

**PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND SCHOOL CHOICE:
THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DISTINCTION**

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Abstract

This study examines the decline in public school enrolment in Vancouver. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the study examines differences between parents who choose public school and those who choose private school. The primary source of information is a survey examining differences between public and private school parents' educational priorities for their children. This is supplemented with a literature review and key informant interviews. The data reveal that public school parents have low levels of satisfaction with respect to both academic and non-academic characteristics of their child's school. The study assesses policies for reform of the public system. It recommends that Vancouver's public schools introduce a wider range of specialized academic and non-academic programs, expand the function of the community schools network and engage in a stakeholder discussion regarding the division of public school spending responsibilities between the Vancouver School Board and individual schools.

Executive Summary

This study uses a policy analysis approach to explore options for public school reform in Vancouver. Specifically, the study proposes alternatives designed to address the policy problem of declining levels of public school enrolment relative to private schools and low levels of parental satisfaction with the public school system.

The study uses both quantitative and qualitative data in examining the policy issue. Data from a survey instrument of over 200 parents with children attending both public and private elementary schools in Vancouver is used to reveal the factors that influence school choice. Both regression analysis and descriptive survey analysis are used to analyze data. The key findings of survey analysis include:

- Public school parents value the ability to send their child to a school close to their home
- Private school parent respondents prioritize academic characteristics of schools more highly than public school parents
- Private school parents are more satisfied with academic characteristics of their child's school than public school parents
- Public and private school parents are roughly equally satisfied with non-academic characteristics of their child's school
- Both public and private school parents have low levels of satisfaction with respect to the type and amount of extracurricular activities provided at their child's school
- Forty four per cent of public school parent respondents would consider sending their child to a private school if it were financially feasible

A combination of survey findings, key informant interviews and research literature are used to identify alternatives to address low levels of public school parent satisfaction and declining levels of private school enrolment. The following alternatives are identified as potential reforms to the public school system in Vancouver:

- Designing and implementing a greater number of *Strategic Choice Programs* that cater to specialized student interests
- Engaging in *Funding Decentralization* designed to allow principals with greater financial autonomy over their schools and the ability to respond more effectively to student needs
- *Expanding Extracurricular Activities* as a means of addressing the low levels of satisfaction observed in public school parent respondents
- *Expanding the Function of Community Schools* in order to provide low-cost extracurricular programming to students and maximize the use of schools as public resources

The proposed policy alternatives are not mutually exclusive. In order to assess the appropriateness of the proposed alternatives, each is evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: financial sustainability, effectiveness, equity, Vancouver School Board political feasibility and other stakeholder feasibility. As a result of multi-criteria analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1) Expand the function of community schools in order to provide extracurricular programming to students at a low cost
- 2) Conduct a study of demand for specialized academic and non-academic strategic choice (magnet) programs in Vancouver's public schools
- 3) Design and implement programs in response to demand in order to ensure long-term financial sustainability strategic choice programming
- 4) Engage in discussion of funding decentralization in order to determine if a division in the distribution of funding responsibilities between schools and the Vancouver School Board is desirable

Dedication

To my parents, who instilled in me their passion for education

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Glossary

CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
Cross Boundary	Refers to a student who attends a school outside of his neighbourhood
EPSB	Edmonton Public Schools. Edmonton's public school board.
Extracurricular Program	Refers to an activity taking place outside of school hours. May be affiliated with the school or with the community.
FISA	Federation of Independent School Associations
French Immersion	Refers to a school program where a child who does not speak French as their first language receives instruction in French.
IB	International Baccalaureate. Internationally standardized academic program developed in Geneva in 1968 for students in Kindergarten through grade 12.
Mini School	Refers to a smaller school within a public school in Vancouver. These schools offer accelerated academic, arts or athletic programming and have entrance requirements such as exams and interviews
Montessori	An educational approach that focuses on the individuality of each child. This method generally does not use traditional measurements of academic achievements, such as grades and tests.
PAC	Parent Advisory Committee
VSB	Vancouver School Board

1 Introduction

Private schools in Vancouver have undergone a transformation over the last 30 years. Prior to 1977, the province neither regulated nor funded Vancouver's private schools. Today, as a result of the *School Support (Independent) Act*, the vast majority of private schools in Vancouver receive 50 per cent of the per-student funding allocated to public schools and are carefully regulated by provincial authorities (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006a). Following the *Act*, private schools gradually gained popularity. In recent years, however, private school enrolment in Vancouver has increased more rapidly than in the past. In the 1996-1997 academic year, 15 per cent of students in Vancouver attended private schools. Today that figure has increased to 18 per cent of Vancouver's student population (VSB, 2006a).

1.1 Policy Problem

The fact that so many parents are willing to pay substantially for a service for which a lower cost, publicly provided alternative exists suggests that Vancouver's publicly funded educational institutions may not be meeting the needs of parents and their children. Levels of private school enrolment are not the sole indicator of parental dissatisfaction with public schools in Vancouver. Surveys conducted on parents of public school children lend further support to the assertion that many parents are dissatisfied with the quality of public education. The British Columbia Ministry of Education administers an annual satisfaction survey to the parents of public school children in grades 4,7,10 and 12 (BC Ministry of Education, 2006b). In the 2005-2006 school year, only 60 per cent of parents with children attending public schools in Vancouver indicated that they were satisfied with what their children were learning, while less than 50 per cent stated that they were satisfied with the program choices available for their children. Responses to these questions demonstrate that levels of parental satisfaction are low in absolute terms. However, parental levels of satisfaction on these two indicators are also 10 per cent lower in Vancouver than the provincial average (BC Ministry of Education, 2006b). Evidently, the increasing popularity of private schools is only one manifestation of parental dissatisfaction with the public school system. Many parents who keep their children in the public system are also unhappy with the quality of education provided.

Results from the current study provide evidence for the close link between the two components of the policy problem at hand: declining levels of public school enrolment and low levels of parental satisfaction with public schools. Study findings indicate that parents who are marginal consumers of public education and would consider sending their child to a private school have lower levels of satisfaction with the public school system than those who would not consider sending their child to a private school. These findings and their implications are discussed in detail in section 5.6.

1.1.1 The Value of Public Education

Since independent schools in Vancouver receive a lower proportion of public funding than private schools, it may be argued that the development of independent schools is beneficial, as it saves on tax dollars. However, this perspective can be challenged for a number of reasons. One such argument, put forth by Paquette (2005), is that independent schools, in particular those that are funded by the state, serve to exacerbate pre-existing cleavages in society. Paquette states:

As private schools “skim off” the best students from one generation to the next, public schools would become increasingly the dumping ground for not-so-good students, who by and large...are more costly to serve. This “public school ghetto” scenario should...give policy makers serious cause for reflection before embarking on [private school funding] schemes.

Through personal correspondence, Gary Little, Associate Superintendent of the VSB, echoes Paquette’s sentiment:

I want a country where every child, irrespective of the family’s finances or social situation, receives the opportunity to have a high-quality education, where every child has the opportunity to interact with children of various faiths, various ethnicities, various socio-economic backgrounds and various learning abilities, including but not limited to special needs. As a country we profess to embrace diversity, but I cannot imagine how that ideal can be as effectively maintained with an educational model that emphasizes stratification rather than integration...Personally, I would rather pay fractionally more in taxes...I do support the right of parents to have private schools, I just do not think that it is in the long term interest of a society to fund that system as it currently is, a point to which I have been true for the better part of a lifetime.

These statements assert that based on considerations of diversity, equity and the formation of social capital, public education is in the greater interest of society.

1.2 Study Framework

The purpose of the current study is to examine the values and educational priorities of parents that serve as determinants of school choice. I will use this information to determine alternative policies that the Vancouver School Board could consider in order to increase parental satisfaction with the public school system. The study is organized in the following manner. First,

I will discuss the history of private school education and education policy in both Vancouver and British Columbia in order to provide a contextual basis for the study. Next, I will examine the current body of research on the subject of school choice. Following the background section is an elaboration of the methodology of the current study, which developed as a response to the shortcomings of previous school choice studies. Surveys conducted on parents of both public and private school children are the primary instrument used in the current research. These surveys measure the extent to which educational priorities differ between parents who send their children to public school and those who choose private school.

The survey results and a series of elite interviews aid in identifying feasible policy alternatives that the Vancouver School Board could pursue in order to heighten parental satisfaction with the public school system and increase their market share. The policy alternatives proposed include: maintaining the status quo, decentralization of public school funding, expanding strategic choice in schools, expanding school-based extracurricular programming and expanding the function of community schools. The proposed policy alternatives are evaluated based on various criteria, including cost-effectiveness, equity and political feasibility. Following a process of policy evaluation, I will propose recommendations to the Vancouver School Board.

Note that the policy problem and alternatives proposed are defined at the school district rather than provincial level. Independent school enrolment rates and parental satisfaction levels vary across provincial school districts. In Vancouver, independent school enrolment rates are higher than all jurisdictions in British Columbia, with the exception of West Vancouver. Additionally, levels of parental satisfaction within the Vancouver School District are considerably lower than the provincial average (BC Ministry of Education, 2006a). As a result, the policy problem identified within School District 39 may not be applicable to all school boards in the province. The current study therefore discusses reforms at the district rather than provincial level.

1.2.1 A Note on Terminology

In some circles, the terms ‘independent school’ and ‘private school’ have highly different interpretations and political connotations. For example, Stratford Hall Head of School James McConnell defines an independent school as a school that is an alternative to the public system but does not operate for profit and considers private schools to be strictly for-profit educational institutions (Interview, 01/29/2007). Others, however, define any school that charges tuition as a private school. The British Columbia Ministry of Education classifies all schools in the province

outside of the public system as independent schools, regardless of whether or not they operate as for-profit enterprises. However, the Ministry only provides funding for those independent schools that do not operate at a profit. The current study uses the terms 'private' and 'independent' interchangeably throughout, a decision that was based on stylistic rather than political considerations.

2 Background

In order to understand the current state of education policy in British Columbia, it is necessary to provide a historical context. This section highlights the issues that motivate the current study through a discussion of the development of British Columbia's private and public school systems. I focus on the evolution of British Columbia's education system in relation to provincial funding policies and regulations. While the scope of the current study is limited to the city of Vancouver, education policy is developed at the provincial level. Thus, this section will outline the development of provincial education policy in British Columbia as a whole, with an emphasis on the Vancouver context.

2.1 History of Education Funding Policy in British Columbia

In accordance with the stipulations of British Columbia's *K-12 Funding Allocation System*, the provincial government and British Columbia's 60 municipal school boards are responsible for the allocation of education funds. The BC Ministry of Education determines the amount of funding available to public schools in the province and then uses a formula based on per-district levels of student enrolment to distribute the funds across school boards (BC Ministry of Education, 2006a). As municipal school boards, including the VSB, receive program funding on a per-student basis, they have a strong interest in securing high levels of enrolment.

In contrast to public schools, private institutions receive funding from both public and private sources. Unlike public schools, private schools are heavily reliant on tuition fees and private donations as a source of funding. While British Columbia's private schools currently receive funding from the government, this has not always been the case. Over the last 50 years, the relationship between the Ministry of Education and British Columbia's private schools has evolved considerably. Prior to 1977, private schools in British Columbia were limited in both number and influence. Additionally, private schools were neither regulated by the Ministry of Education nor funded by public sources during this period. In the 1960s, 121 of British Columbia's private schools joined to form a lobby group called the Federation of Independent School Associations of British Columbia. While these schools represented diverse religious and cultural traditions, they united to achieve their common goal of securing provincial recognition and funding (Cunningham, 2002). In 1977, FISA's lobbying efforts paid off, with the passing of the *School Support (Independent) Act*.

Under the 1977 Act, private schools were able to obtain either 10 or 30 per cent of the per-student funding allocated to public schools. In order to qualify for assistance at the 10 per cent level, a school simply had to demonstrate to an inspector that it had adequate facilities and did not promote racial or religious intolerance. To be eligible for funding at the rate of 30 percent of the per student budget allocated to public schools, private institutions had to meet more rigorous standards. Under new regulations, independent schools were required to satisfy the same basic educational guidelines as British Columbia's public schools, participate in province-wide educational assessment programs, be in operation for at least five years and operate as not-for-profit enterprises (Barman, 1991). Schools that wished to operate independently of the provincial government were entitled to do so, but were not eligible to receive any provincial funding. In the 1980s, the *Act* was amended, reducing the length of time that a private school had to be in operation prior to receiving funding from five years to one year. At the same time, the maximum level of per-student funding that a private school was eligible to receive increased to 35 per cent (Barman, 1991). These amendments facilitated the establishment of new private schools and led to an increase in the number of private institutions seeking public funding.

