above
Q17 Which of the following types of organizations are you a part of? Please select all that apply.

- Sports or recreation organization (hockey league, health club, etc.)
- Youth organization (Scouts, YMCA, etc.)
- Cultural, educational, or hobby organization (theatre group, book club, rail model association, etc.)
- Service club, fraternity, or sorority organization (Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus, etc.)
- School group, neighbourhood, civic, or community association (Parent-Teacher Association, alumni association, block parents, etc.)
- Union professional organization (CUPE, UNIFOR, teachers’ federation, etc.)
- Non-union professional organization (accounting association, bar association, chamber of commerce, etc.)
- Religious-affiliate group (youth group, Bible study, church choir, missions team, etc.)
- Political party or activist organization
- Other ____________________________
Q18 What is the highest academic or professional credential you have attained? If necessary, select more than one.

- High school diploma (or equivalent)
- Trade certificate / diploma (e.g. Red Seal)
- College / university certificate or diploma [below bachelor level]
- Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BSc, BComm)
- Post-baccalaureate diploma
- Professional degree (e.g. LLB/JD, CA/CPA)
- Master's degree (e.g. MBA, MEd, LLM)
- Medical field degree (e.g. MD, DDS/DMD, OD, DC)
- Earned doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD, DSc)
- Other non-university certificate or diploma (from community college, technical institute, etc.)
- None
Q19 What is your occupation? Please select ONE from the following list of classifications:

Art, culture, recreation and sport occupations
- Announcer or other performer
- Athlete, coach, referee, or related occupation
- Creative and performing artist
- Creative designer or craftsperson
- Librarian, archivist, conservator, or curator
- Photographer, graphic artist, or technical or co-ordinating occupation in motion pictures, broadcasting or the performing arts
- Technical occupation in libraries, public archives, museums, or art galleries
- Writing, translating, or related communications professional

Business, finance, and administration occupations
- Auditors, accountants, or investment professional
- Administrative or regulatory occupation
- Administrative services supervisor
- Court reporter, transcriptionist, records management technician, or statistical officer
- Finance, insurance, or related business administration
- General office worker
- Human resources or business service professional
- Library, correspondence, or other clerk
- Mail or message distribution occupation
- Office administrative assistant (general, legal, or medical)
- Office equipment operator
- Supply chain logistics, tracking, or scheduling co-ordination occupation
- Support worker in financial, insurance, or related administration

Education, law, and social, community and government services occupations
- College or other vocational instructor
- Front-line public protection services occupation
- Home care provider or educational support occupation
- Judge, lawyer, or notary
- Legal or public protection support occupation
- Paraprofessional in legal, social, community, or education services
- Policy or program researcher, consultant or officer
- Secondary or elementary school teacher, or educational counsellor
- Social and community service professional
- University professor or post-secondary assistant

Health occupations
- Assisting occupation in support of health services
- Nurse
- Optometrist, chiropractor, or other health diagnosing and treating professional
- Pharmacist, dietitian, or nutritionist
- Physician, dentist, or veterinarian
- Technician - dental health care
- Technician or medical technologist (except certain health)
- Therapy or assessment professional
- Other technical occupation in health care
Management occupations
- Administrative services manager
- Agriculture, horticulture, or aquaculture manager
- Art, culture, recreation or sports manager
- Communication manager (except broadcasting)
- Construction or facility operation or maintenance manager
- Corporate sales manager
- Customer or personal services manager
- Education or social or community services manager
- Engineering, architecture, science or information systems manager
- Financial and business services manager
- Food service or accommodation manager
- Health care manager
- Legislators
- Manufacturing or utilities manager
- Natural resources predator or fishing manager
- Public administration manager
- Public protection services manager
- Retail or wholesale trade manager
- Senior management
- Transportation manager

Manufacturing and utilities occupations
- Central control and process operator in processing or manufacturing
- Labourer in processing, manufacturing, or utilities
- Machine operator or related worker in chemical, plastic, or rubber processing
- Machine operator or related worker in food, beverage, and associated products processing
- Machine operator or related worker in mineral and metal products processing and manufacturing
- Machine operator or related worker in pulp and paper production or wood processing and manufacturing
- Machine operator or related worker in textile, fabric, fur, or leather products processing and manufacturing
- Mechanics, electricians, or electronics assembler
- Printing equipment operator or related occupation
- Supervisor in assembly or fabrication
- Supervisor in processing or manufacturing
- Utilities equipment operator or controller
- Other assembly or related occupation

Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations
- Agriculture or horticulture worker
- Contractor or supervisor in agriculture, horticulture, or related operations and services
- Contractor or supervisor in mining or oil and gas
- Fishing vessel masters or fishermen/women
- Harvesting, landscaping, or natural resources labourer
- Logging machinery operator
- Logging or forestry worker
- Mine service worker or operator in oil and gas drilling
- Supervisor in logging or forestry
- Underground miner, oil and gas driller, or related occupation
- Other worker in fishing or trapping or hunting occupation

**Sales and service occupations**
- Butcher or baker
- Cashier
- Chef or cook
- Cleaner
- Customer or information services representative
- Food and beverage service occupation
- Food counter attendant, kitchen helper, or related support occupation
- Insurance, real estate, or financial sales
- Retail sales supervisor
- Retail salesperson
- Sales or account representatives - wholesale trade (non-technical)
- Security guard or related security service occupation
- Service supervisor
- Specialized occupation in personal or customer service
- Support occupation in accommodation, travel, or amusement services
- Technical sales specialist in wholesale trade or retail or wholesale buyer
- Tourism and amusement services occupation
- Travel and accommodation occupation
- Other occupation in personal service
- Other sales support or related occupation
- Other service support or related occupation

**Sciences and related occupations (natural and applied)**
- Architect, urban planner, or land surveyor
- Computer and information systems professional
- Engineer - civil, mechanical, electrical, or chemical
- Engineer - other
- Life science professional
- Mathematician, statistician, or actuary
- Physical science professional
- Technical occupation in architecture, drafting, surveying, geomatics, or meteorology
- Technical occupation in civil, mechanical, or industrial engineering
- Technical occupation in computer and information systems
- Technical occupation in electronics or electrical engineering
- Technical occupation in life science
- Technical occupation in physical science
- Transportation officer or controller
- Other - technical inspector or regulatory officer

**Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations**
- Automotive service technician
- Carpenter or cabinetmaker
- Contractor or supervisor in industrial, electrical, or construction trades
- Contractor or supervisor in maintenance trades, heavy equipment, or transport operator
- Crane operator, driller, or blaster
- Electrical trades, electrical power line, or telecommunications worker
- Heavy equipment operator
- Longshore worker or material handler
- Machinery and transportation equipment mechanic (except motor vehicles)
- Machining, metal forming, shaping, or erecting trades
- Masonry or plastering trades
- Plumber, pipefitter, or gas fitter
- Printing press operator or other trades or related occupation
- Public works or other labourer
- Taxi, bus, transit, or other motor vehicle driver
- Trades helper or labourer
- Train crew operating occupation
- Other construction trades
- Other installer, repairer, or servicer
- Other mechanics or related repairer
- Other transport equipment operator or related maintenance worker
- Unclassified
  - Other

Q20 Are you an entrepreneur (e.g. business owner, self-employed)?

- Yes
- No

Q21 Approximately, what is the range of your total yearly household income?

- Less than $24,000
- $24,000 to $56,000
- $56,000 to $90,000
- $90,000 to $140,000
- More than $140,000
Q22 What is your household’s largest source of income?

- Wages and salaries (including bonuses, commissions, tips, etc.)
- Investment income (including interest, dividends, capital gains, etc.)
- Government assistance (including Employment Insurance, Worker’s Compensation, Canada Child Benefit, government pension, etc.)
- Other
Q23 What is your first language or mother tongue?
- English
- French
- Arabic
- Bengali
- Chinese (Cantonese)
- Chinese (Mandarin)
- Cree
- Crocs
- Croatian
- Dutch
- German
- Greek
- Gujarati
- Hebrew
- Hindi
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Persian (Farsi)
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Punjabi
- Romanian
- Russian
- Serbian
- Spanish
- Tagalog (Filipino)
- Tamil
- Ukrainian
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Other
Q24 What language do you speak most often at home?

- English
- French
- Arabic
- Bengali
- Chinese (Cantonese)
- Chinese (Mandarin)
- Cree
- Creoles
- Croatian
- Dutch
- German
- Greek
- Gujarati
- Hebrew
- Hindi
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Persian (Farsi)
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Punjabi
- Romanian
- Russian
- Serbian
- Spanish
- Tagalog (Filipino)
- Tamil
- Ukrainian
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Other
Q25 Please select from the following:

☐ I am a Canadian citizen by birth

☐ I am a Canadian citizen by naturalization

☐ I am a landed immigrant

☐ Other ____________________________
Q26 Which ethnicity do you most closely identify with?