As a result of the recommendations of the 1988 *Sullivan Royal Commission on Education*, the *Independent School Act* was enacted in 1989. The revised Act reclassified private institutions into four main groups and subsequently changed funding levels and requirements. Table 1 outlines the current classification scheme of British Columbia's private schools. Under the new Act, virtually all private schools receive some form of public funding, while private schools with over three quarters of private-school students receive 50 per cent of the per-student funding allocated to public schools. Additionally, the *Independent School Act* differs from its predecessor in that it requires all private institutions, regardless of funding eligibility, to register with provincial authorities and meet minimal guidelines. Table 2.1 1 shows the classification and funding of British Columbia's Private Schools.

Table 2.1.1 Classification and Funding of Private Schools in British Columbia

School Group	Funding Allocated	Characteristics and Requirements	No. of students enrolled in BC (2005)
Group 1	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must employ BC-certified Teachers • Must have educational programs consistent with ministerial orders • Must meet the learning outcomes of the BC curriculum • Must maintain adequate educational facilities • Must comply with municipal and regional district codes 	49,075 (77%)
Group 2	35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must meet the same requirements as group 1 schools • Schools classified as group 2 schools when they meet the same requirements as group 1 schools but have per-student operating costs that exceed those of the local public school district 	12,592 (20%)
Group 3	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required to employ BC Certified Teachers • Must maintain facilities that meet all municipal and regional codes 	557 (1%)
Group 4	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cater to non-provincial students • Must meet the same requirements as group 1 schools 	1,170 (2%)

Source: BC Ministry of Education, 2005b.

2.2 Controversy Surrounding Public School Funding Guidelines

While funding requirements that came as a result of the *School Support (Independent) Act* and the *Independent School Act* have facilitated the growth of private schools, they have also constrained the ability of these schools to devise their own curriculum and limited their independence from the government. Some scholars (see Barman, 1991, and Van Brumellen, 1993) argue that the increased influence of the provincial government over private school curriculum is detrimental, as it has served to constrain parental choice. While increased funding and regulation of private institutions has facilitated the development of the independent school system, it may be argued that private schools' lack of financial independence has limited their autonomy.

Proponents of public education have also found fault with the current state of education policy in British Columbia. The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) opposes the public funding of private schools, arguing that this practice diverts resources away from public schools, leads to cutbacks in special needs programs and results in the closure of public schools (CUPE, 2004). Regardless of one's position on the debate, it is undeniable that the current policies regarding public school funding in British Columbia have facilitated the growth and development of private schools through the provision of funds. It is therefore not surprising that

the rapid growth of private schools coincided with the passing of the *Independent School Act*, which provided an unprecedented level of funding to these institutions.

2.3 Classification of Independent Schools in British Columbia

The Federation of Independent School Associations operates as an umbrella organization for five member groups. The Catholic Independent Schools Inter-Society Committee (CIS) acts on behalf of British Columbia's Catholic Schools. All schools under the CIS are classified as Group 1 schools. The Independent Schools Association (ISA) represents non-denominational schools with a commitment to high educational standards, the majority of which are classified as Group 2 schools. The society of Christian Schools in BC (SCS) offers education in the Evangelical Protestant tradition. The majority of these schools have Group 1 funding status. The Associate Member Group (AMG) consists of schools that operate in accordance with a variety of religious or educational traditions, including Montessori, students with special needs, Jewish education and Muslim education (BC Ministry of Education, 2006c). The Association of Christian School International (ASCI BC), represents Christian schools independently operated by local churches (FISA 2007d). For a complete list of independent schools in Vancouver under each sub-group, refer to Appendix A. Table 2.3.1 illustrates the growth in enrolment for each FISA sub-group for the 2006-2007 school year.

Table 2.3.1 Growth in Independent School Enrolment by FISA Subgroup

Membership Growth	ASCI BC Association of Christian Schools International in BC	AMG Associate Member Group	CIS Catholic Independent Schools	ISA Independent Schools Association	SCS Society of Christian Schools	FISA Total
2005-2006	7,599	11,076	21,305	10,113	9,643	59,736
2006-2007	8,599	11,511	21,443	10,458	9,794	61,765
Group Growth	+12.6%	+3.9%	+0.6%	+3.3%	+1.6%	+3.4%
Group's %of total, 2006-2007	13.9%	18.6%	34.7%	16.9%	15.9%	100%

Source: Herfst, Fred. Executive Directors Report to FISA. Presented January 24th, 2007.

2.4 Trends in Public and Private School Enrolment

Increases in levels of private school enrolment is a trend observed not only in British Columbia, but also across North America and Europe. In recent years, independent school enrolment has increased across Canada, with the exception of the Atlantic provinces (Statistics Canada, 2001b). In British Columbia, levels of enrolment in private schools rose from 4.3 to 7.2 per cent between 1977 and 1990 (Barman, 1991). In the 2005-2006 school year, approximately 10 per cent of the province's students were enrolled in independent educational institutions (BC Ministry of Education, 2006b). In Vancouver, 18 percent of school-aged children currently attend independent schools (VSB, 2006a). For data on the number of independent schools and enrolment levels for public and private schools at the provincial level, refer to appendices B, C and D.

While increases in the public funding of independent schools have been critical to the development of the private school system, this factor may not fully explain the increasing popularity of independent educational institutions. Evidently, their development has served to meet a growing demand for private education within Vancouver and British Columbia as a whole. Determining why this phenomenon has occurred at such a rapid rate is the query that motivates the current study. By explaining why some parents choose private schools over public schools in the education of their children, the study attempts to shed light on the shortcomings of Vancouver's public schools and examine ways in which their declining enrolment levels could be addressed.

3 Literature Review

The issue of school choice has motivated numerous research studies in Western countries, particularly the United States. Previous studies point to a variety of factors influencing parental choice of school, including academic performance, race, religion, socioeconomic status of parents and teacher quality. The following section outlines some of the key perspectives on the factors influencing school choice.

Hess and Leal (2001) critically examine the factors that influence choice in education. Using an econometric model, the authors employ cross-sectional data from 50 urban centres in the United States to determine whether school choice is a function of school quality or if it can be explained by various socio-demographic characteristics such as race and religion. Hess and Leal use graduation rate as a proxy for school quality, hypothesizing that lower rates of public school graduation are correlated with higher levels of private school enrolment. Racial composition is one of the socio-demographic variables used in this model. The authors hypothesize that the level of private school enrolment in a neighbourhood is positively correlated with the percentage of black persons that reside there. Additionally, they test the relationship between the percentage of a district population that is Catholic and the level of private school enrolment, hypothesizing a positive correlation. Regression results lend support to each of the tested hypotheses, leading Hess and Leal to conclude that levels of private school enrolment are a function of both public school quality and socio-demographic indicators.

Wrinkle et al. (1999) employ a similar approach to Hess and Leal in examining the factors that influence school choice. Both studies explain levels of private school enrolment as a function of public school performance, the percentage of the neighbourhood population that is Black and the percentage of the population that is Catholic. However, there are significant differences between the two studies. While Hess and Leal's study is a cross-sectional analysis that looks at major urban centres, Wrinkle et al. conduct a panel study, examining data from 73 counties in Texas over a period of five years. While Hess and Leal's study uses graduation rates as a proxy measure of public school quality, Wrinkle et al. use standardized test results as their proxy measure. Both studies find evidence to support the assertion that socio-demographic characteristics are correlated with school choice, though the Wrinkle et al. study does not reveal any correlation between public school quality and levels of private school enrolment. Differences in results between the two studies can be attributed to the fact that they used different samples and slightly different models to explain the same phenomenon.

Schneider et al. (1998) critically examine the role of parental knowledge in school choice. The authors use multiple regression analysis to measure parents' knowledge of school characteristics such as student test scores and racial composition of schools. Data are also used to determine the extent to which parents enrol their children in schools that satisfy their stated preferences. Surveys for the Schneider et al. study were conducted via telephone on a sample consisting of parents with children attending two public schools in inner-city Manhattan neighbourhoods. The authors conclude that there exist two types of consumers in the market for schools: marginal consumers and average consumers. Marginal consumers of education seek out more information and are more knowledgeable about school attributes than average consumers. Additionally, marginal consumers exert more pressure on local schools than average consumers and may therefore encourage educational institutions to operate more efficiently (784). Schneider et al. find that parents who are marginal consumers are more likely than average consumers to actively seek out schools that are consistent with their priorities.

Jacob and Lefgren (2005) explain school choice through an investigation of parents' revealed preferences for teachers. Their study differs from other literature on educational choice, as it examines parental preferences for teachers rather than schools. The authors examine a data set comprised of parental requests for specific teachers in an unidentified city in the western United States. Their analysis reveals that Caucasian and upper to middle income parents are more likely to request teachers that are described by their principals as being popular with students and good at promoting student satisfaction, while low income and non-Caucasian parents place greater value on a teacher's ability to raise achievement levels in math and reading. While the current study differs from that of Jacob and Lefgren in that it examines factors influencing choice of school rather than choice of teacher, both studies examine the socio-demographic dimensions of school choice.

Betts and Fairlee (2001) critically examine the gap in private school attendance rates between American-born white school children and other ethnic and immigrant groups in the United States. The authors find that while income, parental education levels and characteristics of the urban area in which a family resides partially explain the lower attendance rates of ethnic minorities relative to whites, many of the factors contributing to the gap in attendance rates between ethnic groups are the result of unobserved factors. Their analysis suggests that the relationship between a family's ethnic origin and their propensity to send their child to private school results from the interaction of a variety of factors, many of which are not clearly

understood. As a result, designing policies to equalize rates of private school attendance across groups would be a highly complex exercise.

In a separate study, Betts and Fairlie (2003) use census data to determine whether American-born families respond to immigration by sending their children to private school. Their analysis reveals no significant correlation between immigration patterns and private school enrolment. At the secondary school level, however, a correlation is found. The authors estimate that for every four immigrants to arrive in a public high school, one native-born student will transfer to a private school. The study reveals that Caucasian American-born students, rather than those who are visible minorities, account for most of the flight from public to private schools in response to immigration.

Of the aforementioned articles on the topic of school choice, the 2003 Betts and Fairlie study is the most applicable to the study of Vancouver. The majority of academic articles on school choice written about the United States try to explain choice as a function of differences between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics. In Vancouver, however, Blacks and Hispanics comprise a small component of the city's minority population, while persons of Chinese descent represent the largest minority group (Statistics Canada, 2001a). The findings of most American studies are therefore not applicable to the study of Vancouver, as its ethnic composition is markedly different from that of most American cities. However, high levels of immigration has been cited as a possible reason for the increasing popularity of private schools in Vancouver. Betts and Fairlie's analysis lends support to this assertion.

4 Methodology

The methodology for the current study was developed in response to the shortcomings of previous studies on the topic of school choice. Both Hess and Leal and Wrinkle et al. reduce the highly complex concept of school quality to a single indicator. While standardized test scores and graduation rates may each be considered indicators of school quality, they are not the only factors that parents are likely to take into account when selecting a school for their child. School characteristics such as the quality of extracurricular activities offered, the type and amount of specialized education programs available and school safety are a few of the additional indicators of school quality that parents may consider.

The socio-demographic variables used in previous studies on the topic of school choice are not applicable to the current study. Vancouver's unique demographic makeup does not mirror that of the American cities examined in the literature review. Models used in American studies on school choice would therefore not produce meaningful results if applied to the study of Vancouver. Additionally, explaining private school enrolment largely as a function of the percentage of the population that is Catholic is problematic, as many of Vancouver's private schools are non-denominational, while others represent diverse religious traditions, including Christianity, Sikhism and Judaism (Federation of Independent School Associations, 2006a).

While previous studies on the topic of school choice examine demographic characteristics in a manner that is not applicable to the study of Vancouver, socio-demographic considerations are nevertheless an important dimension of the current study. Hess and Leal and Wrinkle et al. argue that the observed increase in private school enrolment in relation to the percentage of the community that is African-American reflects a desire on behalf of Caucasian parents to purchase segregation. As a high percentage of Vancouver's public school students speak English as a second language, trends in private school enrolment may reflect a desire for parents to avoid schools where a high proportion of students do not speak English as a first language.

The current study seeks to address some of the shortcomings of previous studies by looking at a variety of determinants of school choice, including academic and extracurricular priorities of parents, levels of parental satisfaction with schools, parental knowledge and socio-demographic characteristics. Data for the study is collected through elite interviews and surveys.