North American
- Canadian
- Acadian
- African-American
- American (USA)
- First Nation
- Inuit
- Métis
- Mexican
- Other Indigenous / Aboriginal / Native American
- Québécois

British
- English
- Scottish
- Welsh
- Other British Isles origins (not included elsewhere)

Western European
- Belgian
- Dutch
- French
- German
- Irish

Central European
- Austrian
- Hungarian
- Romanian
- Swiss

Eastern European
- Croatian
- Polish
- Russian
- Ukrainian

Southern European
- Greek
- Italian
- Portuguese
- Spanish

Nordic European
- Danish
- Finnish
- Norwegian
- Swedish
- **East Asian**
  - Chinese (Cantonese)
  - Chinese (Mandarin)
  - Japanese
  - Korean
  - Taiwanese
- **South Asian**
  - Bangladeshi
  - East Indian
  - Pakistani
  - Sri Lankan
- **Southeast Asian**
  - Filipino
  - Vietnamese
- **Middle Eastern**
  - Arab
  - Iranian
  - Jewish
  - Lebanese
- **Other**
  - African
  - Australian
  - Haitian
  - Jamaican
  - Kiwi
  - Other ____________________________

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Q27 What, if any, is your religious affiliation? (If NONE, please skip to Question 28.)

- Buddhist
- Christian (Catholic)
- Christian (Non-Catholic)
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other, non-Christian
- None

Q27a How important are your religious beliefs to the way you live your life?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Somewhat unimportant
- Not important
Q27b In the past 12 months, how often did you **attend** religious services (excluding special occasions like weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc.)

- [ ] At least once a week
- [ ] At least once a month
- [ ] At least 3 times
- [ ] Once or twice
- [ ] Not at all

Q27c In the past 12 months, how often did you participate in religious activities **at home** (e.g. prayer, meditation, reading Scripture, worship, etc.)

- [ ] At least once a week
- [ ] At least once a month
- [ ] At least 3 times
- [ ] Once or twice
- [ ] Not at all
Q28 How frequently do you vote?

- Every municipal, provincial, and federal election
- Very often
- Somewhat often
- Somewhat seldom
- Very seldom
- Never

Q29 Approximately how much annual tuition did you pay, per child, for the most recent year?

- Less than $4,000
- $4,000 to $8,000
- $8,000 to $16,000
- $16,000 to $28,000
- $28,000 to $56,000
- More than $56,000
Q30 How are tuition charges calculated at your school?

- Per student
- By family
- Sliding scale
- Other ________________________________

Q31 Did you pay residence fees? (If NO, please skip ahead to Q33.)

- Yes
- No

Q32 If YES to the above, approximately what was the total cost of residence, per child, for the most recent year?

- Less than $4,000
- $4,000 to $8,000
- $8,000 to $16,000
- $16,000 to $28,000
- $28,000 to $56,000
- More than $56,000
Q33 In addition to tuition and residence (if applicable), approximately how much did you spend on extra costs per child (including uniforms, instruments, tutors, school trips, activity fees, etc.)?

- Under $1,000
- $1,000 to $2,500
- $2,500 to $5,000
- $5,000 to $10,000
- Over $10,000

Q34a Do you receive a bursary or financial support/assistance from the school?

- No
- Yes (please specify amount) ________________________________

Q34b Do you receive any financial support or assistance from any other source?

- No
- Yes (please specify amount) ________________________________
Q35 Please indicate the gender of each of your children who attend an independent school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
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<td>Child 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
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<td>Child 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 7</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q36 On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend your child(ren)'s independent school to a friend, neighbour, or colleague?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely unlikely</th>
<th>Neither unlikely nor likely</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q37 Is there a particular story about your family's experience with this school, or reasons for choosing and staying with this school, that you would like to share with us?

To help others better understand why you chose an independent school, we may include your story in publications from this study or future research.