4.1 Sample

The sample for the current study is drawn from the parents of students attending one public school and one independent school in Vancouver. Due to both time and budgetary constraints, the sample is limited to parents with children attending elementary schools. The public school selected is Queen Mary Elementary, which is located in the West Point Grey Neighbourhood of Vancouver's West Side. In 2001, the average income in the West Point Grey neighbourhood was \$101,404 (Statistics Canada, 2001), which suggests that some of the families with children attending Queen Mary have the financial capacity to send their children to private school.

The private school selected is Stratford Hall School, which is located on Vancouver's East Side. The school is an International Baccalaureate school and opened in September of 2000 (Stratford Hall, 2006). The school is classified as a Group 2 school. For the 2007-2008 school year, tuition levels will range from \$9,620 to \$12,520 depending on the child's grade. A 10 per cent tuition discount is provided for each additional child that attends the school (James McConnell, Interview 01/29/2007). The school is divided into the Lower School, which is used by students in kindergarten through Grade 5 and the Upper School, for students in grades 6 through 12. The Lower School is located on Grandview Highway at Vancouver's Italian Cultural Centre. The Upper School is located at 15th and Commercial. While the school attracts students from all over the Lower Mainland, it was established in order to provide a non-denominational independent school option for families living in the Burnaby area (Stratford Hall, 2006).

A survey to test the values, attitudes and characteristics of parents was mailed to 545 households. Additionally, the survey was pre-tested on a group of parents attending an informational session at Stratford Hall. At Queen Mary, the survey was sent to all families with children attending the school, 374 in total. At Stratford Hall, the survey was mailed exclusively to parents with children in grades Kindergarten through Grade 7, 171 in total. Each survey mailed out included a pre-addressed stamped envelope for respondents to return completed surveys.

4.2 Survey Instrument

Surveys are used to determine how parental values, attributes and knowledge influence school choice. The survey elicits from parents the key factors that influence the type of educational institution that they select for their children. I compare responses between parents of

public school students and parents of private school parents to determine any differences in their educational priorities for their children. One component of the survey asks parents to list the top three factors that they consider when selecting a school for their child. Parents provide open-ended responses, which are coded for the purpose of statistical analysis.

Parental satisfaction with their child's school constitutes another important component of the survey. While the BC Ministry of education administers an annual satisfaction survey to parents of children in grades 4, 7, 10 and 12 across the province (BC Ministry of Education, 2006b), no comparable measure exists for BC's independent schools. In order to compare levels of satisfaction between parents who send their children to public schools and parents who send their children to private schools, the survey includes questions modelled after those used in the provincially administered satisfaction survey. Survey questions ask parents to rate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of their child's school, including curriculum, extracurricular activities, discipline and school safety (BC Ministry of Education, 2006b).

Questions that test parental knowledge constitute another key component of the survey. I ask parents to estimate the average class size and the percentage of students that speak English as a second language in Vancouver's public and private elementary schools. I compare responses with data collected by the VSB on these indicators. Responses to the knowledge questions will test parental perceptions of public and private schools against reality. Additionally, these questions help to determine the extent to which perceptions differ between parents who choose public education for their children and those who opt for independent schools.

For many families, financial constraints prevent parents from sending their children to the private school of their choice. Even in neighbourhoods such as West Point Grey, where families have high average incomes, school choice may be ultimately constrained by financial considerations. In order to control for the income effects that may limit parents' educational options for their children, the survey includes a question that asks parents whether they would choose to send their child to a different school if they were provided with a school voucher allowing them to do so at no additional cost. While the use of school vouchers is not a policy option currently under consideration by the VSB, this question serves to provide better insight into school choice by removing financial considerations from the equation.

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents comprise the final component of the survey. Respondents are required to indicate their ethnicity, household income, education level and the ages of their children. As discussed in the literature review of this paper, the results of previous studies conducted in the United States suggest that socio-demographic factors

profoundly influence school choice. The current study does not seek to look exclusively at socio-demographic determinants of school choice, as no policy recommendations can be drawn from such an analysis. However, socio-demographic characteristics of respondents must be controlled for in order to produce reliable results. Taken together, the attitudinal, knowledge and socio-demographic characteristics of parents will aid in identifying the key factors that affect parental choice of school choice of school. For a copy of the survey, refer to Appendix E.

5 Survey Analysis

This section outlines and analyzes survey results in order to assess the impacts of parent characteristics on school choice. Frequencies, cross-tabulations and satisfaction levels for both public school and private school parent respondents are presented to illustrate differences between the two sub-groups in the sample. This is followed by a logistical regression used to estimate the effects of variables affecting school choice

5.1 Behavioural Hypotheses

Information gathered through elite interviews and a literature review served as a basis for the hypotheses tested in the current study. Table 5.1.1 summarizes the hypotheses to be tested.

Table 5.1.1 Behavioural Hypotheses

Variable	Hypothesis	Rationale
Prioritization of class size	Parents who send their children to private schools will be more likely than public school parents to rank class size as one of the primary factors that they consider when selecting a school for their child	Elite Interviews ^a
Prioritization of academic characteristics	Parents who send their children to private schools will be more likely than public school parents to rank academic characteristics first when selecting a school for their child	Literature Review ^b
Prioritization of school location/neighbourhood characteristics	Parents who send their children to private schools will be less likely than public school parents to rank the school's proximity to their home or other neighbourhood characteristics as one of the top three factors that they consider when selecting a school for their child	Elite Interviews ^c
Prioritization of Cultural/ESL Factors	Parents who send their children to private schools will be more likely than public school parents to base their choice on considerations of the cultural makeup of the school.	Literature review ^d
Parental Levels of Satisfaction	Parental levels of satisfaction with their child's school will be higher amongst private school parents than public school parents	Elite Interviews ^c
Parental Attitudes towards teacher strikes	Parents who send their children to private school will be less likely to support teacher job action than parents of public school children	Elite Interviews ^f

Sources:

a) Gary Little, Interview, 09/25/2006

b) Hess and Leal, 2001; Wrinkle et al., 1999

c) James McConnell, Interview, 01/29/2007

d) Hess and Leal, 2001; Wrinkle et al., 1999

e) Gary Little, Interview, 09/25/2006

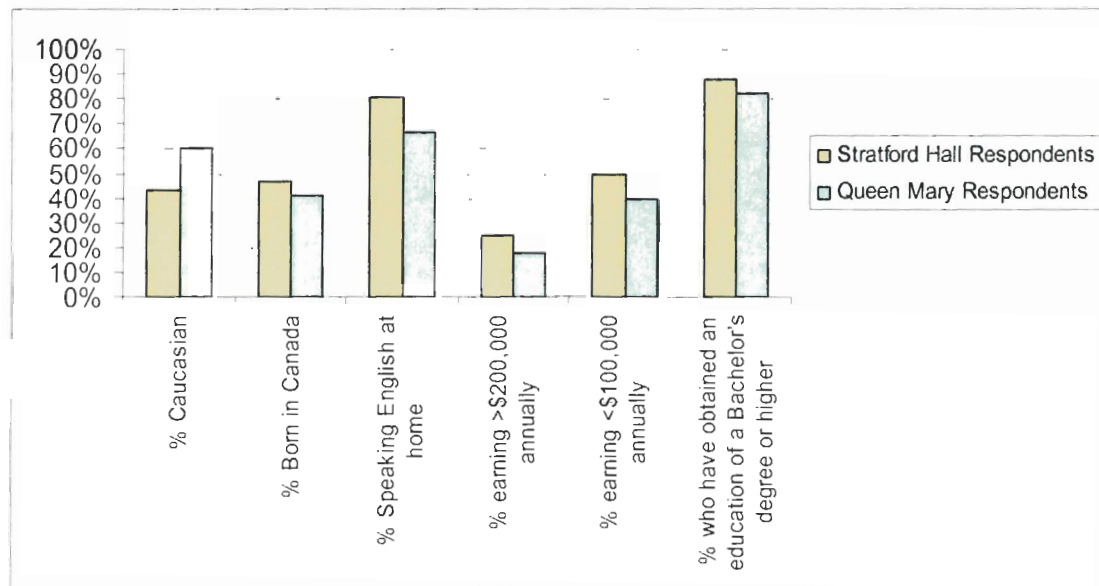
f) James McConnell, Interview, 01/29/2007

Survey data is used to test the behavioural hypotheses. Asking parents to rank their top three educational priorities for their children allows for the testing of the hypotheses one through four. Questions included on the survey that replicate the provincial satisfaction survey will be used to compare levels of parental satisfaction between public and private school parents in order to test hypothesis five. A question on the survey instrument that asks parents whether or not they believe teachers should have the right to strike allows for the testing of hypothesis six. These results will be used to identify alternatives to address the policy problem.

5.2 Respondent Characteristics

Of the 194 surveys that were properly completed and returned on time, 36 per cent (N=69) were received from Stratford Hall parents and 64 per cent (N=125) were received from Queen Mary parents. An additional 17 surveys were received that were either incomplete or submitted too late to be included in the statistical analysis. In total, 211 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 38 per cent. Response rates from each school were similar: 43 percent of Stratford Hall parents responded (74 surveys in total) and 36 per cent of Queen Mary parents responded (137 surveys in total). Figure 5.2.1 illustrates the socio-demographic characteristics of the study sample.

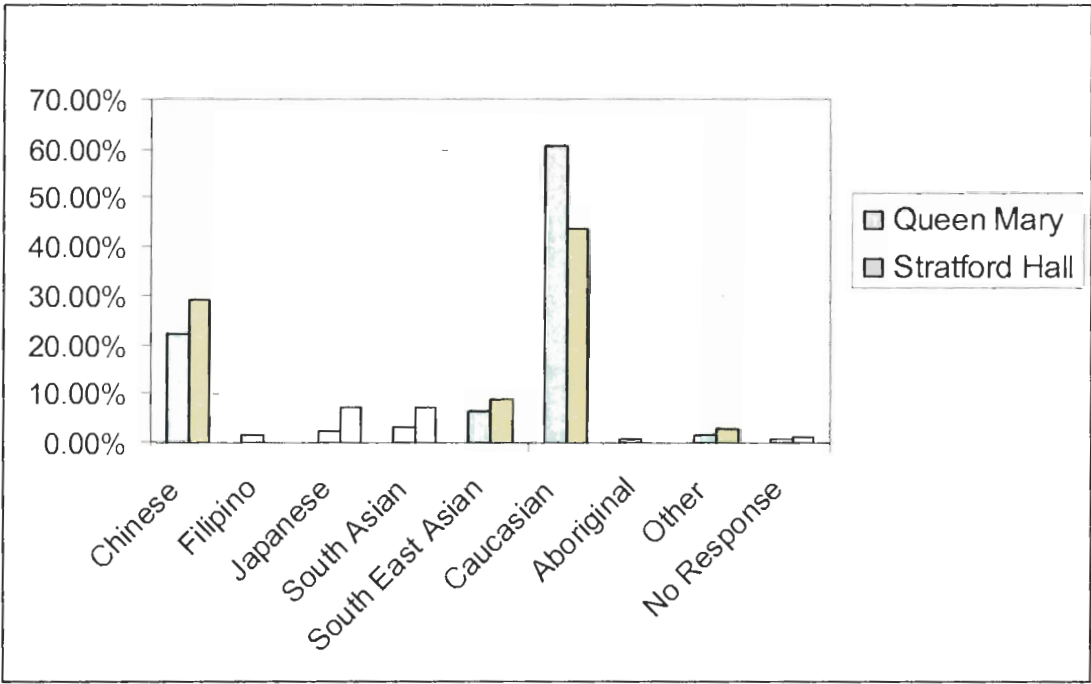
Figure 5.2.1.1 Study Sample Characteristics



5.2.1 Ethnicity and Language

Survey results reveal considerable differences between public school respondents and private school respondents with respect to ethnicity. Caucasian parents represented the majority of the Queen Mary respondents, at 60 per cent of the total sample (N=76). Among parents with students attending Stratford Hall, in contrast, only 43 per cent (N=30) identified themselves as Caucasian. At both schools, the second largest group of respondents identified themselves as Chinese (22 per cent of Queen Mary respondents and 29 per cent of Stratford Hall respondents). Figure 5.2.1.1 shows the breakdown of respondents by ethnic origin.

Figure 5.2.2 Ethnic Breakdown of Sample



Differences also exist between the two groups with respect to the percentage of respondents that were born in Canada and the percentage of families that primarily speak English in the home. Amongst respondents with children attending Queen Mary, 41 per cent of respondents were born in Canada, while 67 per cent reported speaking English primarily in the home. Amongst respondents with children attending Stratford Hall, 47 per cent were born in Canada and 81 per cent reported speaking mainly English in their home. Surprisingly, while more respondents from Stratford Hall report being members of visible minorities, a greater number of Stratford Hall respondents also report speaking mainly English in their home.

5.2.2 Income and Education

In spite of differences between the two groups pertaining to ethnicity and language, the composition of private school parents and public school parents was similar with respect to both income and education levels. Amongst Queen Mary respondents, 82 per cent reported that someone in their household had obtained a Bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 88 per cent of Stratford Hall respondents. Only two respondents from Queen Mary and zero respondents from Stratford Hall reported that a high school diploma was the highest level of education attained by someone in their household.

Among Queen Mary respondents, 18 per cent reported having an income of \$200,000 or more, as compared with 25 per cent of Stratford Hall respondents. What is interesting to note, however, is the distribution of income levels. Among Queen Mary respondents, 50 per cent report having an annual family income of \$100,000 or less. Similarly, 40 per cent of respondents with children attending Stratford Hall indicated that their family income was less than \$100,000 annually. Hence, the income distribution of households sending their children to Queen Mary is much more dispersed than those sending their children to Stratford Hall.

5.3 Parental Perceptions

One major component of the survey measures differences in perceptions between parents choosing public and private schools. The survey asked respondents to estimate the average class size for both public and private elementary schools in the city of Vancouver. Table 5.3.1 outlines the survey results.

Table 5.3.1 Parental Class Size Estimates

	Average Private School Class Size Estimate	Average Public School Class Size Estimate
Private School Respondents	19.1 students/class	26.6 students/class
Public School Respondents	20.2 students/class	25.5 students/class

While parents of both private school and of public school children estimated a considerable gap between public and private elementary school class size, private school parents, on average, estimated a bigger gap between class sizes in the two types of school than parents with children attending the independent school did. In the Vancouver School District the average class size is 18.2 students per class at the Kindergarten level, 20.9 students per class from grades

1-3, and 27.5 children per class from grades 4-7 (BC Ministry of Education, 2005a). Respondents from both groups estimated an average class size within the district range, though estimates were at the high end of the district range.

It must be noted that respondents' estimates of public school class size ranged from 15 students per class to 36 students per class. Given the difference between the average public school class size at the Kindergarten level and the average public school class size from grades 4-7, it is not surprising that there is considerable variance in responses. However, 40% of respondents estimated an average class size outside of the range of 18.2-27.5, suggesting that many parents are misinformed with respect to average class size in Vancouver's public elementary schools.

In addition to asking parental perception of class size, the administered survey asked parents to estimate the percentage of ESL students attending both public and private elementary schools in Vancouver. Table 5.3.2 outlines the survey results:

Table 5.3.2 Parental ESL Estimates

	Average Private School ESL Estimate	Average Public School ESL Estimate
Private School Respondents	32% of students	45% of students
Public School Respondents	28% of students	36% of students

Both groups estimated that a higher percentage of students in public schools speak English as a second language than students in private schools. While district-wide results are not available on this indicator, survey responses reveal that a greater proportion of public school respondents spoke a language other than English at home as compared to private school respondents.

5.4 Parental Values

An analysis of parental priorities when selecting a school for their children reveals both similarities and differences between the two groups of respondents. The administered survey asked parents to list their top three priorities when selecting a school for their child. Among the 125 respondents with children at Queen Mary, the top three priorities indicated were academic considerations (82 per cent of respondents), social aspects, including child's happiness and peer

group (70 per cent of respondents) and neighbourhood/proximity to home (51 per cent of respondents). Quality of teachers and administrators at the school was also a significant factor, with 49 per cent of respondents listing this consideration among their top three priorities.

Priorities that ranked relatively low among Queen Mary parent respondents included extracurricular program offerings (10 per cent of respondents) and discipline/safety considerations (7 per cent of respondents). Fraser Institute ranking also appeared to be an insignificant factor as only four respondents with children attending Queen Mary indicated that these rankings were among the top three factors that they took into account when selecting a school for their child. School reputation also appeared to be a relatively insignificant factor for Queen Mary parents in selecting a school for their child, as only 10 per cent of respondents indicated that this was one of their top three priorities.

Of the 69 surveys received by parents with children attending Stratford Hall, the top three priorities indicated were academic considerations (88 per cent of respondents), social aspects of the school (73 per cent of respondents) and teacher/administrator characteristics (28 per cent of respondents). Class size was also an important priority for Stratford Hall parents, with 19 per cent of respondents indicating that it was one of the top three factors taken into consideration when selecting a school for their child. No respondent from Stratford Hall indicated that Fraser Institute school rankings played a role in their decision when selecting a school for their child. This is not surprising considering that Stratford Hall, as a recently established school, is not yet ranked by the Fraser Institute (Jim McConnell, 2006). Table 5.4 1 summarizes the top responses indicated by parents from both Stratford Hall and Queen Mary.

Table 5.4.1 Prioritization of School Characteristics

School Characteristics	% of Queen Mary Respondents Who listed this factor in top three considerations	% of Stratford Hall respondents Who listed this factor in top three considerations
Academic/Curriculum	82% (102 responses)	88% (61 responses)
Teacher/Admin Quality	49% (61 responses)	28% (19 responses)
Social Aspects of School	70% (88 responses)	73% (51 responses)
Neighbourhood/Proximity	51% (64 responses)	25% (17 responses)
Discipline in the School	7% (9 responses)	3% (2 responses)
Class Size	2% (2 responses)	19% (13 responses)
Fraser Institute Rankings	3% (4 responses)	0% (0 responses)
Public Opinion of School	10% (13 responses)	1% (1 response)
Extracurricular Offerings	10% (13 responses)	4% (3 responses)

As predicted, class size was a more important factor among private school parent respondents, while neighbourhood characteristics were deemed a more important consideration by parents with children in public school than parents with children in private school. While Stratford Hall parent respondents prioritized class size, Queen Mary parent respondents were more likely to rate teacher and administrator characteristics as important factors when selecting a school for their child. Both groups of respondents cited academic/curriculum considerations and social considerations as the most important factors in selecting a school for their child. While there are variations between the two groups of respondents, parents' top priorities do not vary in accordance with the type of educational institution that they choose for their child.

Differences between parents who choose public schools for their children and parents who select private school become apparent when one examines the primary factor that they consider when selecting a school for their child. Recall that my survey asked parents to rank their top three priorities in order. Among Queen Mary parent respondents, 52 per cent listed academic characteristics or teacher quality as their top consideration. In contrast, 73 per cent of Stratford Hall parent respondents listed their top priority as either academic characteristics or teacher quality. These responses suggest that parents who chose independent schools for their children are more likely than parents who chose public school to rank a purely academic school

characteristic as their primary consideration. In contrast parents who chose public schools select academic and non academic school characteristics as their top priority in roughly equal numbers.

5.5 Satisfaction Levels

One component of the survey administered to parents of Stratford Hall and Queen Mary students concerns satisfaction levels with respect to their child's education. Questions for this component of the survey are drawn from the BC Ministry of Education's Satisfaction Survey, which is administered annually to parents with children in grades 4,7,10 and 12 (BC Ministry of Education, 2006b). However, the survey is not administered to parents with children attending private schools. Thus, the purpose of including these questions is to compare responses between parents with children in the public system and parents of private school students. Table 5.5 1 summarizes the survey responses and compares them with the 2005-2006 elementary school parent survey results at the school, district and provincial level.

Table 5.5.1 Percentage of Parents Reporting Satisfaction with their Child's School 'All of the Time' or 'Many Times'

Satisfaction Survey Question	Stratford Hall Respondents	Queen Mary Respondents	Queen Mary 2005-2006 *	District average 2005-2006 **	Province average 2005-2006***
Are you satisfied with the development of your child's reading skills at school?	89%	74%	68%	67%	74%
Are you satisfied with the development of your child's writing skills at school?	85%	58%	49%	55%	63%
Are you satisfied with the development of your child's mathematics skills at school?	75%	48%	58%	60%	67%
Are you satisfied with the program choices at your child's school?	91%	66%	65%	65%	71%
Are you satisfied with the extracurricular program choices at your child's school?****	59%	46%	n/a****	n/a****	n/a****
Do you feel welcome at your child's school?	92%	92%	93%	86%	88%
Are you included in decisions made at the school that affect your child's education?	43%	59%	33%	45%	53%
Are you satisfied that staff treat all students fairly at your child's school?	77%	80%	84%	80%	79%
Do you think your child is safe at school?	91%	93%	93%	67%	88%

* Data from Queen Mary parent respondents for the 2005-2006 academic year

** Data from all public school parent respondents with children attending public elementary schools in School District #39 (Vancouver). Source: BC Ministry of Education, 2006b

*** Data from all public school parent respondents with children attending public elementary schools in all British Columbia School Districts. Source: BC Ministry of Education, 2006b

**** This question was added by the author and is not included in the BC Ministry of Education's Satisfaction Survey.

Satisfaction question results reveal considerable differences between the two groups of respondents. On all indicators pertaining to academic development, satisfaction levels amongst Stratford Hall parents are considerably higher than satisfaction levels amongst parents with children attending Queen Mary. The largest differences in satisfaction levels pertain to the development of writing and mathematics skills. On both indicators, 27 per cent more parents at Stratford Hall indicated that they were satisfied with their child's development 'all of the time' or 'many times'.

Differences between parental satisfaction levels narrowed with the consideration of non-academic characteristics of their child's school. Roughly equal numbers of parents at each school indicated that they felt welcome at their child's school, that their child was safe at school and that staff treated all students fairly at their child's school. Additionally, results for these indicators among Queen Mary respondents were as high as or higher than both the district and provincial averages from the previous year.

Results between the two groups were also comparable with respect to satisfaction levels regarding extracurricular programming and feeling included in decision making in their child's school. However, parents at both schools reported relatively low levels of satisfaction with respect to the aforementioned indicators. Only 59 per cent of Stratford Hall respondents and 43 per cent of Queen Mary respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the extracurricular program choices at their child's school 'all of the time' or 'many times'. Additionally, while 88 percent of Queen Mary parent respondents and 97 per cent of Stratford Hall parent respondents schools indicated that their child participated in extracurricular activities outside of the school, only 46 per cent of Queen Mary respondents reported their child taking part in school-based extracurricular activities, compared with 72 per cent of Stratford Hall respondents.

5.6 Marginal Consumers of Public Education

Including a survey question on whether parents would consider sending their child to another school if provided with a voucher allows for the identification of marginal consumers of public education. Those who answered that they would consider sending their child to a private school if provided with a voucher are deemed to be marginal consumers of public education. This is to say that they are indifferent between sending their child to a private school and sending their child to public school. As the current study seeks to prevent loss of public school students to the private system, it is important to examine more carefully the survey responses of these marginal consumers.

Identifying marginal consumers also help to bridge the link between the two components of the policy problem: declining public school enrolment levels and low levels of parental satisfaction with the public school system. Survey responses reveal that marginal consumers of public education have significantly lower levels of satisfaction than those who would not consider sending their child to a private school. Amongst Queen Mary parent respondents, only 62 per cent of marginal consumers of public education indicated that they were satisfied with the development of their child’s reading skills, as compared with 85 per cent of respondents who indicated that they would not consider sending their child to a private school. Similarly, 39 per cent of marginal consumers of public education indicated that they were satisfied their child’s extracurricular opportunities, as compared to 53 per cent amongst respondents who are not marginal consumers. Table 5.6 1 illustrates the breakdown between parental satisfaction levels of marginal consumers of public education and those who would not consider sending their child to a private school if provided with a voucher.

Table 5.6.1 Marginal Consumers of Public Education and Satisfaction Levels

Satisfaction Survey Question	Marginal Consumers of Public Education	Non-Marginal Consumers of Public Education
Are you satisfied with the development of your child’s reading skills at school?	62%	85%
Are you satisfied with the development of your child’s writing skills at school?	50%	65%
Are you satisfied with the development of your child’s mathematics skills at school?	43%	54%
Are you satisfied with the program choices at your child’s school?	61%	72%
Are you satisfied with the extracurricular program choices at your child’s school?	39%	53%
Do you feel welcome at your child’s school?	92%	100%
Are you included in decisions made at the school that affect your child’s education?	19%	54%
Are you satisfied that staff treat all students fairly at your child’s school?	64%	88%
Do you think your child is safe at school?	89%	97%

As this paper seeks to retain marginal consumers of public education, it is critical that policy alternatives under consideration seek to raise satisfaction levels of public school parents, particularly those who are marginal consumers of public education. Alternatives proposed will therefore seek to address aspects of the public education system where marginal consumer levels of satisfaction are the lowest.