Please be assured that all identifying information will be removed before publication.
Appendix F:

Securing Survey Participation

Securing participation proved formidable for three reasons. First, several phone and email attempts over many weeks were required to make contact with almost all the schools, and in some cases, up to an additional three months of communication to secure participation. The survey was first distributed November 22, 2018 and closed March 11, 2019. Second, many of the schools regularly distribute their own in-house surveys, so they were reluctant to participate. Third, the questionnaire required an average 18-minute commitment from parents, which many considered too long. Throughout this process, it became increasingly apparent how inundated people are with online survey requests today. For future research, incentives should be considered, as Bosetti demonstrated so effectively in her 2004 study, which secured participation from 29 out of 30 schools (Bosetti, 2004, p. 389).
Appendix G:

Occupations, household income, and family structure

As independent school parents are more likely to be well-educated, it is not surprising they occupy professions that require higher education, and therefore, command higher incomes. Although the majority of respondents earn above-average household incomes, less than one-third are in the top quintile and exactly 20% of respondents are in the middle $56,000 to $90,000 quintile of Canadian two-parent household incomes (Statistics Canada, 2016b; Lammam et al., 2016).29

Controlling for sex,30 Figure 6 presents the greater and lesser likelihood for independent school parents to work in each broadly defined Statistic Canada (2016a) National Occupation Classification (NOC). Independent school parents are 1.8 times more likely to work in natural and applied science and related occupations (7.7% of respondents compared to 4.3% of British Columbians), 1.3 times more likely to work in health occupations (11.6% versus 8.9%) and education, law, and social, community and government services occupations (17.8% versus 13.6%), nearly 1.3 times more likely to work in management (12.3% versus 9.7%), and 1.2 times more likely to work in business, finance, and administration. The latter is the largest occupation category in my sample (23.7% versus 19.5%). Independent school parents are less likely to work in the remaining NOCs.

---

29 When testing the survey, pilot respondents were strongly opposed to detailing personal or household financial information, so I structured the questionnaire’s range of total annual household income by multiplying Statistic Canada’s individual income mobility quintiles (from Lammam et al. (2016)) by two. Unlike the national couple-family median that, at $89,610 (Statistics Canada, 2016b), conveniently falls at the dividing line between my calculated middle and second-highest quintiles, the median BC couple’s total income, at $87,630 (Statistics Canada, 2016b), is well inside the middle quintile. Thus, an exact comparison to the provincial median is not possible.

30 My survey respondents were approximately 80% female and 20% male, so the BC average was weighted to reflect this distribution.
Table 12 presents the top 20 specific occupations, by NOC, for independent school parents. After unclassified occupations, the most common independent school parent occupation is secondary and elementary school teachers and educational counsellors, at 9.8% of respondents compared to 2.7% of British Columbians (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Teachers are followed closely by auditors, accountants, and investment professionals at 8.2%, which is four times the BC average of 2%. Of the remaining most-prevalent occupations, a few are particularly disproportionate. Independent school parents are six times more likely to be civil, mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineers (2.7% versus 0.4%) and managers in engineering, architecture, science, and information services (1.8% versus 0.3%), over five times more likely to be administrative services supervisors (2.3% versus 0.4%), nearly five times more likely to be physicians, dentists and veterinarians (3.2% versus 0.67%), and 4.5 times more likely to be pharmacists, dietitians and nutritionists (1.4% versus 0.3%). Conversely, rounding out the top 20, independent school parents are one-third as likely to be general office workers (1.4% versus 4.1%) and slightly less than three-fifths as likely to work in assisting occupations in support of health services (1.4% versus 2.5%). Another notable finding, just outside the top 20, is that independent school parents are over eleven times more likely to be public administration managers (1.14% versus 0.10%).

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31 Again, all BC averages are gender-adjusted to ensure like-to-like comparisons.
Table G: Top 20 occupations for independent school parents, by specific NOC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Specific NOC</th>
<th>Share of Independent School Parents (%)</th>
<th>BC Adjusted Average (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14.58</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary &amp; elementary school teachers, &amp; edu. counsellors</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Auditors, accountants, &amp; investment professionals</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Physicians, dentists, &amp; veterinarians</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Computer &amp; information systems professionals</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Administrative &amp; regulatory occupations</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Human resources &amp; business service professionals</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Engineers - civil, mechanical, electrical, or chemical</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Finance, insurance, &amp; related business administration</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Home care providers &amp; educational support occupations</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Administrative services supervisors</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Professional occupations in nursing</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Office administrative assistants (general, legal, &amp; medical)</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Managers in engineering, architect., sci. &amp; info. systems</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Therapy &amp; assessment professionals</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pharmacists, dietitians, &amp; nutritionists</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Social &amp; community service professional</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Other technical occupations in health care</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Assisting occupations in support of health services</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>General office workers</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public administration managers earn well above average incomes, as do many of the professions overrepresented by independent school parents. The best example of this is senior management. They earn the highest average incomes in BC and are the third most common of independent school parent occupations at over four times the provincial average. Independent school parents are also more likely to be entrepreneurs (e.g. business owners, self-employed). Fully 24.5% of respondents are entrepreneurs, compared to 17.9% of British Columbians and 15.3% of Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2018c).