5.7 Regression Analysis

A linear regression is used to estimate the probability that a parent with particular characteristics or attitudes will choose private education for their child. The regression holds control variables in the equation constant as it tests the significance of each independent variable and explains how likely a parent with a specific characteristic is to opt for private education. Table 5.7.1 outlines the hypothesized effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable of school choice. A positive sign indicates that a respondent possessing a particular characteristic is more likely to select a private school for their child when all other variables included in the equation are held constant. Rationale for each hypothesized effect has been determined through a literature review and elite interviews.

Table 5.7.1 Respondent Characteristics and Hypothesized Effects

Variable Name	Hypothesized Effect	Rationale
Number of Children	-	As private schools charge tuition fees, families with more children will be less likely to afford them than those with few children
Speak English in the Home	+	Literature reveals that families who speak English in the home are more likely to send their children to private school ^a
Born in Canada	+	Literature reveals that on average, immigrants have lower rates of private school attendance than non-immigrants ^b
Annual household income > \$100,000	+	As private schools charge tuition fees, families with high household incomes will be more likely to afford them
Education Level	+	Literature reveals that higher levels of parental education are correlated with a greater likelihood that the child attends private school ^c
Visible Minority	-	Literature reveals that members of visible minorities are less likely to attend private school than Caucasians ^d
ESL Estimate Private School	-	Perceptions of class composition may motivate a parent to select a particular type of school for their child ^e
ESL Estimate Public School	+	Perceptions of class composition may motivate a parent to select a particular type of school for their child ^f
Class Size Estimate Private School	-	If a parent thinks private school class sizes are low, they may be more likely to enrol their child in a private school
Class Size Estimate Public School	+	A parent who thinks public school class sizes are high may be more likely to enrol their child in a private school
Support for right to strike	-	Concern over strikes in public schools may lead some parents to enrol their children in private school ^g

Sources:

- a) Betts and Fairlee, 2003.
- b) Betts and Fairlee, 2001.
- c) Betts and Fairlee, 2001.
- d) Betts and Fairlee, 2001.
- e) Gary Little, Interview 08/25/2006.
- f) Gary Little, Interview 08/25/2006.
- g) James McConnell, Interview 01/29/2007.

Three regression models are used in the analysis. Model 1 includes only socio-demographic characteristics of respondents as predictors of schools choice. Model 2 adds variables for parental perceptions of class size and ESL levels for both public and private schools. Model 3 adds a variable for attitudes regarding support for job action by teachers. When interpreting results, it is important to note that the regression analysis can only prove correlation

between the independent variables in the equation and school choice, it cannot identify causation. Table 5.7.2 presents regression analysis results for 194 observations.

Table 5.7.2 Regression Models

VARIABLE NAME	MODEL 1		MODEL 2		MODEL 3	
	B	t-stat	B	t-stat	B	t-stat
Sociodemographic Variables						
Number of Children	-.091*	-1.86	-.091*	-1.92	-.095*	-2.0
Speak English in the Home	-.186**	-2.0	-.162*	-1.82	-.157*	-1.75
Born in Canada	-.094	-1.17	-.080	-1.03	-.088	-1.12
Household Income > \$100,000	.197***	2.65	.223***	3.07	.215***	2.94
Education Level	-.144	-1.46	-.184*	-1.92	-.187*	-1.94
Visible Minority	-.282***	-3.58	-.247***	-3.24	-.252***	-3.3
Perception Variables						
ESL Estimate Private School			-.002	-.820	-.002	-.9
ESL Estimate Public School			.007***	3.21	.007***	3.2
Class Size Estimate Private School			-.023**	-2.19	-.024**	-2.26
Class Size Estimate Public School			.014	1.46	.014	1.45
Attitudinal Variable						
Support for Right to Strike					-.002	-.867

*Significant at <.1, **Significant at <.05, ***Significant at <.01

5.7.1 Model 1

Variables used in Model 1 are limited to socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The Adjusted R-Square of the model is .15, meaning that the independent variables used in this model explain 15 per cent of the variation in the dependent variable. Four demographic variables are significant at the 90 per cent confidence level or greater: number of children, speaking primarily English in the home, household income level and being a visible minority. With the exception of speaking English primarily in the home, the signs on the coefficients of all significant variables are in the expected direction. Results indicate that respondents speaking primarily English in the home are 19 percent less likely to select a private

school for their child, holding all other variables in the equation constant. This result is less surprising, however, when one considers that Stratford Hall, as an International Baccalaureate school, attracts a considerable number international students (James McConnell, Interview, 01/29/07), who may be less likely than Canadian residents to speak English in the home.

Respondents with an annual household income level of \$100,000 or higher are 20 per cent more likely to send their children to private school when all other variables in the equation are held constant. Each additional child a family has translates into a nine per cent reduction in the likelihood that the family will choose private education for their child. A respondent who identifies themselves as a visible minority is 28 per cent less likely to send their child to private school when controlling for all other variables.

5.7.2 Model 2

Model 2 retains all variables used in Model 1 but adds variables for parental perception regarding the public and private school systems. Adding these variables inflates the Adjusted R-Square to .19. All significant variables identified in Model 1 remain significant in Model 2. The sizes of the coefficients are largely unchanged with the addition of the parental perception variables. Additionally, respondent education level, which was not statistically significant in Model 1, is significant in Model 2. Model 2 regression results reveal that when all other variables included in the equation are held constant, a parent with a university degree is 18 per cent less likely to choose private education for their child.

In Model 2, respondent estimates of private and public school class sizes are correlated with school choice. When all other variables included in the equation are held constant, a respondent is 2 per cent more likely to choose private school for their child with each one student reduction in private school class size estimate. Estimates of public school class size, however, are not statistically significant. Parental estimates of the percentage of students in public schools that speak English as a second Language are statistically significant, though parental estimates of the percentage of private school students who speak English as a second language are not.

5.7.3 Model 3

Model 3 includes all the variables used in Model 2 and one attitudinal variable, parental position on teachers' right to strike. Adding this variable to the equation does not change the value of the Adjusted R-Square from than in Model 2. Additionally, regression results indicate that neither of these variables is statistically significant. When this variable is added to the

regression equation, all of the variables that were found to be statistically significant in the previous equation maintain their significance and their coefficient signs and values remain unchanged.

5.7.4 Summary of Significant Variables

Regression results reveal that the following variables that were hypothesized to influence parental choice of school are significant at the 10 per cent level or better and take the expected sign:

- Number of Children
- Speaking Primarily English in the Home
- Household Income
- Education Level
- Minority Status
- Estimates of the percentage of public school students who are ESL
- Estimates of average private school class size

The following independent variables were not found to be statistically significant:

- Being born in Canada
- Estimates of the percentage of private school students who are ESL
- Estimates of average public school class size
- Support for teachers' right to strike
- Sending child to another school if provided with a voucher

5.8 Survey Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of the survey developed for this study is that it looks at the satisfaction levels of parents with children in both public and private schools. While BC Ministry of education issues an annual satisfaction survey to public school parents, these questions have never before been asked of parents who send their children to private school. Including them in my survey provides a basis for comparison. Another major strength of the survey used in this study is that it asks parents about their educational priorities for their children. This information can be used by the VSB to design programs to address identified shortcomings.

A number of factors, including time constraints, financial considerations and feasibility issues have contributed to the limitations of the current study. Though response rates were high at 38 per cent, only two schools were surveyed. Additionally, demographic characteristics of respondents did not mirror Vancouver's population as a whole. Twenty one per cent of respondents reported annual household incomes of \$200,000 or more annually and 87 per cent have obtained an education at Bachelor's degree level or higher. In contrast, Statistics Canada Data reveals that the median household income in Vancouver for 2001 was \$57,926 and 27 per cent of the population reported having an education and the Bachelor's degree level or higher (Statistics Canada, 2001a). As a result, survey findings may not be generalizable to the population of parents with school-aged children in Vancouver as a whole. Subject to both financial and time considerations, future studies could build on the findings presented in the current study by conducting a random survey of parents with children in both public and independent institutions in Vancouver as a means of obtaining a representative sample.

Another major limitation of the survey used in the current study is that it largely sought to identify problems with the current system rather than solutions. In future studies on the topic of public education reform, it would be useful to ask parents not only their perceptions of the current public education system, but also the types of reforms that they believe should be implemented in order to improve the quality of Vancouver's public schools. While the elite interviews conducted as part of the current study serve to identify potential public school reforms, including questions concerning options for school reform on the questionnaire would provide a basis for more detailed analysis of the policy alternatives.

6 Policy Alternatives

This section examines a number of policy alternatives that could be used to reform Vancouver's public school system. Policy alternatives were determined through elite interviews and the examination of survey results. Each of these alternatives may be seen as a method of increasing the quality of Vancouver's public school system and addressing the concerns of parents. It must be noted that the policy alternatives discussed in this section are not mutually exclusive and could be implemented in conjunction with one another.

Survey results reveal significant parental dissatisfaction with their level of inclusion in school decision making, as well as dissatisfaction with the type and amount of extracurricular activities available. The survey also reveals that parents value quality academic programs, social development of their children and proximity to home the most highly when selecting a school for their children. The policy options selected therefore aim to improve upon aspects of public education where low satisfaction levels have been identified. Additionally, policy alternatives will focus on aspects of their children's education that parents value most highly.

It must also be noted that proposed policy alternatives will not include a discussion of reforms that fall under provincial jurisdiction, such as changes to funding provisions or union regulations. The primary focus of this paper lies in improving the quality of the Vancouver school system through VSB reform, rather than attempting to change provincial legislation. As discussed previously, the current study proposes alternatives to be implemented at the district rather than provincial level, due to the nature of the policy problem. The reduction of public school class sizes is another alternative that will not be evaluated in the analysis. Maximum class size limits are set by the provincial government, though a district school board is free to set class sizes lower. However, this initiative would be unlikely to address parental concerns, as few public school parents indicated that class size was one of their top educational priorities.

6.1 Status Quo

The status quo is selected both as a viable policy option in itself, and to be used as a comparison case against which other policy alternatives can be evaluated. While the Vancouver School Board has indicated its desire to implement reforms designed to retain students in the public school system (Gary Little, Interview, 08/2006), the process of policy evaluation may reveal that alternatives to the status quo are either too costly or largely ineffective.

In considering whether maintaining the status quo with respect to public school programs and curriculum in Vancouver is a viable policy option, there are a number of important issues to consider. In recent years both levels of parental satisfaction with the public school system and the percentage of Vancouver students enrolled in the public school system have fallen steadily in Vancouver. It is therefore likely that a continuation of the status quo will lead to further declines in both enrolment levels and parental satisfaction scores.

6.2 Policy Alternative 1: Strategic Choice Model

One option for reform currently under consideration by the VSB is the expansion of program choice in public schools. Expanding strategic choice in schools would entail identifying sufficient demand for specific program options, including academics, languages, athletics and arts. Based on demand, variety of specialized programs would be created in public schools throughout Vancouver (Gary Little, Interview, 12/2006). The VSB has based its desire to enhance strategic choice in Vancouver's public schools on the assertion that parents are demanding these types of programs in schools. According to the VSB, demand for greater choice in education is rooted in the belief that providing children with various program options is more responsive to student needs and maximizes student opportunities. Additionally, the expansion of choice is regarded as a means of ensuring greater accountability within the public education system (VSB, 2006a). Goldhaber (2001) echoes this sentiment, stating that school choice provides tailored programs to meet the unique educational needs of students and creates an 'educational marketplace,' whereby schools must attract and compete for students, leading to improvements in schools' quality. Expansion of strategic choice programming has the potential to address low levels of parental satisfaction with respect to both academic and extracurricular characteristics of schools. Academic-based strategic choice programs would include accelerated curriculum options, in addition to programs addressing specific academic interests in the student population, such as sciences or languages. Non-academic strategic choice programs, such as those with an arts or athletics focus, would have an extracurricular component.

While there are numerous arguments in favour of expanding strategic choice in Vancouver's public schools, the VSB has identified a number of barriers to the implementation of expanded program choice. Key considerations include the cost of administering choice programs, space and staffing considerations, demand and sustainability for new programs, governance considerations and the role of public opinion. The VSB has also identified increased enrolment in independent schools as a significant challenge to implementing choice legislation (VSB, 2006a).

Indeed, as funding is determined by enrolment levels, decreases in public school enrolment may make enhanced choice in public schools financially infeasible.

In their most recent position paper on the topic of strategic choice, the Vancouver School Board (2006a) identified several factors that they believe are critical to developing a successful strategic choice program:

- Embodying a strong commitment to the concept of strategic choice (both school choice and program choice)
- Allowing for open school boundaries as a means of enhancing student choice
- Ensuring financial sustainability while allowing choice programs to develop
- Strong public support for choice programming

One argument made in opposition to the expansion of strategic choice programming in public schools is that such programs serve an elitist function by segregating students and functioning in a manner similar to independent schools. Proponents of standard academic curriculum argue that choice programs serve to segregate students according to their ability and provide unequal opportunities for children. Indeed, many choice programs in Vancouver require entrance exams or interviews as a prerequisite to admission. While those who favour the expansion of strategic choice use differences in curriculum as a justification for the expansion of such programs, others argue that such policies create unequal learning opportunities for students (Gary Little, Interview, 12/2006).

There is currently considerable discussion surrounding the expansion of strategic choice programming in Vancouver's public institutions. It is important to note, however, that the Vancouver School Board Currently offers a variety of program choices and facilitates choice by allowing students to attend schools other than their neighbourhood school, subject to capacity constraints. Programs currently offered include French Immersion, Montessori, International Baccalaureate, and mini schools (VSB, 2006a). For a complete list and description of choice programs currently offered through the Vancouver School Board, see Appendix F.

6.3 Policy Alternative 2: Funding Decentralization

This policy option entails devolving public school funding and decision-making from the district level to the individual school level. The logistics of funding decentralization and the applicability of this model to the city of Vancouver are discussed in this section. Note that in

many other jurisdictions, including the city of Edmonton, this alternative is implemented in conjunction with strategic choice.

6.3.1 The Edmonton Model

In 1976, the Edmonton Public Schools Board (EPSB) began an experiment with funding decentralization in seven public schools (McBeath, 2001). By 1979, all schools in the Edmonton public school system participated in site-based decision-making, a process of devolving school operations, including budgetary functions, to the individual school level (Edmonton Public Schools, 2005). Under this system, individual schools receive 92 cents out every dollar allocated to the EPSB, leaving principals with central authority over major decisions, including school staffing, planning and maintenance. Principals must report frequently to the superintendent, and school performance is carefully monitored by the EPSB in order to ensure budgetary accountability (McBeath, 2001).

An important advantage of the funding decentralization model is the prominent role that it allows parents and community members in the process of school operations. According to Emery Dossall, former superintendent of EPSB and current Deputy Minister for the British Columbia Ministry of Education, one of the primary advantages of site-based decision-making is that it allows each school to respond proactively to parent demands (2001, p.7). Indeed, this consideration is relevant in the Vancouver context, where parents report that they are largely excluded from decisions that affect their child's education.

In the EPSB, funding decentralization is used in conjunction with strategic choice for parents and students within the public school system. The result of funding decentralization has been the development of numerous charter schools, including schools emphasizing performing arts, Aboriginal programming, Christian education and a variety of language schools. As students are not required to attend their neighbourhood school, they are able to choose freely between the diverse schools offered in the public system (Edmonton Public Schools, 2005).

6.3.2 Funding Decentralization: Applicability to Vancouver

The manner in which strategic choice has developed in Edmonton serves as a model for the VSB, should they decide to proceed with this policy option. With a public school attendance rate of 95 per cent in Edmonton, many view strategic choice as a means to increase levels of public school enrolment in Vancouver. However, the current VSB policy proposal involves expansion of school choice through VSB's identification of desired programs and courses among

the student and parent population (VSB, 2006a). In contrast, funding decentralization in Edmonton resulted in the creation of school choice programs under the direction of school administrators rather than the school board itself.

In determining the degree of funding decentralization to incorporate into the development of strategic choice in the Vancouver School District, it is important consider the advantages and disadvantages of decentralization. Maintaining funding at the school board level may lead to greater coordination among schools, thereby avoiding overlaps in programming. However, it may also be argued that school administrators have a better knowledge of the types of programs that students and their parents need and desire and are therefore better able to implement strategic choice than the VSB. The significance of this consideration must not be overlooked and will therefore be examined more carefully in the policy analysis section of my study.

In Edmonton, approximately 95 per cent of school-aged children are enrolled in the public system (Maguire, 2006). It must be noted, however, that Vancouver would be unlikely to reach this level of public school enrolment under funding decentralization. This is due to the fact that in addition to the EPSB, Edmonton has a Catholic School District. This board is publicly funded and serves approximately 32,000 students in 84 schools (Edmonton Catholic School District, 2007). As it is not within the jurisdiction of the VSB to create public religious schools, nor does the current provincial legislation allow for this, creating public religious schools will not be discussed as a component of this policy alternative for Vancouver.

The Vancouver School Board currently allows for a small degree of funding decentralization within its budget. Principals are granted a per student allocation to be used at their discretion. In elementary schools for the 2006-2007 school year, each school received \$67.89 per student as a general allocation, \$7.04 per student for the replacement of furniture and equipment and a small budget for other entitlements, including library resources and field trips (VSB, 2006b). For a copy of the Queen Mary discretionary budget for 2006-2007, refer to Appendix G.

6.4 Policy Alternative 3: Expansion of Extracurricular Programming

Survey results revealed that while 88 percent of public school parent respondents have children who participate in extracurricular activities outside of school, only 46 per cent are involved in extracurricular programming affiliated with the school. In contrast, 72 per cent of parents with children in the private school system who responded reported that their children were involved with extracurricular activities within the school. While few public school parents

indicated that extracurricular programming was one of the top three factors that they considered when selecting a school for their child, this does not mean that parents do not value extracurricular programming in their child's school. Moreover, the low levels of parental satisfaction with respect to the type and amount of extracurricular programming provided at their child's school, in addition to the consideration that less than 40 per cent of marginal consumers of public education are satisfied with extracurricular programming indicates that the expansion of extracurricular programming in public schools is a policy option that warrants consideration.

The expansion of extracurricular programming in Vancouver would require increases in funding. Under the status quo, unpaid parents, teachers and community leaders sponsor extracurricular activities in public schools. In order to expand extracurricular programming, it would be necessary to purchase additional equipment. Additionally, it may be necessary to provide financial compensation to new coaches and sponsors. The additional cost associated with this policy alternative is an important consideration that I will return to in the process of policy analysis.

6.5 Policy Alternative 4: Expand the Function of Community School Teams

Traditionally, community schools in Vancouver were those that were open to students and the public outside of school hours, offering a wide range of program and activities. In recent years, however, the VSB's concept of community schools has evolved to include several community school teams. Community schools teams are groups of schools that are in the same neighbourhood. Each hub consists of one secondary school and its neighbouring elementary feeder schools (Dan Marriott, Interview, 01/19/2007). A community schools coordinator runs each community schools team. The coordinator is supported by a youth and family worker, a programmer and teachers. The community schools team works to provide interventions to targeted or at-risk children, in addition to a variety of programs open to the general public. Currently there are 12 community school teams in Vancouver, two of which are located on Vancouver's West Side, with the remainder located in South and East Vancouver (Bill Marriott, Interview, 01/19/2007). For a complete list of the community school teams in Vancouver, see Appendix H.

Since their development in 2004, community school teams have been largely successful. In their first year of operation, community school teams have been involved in the coordination of 1,600 school programs and have served more than 10,000 at-risk students. Additionally,

Vancouver's community school teams have established or built upon more than 100 partnerships in the community, including the Vancouver Police Department, local community centres and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VSB, 2005b). Through these partnerships, community schools teams are able to provide students with low-cost extracurricular programming, including community centre activities, cultural activities and volunteerism. Through the community school network, public schools are able to provide after-school activities for children at a lower cost than expanding traditional extracurricular programming. Additionally, allowing for expanded public use of school facilities may allow parents to feel more welcome in their child's school. While parental levels of satisfaction are generally high for public school parent respondents with respect to feeling welcome in their child's school, marginal consumers of public education feel less welcome than those who are not marginal consumers.

Given the aforementioned successes, one possible option for reform within the Vancouver School Board is to expand the function of community schools by providing greater program and facility access to students and community members outside of school time. Dan Marriott, the Community Schools Coordinator for the VSB, believes that this is an important option to consider, as out-of-school activities keep students highly connected to their school and community (Interview, 01/19/2007). Mr. Marriott believes that subject to the removal of certain barriers, including liability issues, schools could be opened to the community at extended hours and on the weekend, providing students and the community greater access to these public assets and to expanded programming.

6.5.1 Stratford Hall as an Urban School

In an article written for the April 2006 Issue of *Dialogue*, Dr. McConnell, Stratford Hall Head of School, notes that the location of his school in a crowded urban neighbourhood has necessitated innovative use of space and community resources. In his article, Dr. McConnell outlines his concept of Stratford Hall as an urban school:

Our school can model sustainability and efficiency based on limited resources. Constraints generate creative and innovative ideas, so we will be thoughtful as we plan new facilities...We will have to share. Already, we share space in the public parks nearby and we expect to share our facilities with community groups...Including the resources of a major city in a school's programming show students that learning takes place all around, not just inside the classroom.

The idea of community schools is similar to the urban school concept used by Dr. McConnell. Both concepts incorporate effective use and sharing of limited resources, community

outreach and building partnerships with neighbours. The success that Stratford Hall has had with applying these concepts to the development of their school suggests that the expansion of schools as active community members that engage in the sharing of scarce public resources warrants consideration as a viable policy option.

7 Criteria and Measurements

In order to assess the various policy alternatives proposed to the Vancouver School Board, each will be assessed in light of relevant criteria. The criteria that will be used as a basis for assessment are financial sustainability, effectiveness, equity, VSB political feasibility and other stakeholder political feasibility. Measures are assigned to each criterion for the purpose of comparison and to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed policy reforms. Examining each policy alternative in relation to the aforementioned criteria facilitates decision-making and is used to support final policy recommendations. Table 7.1 presents a summary of the criteria and measures used in the process of policy evaluation.

Table 7.1 Criteria for the Assessment of Policy Alternatives

Criterion	Definition	Measurement
Financial Sustainability	Can the policy alternative be supported by the VSB's budget?	High=3 Medium=2 Low=1
Effectiveness	To what extent will the alternative be successful at increasing levels of public school enrolment relative to private schools and/or prevent loss of students to the private school system in the future?	High=3 Medium=2 Low=1
Equity	To what extent does the policy alternative ensure equal access for all children within the public school system?	High=3 Medium=2 Low=1
VSB Political Feasibility	How acceptable is this policy alternative to decision-makers at the VSB	High=3 Medium=2 Low=1
Other Stakeholder Feasibility	How acceptable is this alternative to other stakeholder groups, including parents, teachers and school administrators?	High=3 Medium=2 Low=1

In the analysis, certain stakeholder groups or interests may have the desire to weight some criteria higher than others, based on their position and interests. The current study, however, weights all criteria equally. This is due to the fact that receiving a low score on any one criterion is sufficient to block implementation of the policy alternative in question. For example, an alternative highly effective in addressing the policy problem cannot be implemented if it is found to be highly inequitable.

7.1 Financial Sustainability

Cost is one of the primary considerations to take into account in the evaluation of policy alternatives. As the Vancouver School Board operates under a tight budget, alternatives that are

not affordable can be immediately eliminated. Moreover, since the VSB is funded by tax revenues, it would be difficult to justify costly policy alternatives to the public. However, it must be noted that the VSB is provided funding on a per-student basis. If an alternative is successful in increasing levels of public school enrolment in Vancouver, then the VSB budget will subsequently increase. Therefore, it may be possible to justify a slightly more costly alternative if it is highly effective in increasing levels of public school enrolment.

7.2 Effectiveness

My final policy recommendation or set of recommendations must be justified as an effective means of addressing both the relatively low levels of parental satisfaction with the public school system in Vancouver and the decrease in levels of public school enrolment. While the VSB's primary concern lies in recapturing the share of their client base that has been lost in recent years, increasing satisfaction levels of parents with children currently in public school is also necessary in order to prevent loss of students in the future. As survey results indicate that respondents who are marginal consumers of public education also have the lowest levels of satisfaction as indicated by the administered survey, it is important to include both dimensions of the policy problem when speaking to the effectiveness of the proposed policy alternatives.