Another important socioeconomic factor is family structure. Of independent school households, 91% are two parent families compared to 73% of BC households with children
Of the combined 46 lone parent families in my sample, 38 (83%) were female parents, which mirrors the 80% of female lone parents in the BC 2016 census (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Similarly, when controlling for marital status and number of parents in a household, over 16% of lone parent independent school families are in the bottom quintile of household income. Married couples are an increasingly larger share of each wealthier quintile, exceeding 94% in the top quintile. This is consistent with the causes of poverty literature, which reveals single-parent households have disproportionately lower income (see Haskins and Sawhill (2003), Murray (2013), Wang and Wilcox (2017), Chetty and Hendren (2018a, 2018b), and Sarlo (2019)). In Canada, female lone-parent households are over 12 times more likely to live in poverty than a married, working two-parent household (Sarlo, 2019).

Taken together, the combination of more two-parent households, parents’ higher educational attainment, and higher-paying occupations logically results in higher incomes. However, this is likely indicative of respondent self-selection bias. My sample, although representative random selection, is but a small extract of the entire BC student population. By comparison, the findings of Clemens et al. (2017) and MacLeod et al. (2017) were based on coverage ratios of 80% of BC and Alberta K-12 families, respectively. Moreover, my survey’s income data – in response to pilot participant feedback – is rather limited. Therefore, it is not rigorous enough to challenge the literature’s assertions that non-elite independent school family household income and socioeconomic status reflect the typical middle class family (see Clemens et al., 2017; MacLeod et al., 2017; and Bulman, 2015). Albeit, my socioeconomic findings seem to confirm that of PISA (2012, p. 526); namely, family characteristics within independent schools create school-characteristic advantages over public schools (which likely explains the superior performance of independent compared to public schools).

32 In the 2011 and 2016 censuses, 73.28% and 73.02% of BC families with children are parented by couples, respectively. The 2011 census further categorizes into 65.55% married and 7.73% common-law.
Appendix H:

Organizing Open-Ended Responses for Parents’ “Most Important” Reason for School Choice

When asked open-endedly the most important consideration in choosing their independent school, 43% (176) of my survey respondents gave a single reason. For the remaining 57% (237), it was a combination of factors, so the data needed to be organized before analysis. Of 413 responses, 883 different reasons were given, which I collapsed into 62 categories before scoring. I gave explicit reasons a score of one, and implicit reasons a half score. For example, one parent wrote the most important thing was, “[The] safety of my children's spiritual, emotional and physical well-being so that they can flourish in their strengths and grow in their weaknesses.” Explicitly, “safe school” and “educates the whole child” were each given a score of one. Implicitly, three things were alluded to and, therefore, given a half point each: “recognizes/encourages/fosters student success”, “individualized attention/recognizes uniqueness”, and “character development”. The average respondent gave two reasons, with a median and mean score per respondent of 2.0 and 2.1, respectively, and a max and min of 9.0 and zero, respectively (if respondents said “everything”, they scored zero).

Of the 62 open-ended categories, Table 7 shows a ranking of the top 10. Excluding responses with religious references, the top “most important” reason is identical to the top-ranking characteristic in Table 5: “This school offers a supportive, nurturing environment for students”. Including all responses, the most important reason is: “Reinforces our faith or religious beliefs”. With a score of 69, this is the top consideration for exactly one out of six respondents (16.7%) and represents 7.8% of the 883 different responses. Ranking second, 49 responses (3rd) make specific reference to the fact the school is Christian. Again, this is a separate category, as the reason for choosing a Christian school is not necessarily to reinforce parents’ faith or to receive a religious education. From one word responses to lengthy paragraphs, the rationale for choosing a “Christian” school vary heavily, so it is its own category. “Supports our family’s values” (5th) and “Values” (7th) are
also different and, thus, counted separately, with scores of 41 and 39, respectively. A final example of this is respondents that include both values and religious references in the same response, the two are counted separately as they are different things. This approach applies to all 883 responses and the entire list of 62 categories. The one exception is small class size and small school, as most responses including either allude to both.