7.3 Equity

Equity is a fundamental consideration in the process of policy evaluation. The need to respect diversity in public schools and maintain a positive learning environment is of paramount importance. Policy reforms must take into account impacts on students from all neighbourhoods, ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, the benefits of these reforms must have the potential to be realized by all students in Vancouver's public school system. This issue also relates to the social segregation or stratification that can occur as a result of enhanced choice with respect to both school choice (public and private) and program choice (as with the development of specialized academic programs within public schools). This criterion therefore encompasses issues of social integration of children from a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

7.4 Political Feasibility

Political feasibility is an important criterion to consider in the evaluation of policy alternatives. Any changes made to Vancouver's public school system will be subject to the approval of the

VSB. As a result, VSB support is a necessary condition for the implementation of any policy changes. This criterion encompasses both the political position of the Vancouver School Board with respect to the proposed reforms and the administrative ease with which the policy alternatives can be implemented.

7.5 Other Stakeholder Feasibility

The acceptability of the proposed policy alternatives must be considered in relation to a number of key stakeholder groups not directly affiliated with the VSB. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), which represents all public school educators in the province, is a 38,000 member organization with strong ties to the labour movement and the provincial New Democratic Party. Given their considerable size and influence, the BCTF may try to prevent the implementation of any policy that they deem unsatisfactory and against their interests. Likewise, the feasibility of this alternative when considered in relationship to the preferences of other stakeholder groups, including the Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice Principals Association and parent associations, should be taken into account. In particular, the political feasibility of the alternatives among parents must be carefully considered, as one of the primary objectives of making reforms to the current system is to improve parental satisfaction with the public school system

8 Assessment of Policy Alternatives

This section provides assessment of the proposed policy alternatives. The criteria outlined in the previous section are used to evaluate the options under consideration. Alternatives are presented in a matrix in order facilitate the process of evaluation to compare the relative merits of each policy option. Evaluation of each of the policy alternatives is done with information compiled through a series of elite interviews, survey data and a literature review. Table 8.1 presents an assessment of the alternatives.

Table 7.5.1 Assessment of Policy Alternatives

Criteria	Status Quo	Alternative 1 Strategic Choice	Alternative 2 Funding Decentralization	Alternative 3 Extracurricular Expansion	Alternative 4 Community Schools
Financial Sustainability	Medium potential for school closures over the long term	Medium costly to implement programs initially, though once they are established they will be easier to maintain	High if funds are properly managed, may lead to greater cost-effectiveness	Medium/Low - Unless programs relied entirely on volunteerism, coaches/sponsors would have to be paid, which the VSB budget cannot financially support	High - coordination with community centres and the introduction of low cost programs prevents budgetary concerns
Effectiveness	Low - public schools will continue to lose children to ind. schools, likely no increase in satisfaction levels	High - expansion of strategic choice will likely increase levels of parental satisfaction and may prevent them from seeking out specialized academic programs at independent schools	Medium - Principals have the financial capacity to implement programs in accordance with the preferences of parents/students at the school. Will likely lead to greater levels of satisfaction and higher retention rates	Medium/High - Levels of parental satisfaction with respect to this indicator will increase as a result	Medium - Likely to improve levels of parental satisfaction and prevent loss of students, but unlikely to draw kids back from private schools
Equity	Medium - while some students thrive in the current academic setting, others do not	Medium - If programs are made accessible to all, equity will be enhanced. If entrance exams are required for specialized academic programs, equity considerations may be compromised	Medium - Some parents may be in a better position to influence school decision making, while the voices of others may not be heard	Medium/Low - Ability of parents at the school to contribute financially may impact their child's ability to participate	High - equal access to all, with a specific focus on at-risk children
VSB Political Feasibility	Low - VSB wants to change programming in order to prevent future loss of students	High - The VSB is already looking at the expansion of strategic choice in schools	Low - Has not been seriously considered by the VSB	Medium - Likely not politically feasible since not financially feasible	High - VSB is already highly involved in enhancing the role of community schools
Other Stakeholder Feasibility	Medium - many stakeholder groups are pushing for change, others are reluctant to depart from the status quo	High - parents have expressed their desire for the introduction of a greater number of specialized programs in the school	Medium - Divisive issue amongst PAC committee at Queen Mary and principals in the Vancouver School district.	Medium - Many parents would support this initiative, though it would detract from well established community programs	High - Many parents would support, not likely to be opposed by teachers or administrators

While all criteria used in evaluation are carefully considered and equally weighted, the financial feasibility criterion can be used to immediately eliminate policy options that are not viable. Recall that the VSB operates on a tight budget determined by per-student enrolment. Given this consideration, financial feasibility is a necessary condition for the implementation of a given policy alternative. I can thus eliminate immediately all policy alternatives that are not financially sustainable, as budget limitations will prevent the implementation of such reforms.

8.1 Key Informant Interviews

Five key informants were interviewed for the process of policy evaluation. The key informants selected for interview were: (1) Bill Barrie, Principal of Queen Mary Elementary, (2) Esther Reid, a parent who is highly involved at Queen Mary and is a member of the PAC

committee, (3) Dan Marriott, a former public school principal and the Vancouver School Board’s Community Schools Liaison, (4) Susan Fisher, a recently retired public school teacher and former union representative at Southlands Elementary School and (5) James McConnell, Stratford Hall’s Head of School. Collectively, these key informants represent a wide variety of stakeholder groups, including parents, public and independent school administrators, teachers, the Vancouver School Board and union interests.

8.2 Summary of Policy Evaluation

Table 8.2.1 Scoring of Policy Evaluation

Criteria	Status Quo	Alternative 1 Strategic Choice	Alternative 2 Funding Decentralization	Alternative 3 Extracurricular Expansion	Alternative 4 Community Schools
Financial Sustainability	2	2	3	1.5	3
Effectiveness	1	3	2	2.5	2
Equity	2	2	2	1.5	3
VSB political feasibility	1	3	1	2	3
Other Stakeholder Feasibility	2	3	2	2	3
Totals	8/15	13/15	10/15	9.5/15	14/15

I next assess each of the policy alternatives based on the cited policy criteria. Table 8.2.1 presents a summary of the policy alternative evaluation matrix. This table allows for quantitative calculation of the options and facilitates comparison. A low score merits one point, a medium score two points and a high score is awarded three points. In this initial evaluation, all relevant criteria are weighted equally. This is due to the fact that a low score on any one criterion could prevent the implementation of a policy alternative.

8.3 Evaluation of the Status Quo

The status quo receives a low score with respect to effectiveness considerations. Under the status quo, parental satisfaction levels will not increase and the percentage of Vancouver students enrolled in independent schools will likely continue to rise. This alternative receives a score of medium with respect to financial sustainability, because if public schools continue to lose students to private schools, funding levels will decline and it is possible that some schools will have to close. The status quo received a low score on VSB feasibility, as the school board is

currently exploring options for policy reform and has indicated dissatisfaction with the status quo (VSB, 2006a). The status quo received a score of medium with respect to feasibility among other stakeholders. This score was awarded because while many parents and educators are supportive of policy reform in public schools, the VSB anticipates moderate resistance to change coming from some stakeholders, stating that “change can be difficult when school communities are used to certain set of practices and procedures” (VSB, 2006a). The status quo scored medium for equity. This is because a limited number of specialized academic programs currently exist in Vancouver, granting some students easier access to these opportunities than others do. When ranked against the various alternatives, the status quo received the lowest score, 9 points out of a possible 15.

8.4 Evaluation of Alternative 1: Strategic Choice

With respect to cost, the strategic choice alternative receives a score of medium, as programs would be expensive to implement initially. The VSB identifies staffing, space limitations and program demand as key obstacles to the expansion of strategic choice in Vancouver’s schools. While accurately gauging demand prior to the implementation of new programs is necessary in order to ensure success, this process can be both costly and time consuming (VSB, 2006a). However, if the VSB were able to accurately gauge demand and design programs accordingly, this alternative would be financially sustainable over the long term. Evidently, the score awarded for the financial sustainability of this alternative is highly sensitive to the manner in which it is implemented. Assuming that the VSB conducts some form of a feasibility study prior to implementation, this alternative receives a score of medium.

This alternative scored high on the effectiveness criterion. The VSB based its decision to explore strategic choice options for the Vancouver public schools on a meta-analysis of education in Canada, which shows an increasing parental demand for choice (VSB, 2006a). Esther Reid indicated that parents with children attending Queen Mary, including herself, would like to see an academic mini-school established at her neighbourhood high school (Interview, 01/15/2007). Given this consideration, it is likely that the expansion of strategic choice in schools would respond to parental demands, thereby increasing satisfaction levels and helping to retain students within the public school system.

Evidence from academic literature provides further support for the assertion that expansion of strategic choice programming will prevent loss of students to the public school system in the future. Epple, Newlon and Romano (2000) find that through the implementation of

specialized programs, particularly those geared towards gifted or higher ability students can retain a greater number of students than those without specialized programs.

This alternative scores high on the VSB political feasibility criterion, as the fact that the school board is already studying options for the expansion of strategic choice implies their receptivity to this alternative. However, the alternative scored medium with respect to other stakeholder feasibility. While VSB research and the data collected for the current study indicate widespread support, the VSB acknowledges that strategic choice “often requires problematic changes that deal with collective agreements, organizational changes, facilities considerations and issues of governance” (VSB, 2006a). These issues could make the expansion of strategic choice programming challenging

This alternative scores a medium with respect to equity considerations. The equity of strategic choice is highly sensitive to the manner of implementation. In order to be considered equitable, choice programs must be distributed evenly across neighbourhoods so that all children have relatively equal access. Additionally, equity can be enhanced if a variety of choice programs that appeal to diverse interests are represented. For example, if the VSB decided to expand its fine arts programs in schools, then children with academic, athletic or technological interests would not benefit.

Increased racial or class segregation is another important aspect to consider when evaluating this policy alternative. A review of the literature reveals that when schools switch to a market framework in which school choice is liberalized, the education of minority students is negatively impacted. Tomlinson (1997) observed this phenomenon in a study of England’s public school system from the 1960s to the 1980s. She found that racial segregation is “exacerbated by parental choice” (p. 67). Additionally, Tomlinson observed class segregation through school choice in her analysis. If this policy alternative is implemented by the VSB, entrance requirements should be based on merit and designed in such a manner that students from all neighbourhoods, socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic groups have equal opportunity to access the programs.

One final important consideration of the strategic choice alternative pertains to the importance that public school parent respondents placed on sending their children to a school that is in their neighbourhood. While Principal Bill Barrie estimates that 30-40 per cent of children attending Queen Mary are cross boundary, the vast majority of these children still live in West Point Grey and UBC neighbourhoods (Interview, 01/15/2007). Queen Mary parent Esther Reid highlighted the importance of neighbourhood considerations in stating that while she wanted her

child to attend an academic mini-school, such as the ones offered at Point Grey and Prince of Wales, the distance of these schools from her home would prevent her from sending her child there (Interview 01/15/2007). While parents are increasingly demanding choice from the public education system, some are hesitant to sacrifice school proximity to home for the increase in educational options.

One way of overcoming this dilemma would be to concentrate the expansion of academic choices at the senior grade levels. As students reach high school age they become increasingly mobile and independent, allowing them to travel farther distances to schools if they choose to do so. Additionally, focusing choice at the secondary level would ensure that younger students have a broad educational base and exposure to a variety of academic offerings in their early years. In an interview, Bill Barrie agreed that the importance elementary school parents place on sending children to a school in their neighbourhood suggests that the expansion of strategic choice in schools would be best concentrated at the secondary level. The strategic choice alternative received the second highest score, 13 out of a possible 15 points.

8.5 Evaluation of Alternative 2: Funding Decentralization

With respect to financial sustainability, the funding decentralization alternative receives a high score. Under this alternative, funding would remain at the same level as the status quo. However, rather than being managed by the school boards, spending decisions would be overseen primarily by school administrators. This alternative received a score of medium with respect to effectiveness. In a personal interview, former elementary school principal and community schools liaison Dan Marriott indicated that he was uncertain as to whether it would increase levels of satisfaction with public schools or prevent loss of students to the private school system. Mr. Marriott believed that while some schools would be able to manage funds effectively and efficiently, others would run into considerable financial problems, or even go bankrupt.

This finding scored low with respect to Vancouver School Board feasibility. Mr. Marriott indicated that the VSB has not seriously contemplated this policy alternative as a viable option and is unlikely to do so in the future. The alternative scored medium with respect to other stakeholder feasibility. Mr. Marriott indicated that while some principals would welcome the opportunity, others would be opposed (Interview, 01/19/2007). Principal Bill Barrie stated that he would not be interested in funding decentralization, as it would require him to spend more time on tasks such as staffing and the purchasing of supplies and less time for his traditional role as an educator and head of school (Interview, 01/19/2007). Mr. Marriott indicated that teacher

acceptance would be dependent upon the manner in which spending decisions were made. He felt that the more opportunity that teachers had to partake in budgetary decisions, the more like they would be to support such and initiative. However, Susan Fisher, a recently retired elementary school teacher expressed strong opposition to this alternative (Interview, 02/18/2007). Finally, Esther Reid stated that while she is personally supportive of this policy alternative, a recent discussion on the issue at PAC meeting revealed both support for and opposition to funding decentralization from parents. The score of medium assigned to this alternative on the criterion of stakeholder feasibility reflects the polarization of popular opinion regarding funding decentralization.

Finally, this alternative received a medium score with respect to equity considerations. Mr. Marriott believes that under funding decentralization, some schools would be able to manage their budget more effectively than others. He observed that this might lead to a lack of standardization across Vancouver's public schools with respect to education quality and program availability. This policy alternative received a total score of 10/15 suggesting that once all relevant criteria accounted for, this alternative may not be the optimal policy for the VSB to pursue.

8.6 Evaluation of Policy Alternative 3: Expansion of Extracurricular Opportunities

As with the previous alternatives discussed, the scoring awarded to this alternative is highly sensitive to the manner of implementation. Currently, schools in Vancouver rely on parent, teacher and community volunteers to provide children in public schools with extracurricular opportunities, including sports, arts and interest clubs. If the VSB were to fund sponsors and coaches as a means of enhancing program choices, the alternative would be financially infeasible and must therefore be immediately eliminated from consideration. However, it is likely also infeasible to rely on significantly greater levels volunteerism from teachers, parents and community leaders, as those who are not currently participating likely don't have the time or desire to do so, while those who are currently involved in the provision of public school extracurricular activities likely do not have the ability to take on additional responsibilities. Given these considerations, I will assume that this alternative is implemented by private funding of extracurricular activities, including parent fees and fundraising activities.

With this method of implementation, financial considerations and equity considerations are closely linked. This alternative is only feasible to the extent that parents have the financial

capacity to afford any fees associated with their child's involvement or have the capacity to fundraise. Lower-income or at-risk children, who would benefit most from an expansion of school-based extracurricular programming, are more likely to come from families that lack the financial capacity to pay for such activities (Bill Marriott, Interview, 01/19/2007). As a result, this alternative scores medium/low with respect to both equity and financial feasibility considerations.

This alternative received a score of medium on the VSB political feasibility criterion. Mr. Marriott indicated that while this alternative would be desirable if the VSB budget provided for it, the aforementioned equity and financial considerations prevent full acceptance of extracurricular expansion as a viable alternative. Likewise, this alternative received a score of medium when examined in relation to feasibility considerations among other stakeholders. Survey results indicate that parents are dissatisfied with the current level of extracurricular programming provided at their child's school, suggesting that this alternative would be widely accepted by parents. Esther Reid echoed this sentiment when she stated that she would like to see a greater amount of extracurricular opportunities for her children at school. However, Bill Barrie indicates that he did not believe this was a particularly viable alternative. Mr. Barrie states that one of the reasons he does not support expanding extracurricular programming in schools is that it would compete with the well established community extracurricular activities already taking place in the West Point Grey area, including soccer and minor hockey (Interview, 01/15/2007). However, it is important to point out that community extracurricular activities generally have fees associated with them, which does little to address equity considerations.

This policy alternative receives a score of medium/high with respect to effectiveness. Survey results suggest that expanding extracurricular programming would significantly raise parental levels of satisfaction. Additionally, Mr. Marriott indicates that he believes that that expansion of extracurricular programming would raise levels of satisfaction within the public school system, though he is unsure as to whether this policy alternative would prevent future loss of students to independent schools (Interview, 01/19/2007). However, Ms. Reid stated that she believed that some parents who took their children out of the public school system and into the private school system did so in part to take advantage of the extracurricular opportunities provided (Interview, 01/15/2007).

While Stratford Hall parent respondents indicated relatively low levels of parental satisfaction with respect to extracurricular programming in the schools, it is likely that other private schools in Vancouver have higher levels of parental satisfaction on this indicator. In a

personal interview. Stratford Hall head of School James McConnell admitted that he was not surprised that many parents were dissatisfied with extracurricular programming in their school, due to the fact that Stratford Hall is a newer and smaller school, which is still developing its extracurricular programs (Interview, 01/25/2007). While Stratford Hall does not have extensive extracurricular offerings, many other private schools in Vancouver do, suggesting that the prioritization of extracurricular activities in school choice may in fact be higher for parents who choose private school than the Stratford Hall data reveals. In spite of the perceived effectiveness of this alternative, problems with respect to equity, financial feasibility and the concerns of stakeholders serve to undermine its viability. This alternative received a score of 9.5 out of a possible 15 points.

8.7 Analysis of Policy Alternative 4: Expand the Function of the Community School Network

This policy alternative received a high score on the financial sustainability criterion. While pursuing this option would entail expanding extracurricular programming in schools, Dan Marriott believes that the VSB could do this at a relatively low cost through the existing partnerships between community schools and local community centres. The link between community schools and neighbouring community centres provides one point of access for the provision of low-cost after school programs. Additionally, expansion of activities centred on arts and culture could be done at a relatively low cost (Dan Marriott, Interview, 01/10/2007).

This option received a score of medium with respect to the effectiveness criterion. While Mr. Marriott indicated that it was unlikely that this option would result in parents of private school children switching their children to public schools, he did believe that it would increase levels of parental satisfaction and may prevent loss of future students. While this alternative is predicted to raise the satisfaction levels overall amongst parents, there is no indication of the impact that it would have on raising the satisfaction levels of marginal consumers of public education. These uncertainties suggest that this policy alternative is not effective enough to stand on its own, particularly when the primary objective of the Vancouver School Board is to prevent loss of students to the private school system in the future.

Expanding the function of community schools received the highest score for equity of any policy option presented. This is due to the fact that community school hubs provide equal access to general programs offered outside of school hours. Additionally, community school coordinators have developed a number of programs geared specifically towards at-risk children.

Expanding the function of community schools is also highly politically feasible, both from the perspective of the VSB and other stakeholders. Esther Reid indicated that she would like to see the community function of Queen Mary expanded (Interview 01/15/2007). Additionally, Mr. Marriott indicated that principals and teachers would be likely to support this initiative. Based on a scoring of all relevant criteria, this alternative ranked the highest of those under consideration, earning 14 out of a possible 15 points.

8.8 Reassessment of Policy Alternatives

An alternate way of evaluating the various policy alternatives involves scoring without the inclusion of political considerations. Stakeholder receptiveness may ultimately impact whether a policy alternative is implemented. This is particularly true with respect to policy problems concerning public education, which involve a wide variety of stakeholder groups that often have competing interests. However, I have decided to test these options a second time, without the consideration of stakeholder feasibility. This is done to ensure that my final recommendations are truly effective, and not just widely accepted by the affected parties. As in the initial analysis, criteria are all weighted equally. The exclusion of stakeholder interests from the reassessment does not mean that the positions of the groups are irrelevant to the analysis. Instead, it is a means of re-testing the alternatives from a neutral perspective to ensure that high quality alternatives are not being overlooked.

Table 8.8.1 presents a summary of policy evaluations with the removal of stakeholder and VSB political feasibility. Alternatives are scored out of a possible of 9 points, rather than the maximum of 15 awarded in the original matrix.

Table 8.8.1 Evaluation of Policy Alternatives without Political Considerations

Criteria	Status Quo	Alternative 1 Strategic Choice	Alternative 2 Funding Decentralization	Alternative 3 Extracurricular Expansion	Alternative 4 Community Schools
Financial Sustainability	2	2	3	1.5	3
Effectiveness	1	3	2	2.5	2
Equity	2	2	2	1.5	3
Totals	5/9	7/9	7/9	5.5/9	8/9

When political considerations are removed from the process of policy evaluation, both community schools and strategic choice receive still receive high scores. The status quo and expansion of extracurricular programming receive the lowest scores of all alternatives presented. The most significant difference between the first evaluation matrix and the second pertains to the change in ranking of the funding decentralization option. Under the revised matrix, this alternative receives 7 out of a possible 9 points and is tied with strategic choice as the second-highest ranking alternative. The only difference in scoring between these two alternatives pertains to their political feasibility, suggesting that the funding decentralization option should not be immediately eliminated from consideration as a viable policy option.

9 Policy Recommendations

Based on the evaluation of the policy alternatives discussed in the current study, the VSB may opt to implement more than one policy option, as the alternatives are not mutually exclusive. This section outlines my recommendations, based on the alternatives that the previous analysis revealed to be the most viable. Included is a discussion of the first steps to take in the implementation process.

9.1 Community Schools Recommendation

Based on the scoring matrix and process of policy evaluation, my first recommendation is that the VSB look into options for expanding the functions of the community schools network. The level of importance that parents of public school students place on the neighbourhood characteristics of a school lend further support to my assertion that expanding the function of community schools is a policy option that the VSB should consider. Based on my interviews with key informants, the first step that I recommend is to conduct a feasibility study on this policy alternative. Specifically, this study should examine the various barriers to implementation that exist, such as liability concerns, and look at ways to mitigate them.

A second recommendation for expanding the community schools is to engage in consultations with parents, school staff and the community at large. Recall that the purpose of the community schools network is to work with the community in coordinating and providing programs within the school for the community at large. In order for this to be done effectively, widespread participation is necessary. If ideas and suggestions arising from consultations are effectively incorporated into plans to expand community school hubs, then schools will be better able to effectively serve as a neighbourhood space.

9.2 Strategic Choice Recommendation

Based on the high score awarded to this alternative, my second recommendation is to examine options for expansion of strategic choice in schools. The Vancouver School Board is already looking into ways to implement this alternative, which are outlined in their 2006 position paper on strategic choice. Before expanding choice programming in schools, I recommend that the VSB conduct a careful study of demand for specific programs in order to ensure that the design of strategic choice programming satisfies the demands of parents and students, thereby

ensuring financial sustainability. While there is a considerable cost associated with conducting a study, it will be far less costly over the long term than establishing strategic choice programs that are not cost effective.

Another recommendation for the implementation of strategic choice in schools is that these programs be implemented mainly at the secondary level. I base this recommendation on the importance that respondents with children in public elementary schools place on sending their child to a school in their neighbourhood. Children at the high school level are more independent and mobile than those of elementary school age, which provides additional justification for concentrating specialized academic programs in Vancouver's public secondary schools.

9.3 Funding Decentralization Recommendation

My final recommendation is for the VSB to open discussion on funding decentralization. Currently, political feasibility serves as the major impediment to the implementation of this policy alternative. However, as previously discussed, scoring for each alternative is highly sensitive to the manner in which the alternative is implemented. It is likely that some variation of the funding decentralization model used in Edmonton would receive a higher score with respect to political feasibility. Partial funding decentralization is one possible alternative that could be implemented as an alternative to total decentralization. For example, administrators could be given financial control over funding for academic and extracurricular programming, but not for hiring of teachers or the purchasing of school supplies and services. Another possibility would be to include not only administrators but also teachers and parents in the management of school funds. Considering a variety of funding models might solve some of the issues identified in section 8.5 as barriers to widespread acceptance of funding decentralization as a viable policy alternative.

10 Conclusion

Through survey data, elite interviews and a survey of relevant literature, my study proposes policy options to the Vancouver School Board to increase levels of parental satisfaction and prevent loss of students to private schools. Literature review and elite interviews reveal that parents are choosing independent over public education for their children for a variety of reasons, including concerns about class size, job action, academic quality and class composition. Survey data reveals that while parents have largely similar educational priorities for their children, parents with children in private school place slightly more importance on academic achievement than public school parents do. Additionally, parents of public school children value the opportunity to send their children to a school close to their home.

Based on its survey data, this study presented and evaluated a variety of options for reform to Vancouver's public school system. My analysis yields three policy alternatives that the VSB should consider to address the concerns of parents within the public school system and prevent loss of students to independent schools. These alternatives are to expand strategic choice in Vancouver's public schools, to enhance the function of community school networks and to engage in discussion on funding decentralization. These policy options were selected for their ability to effectively address the closely related policy problems of low levels of parental satisfaction with public education in Vancouver and loss of students to the private school system.

In the process of policy implementation, two major considerations must be addressed. First, my study reveals that there is considerable diversity of opinion surrounding the optimal manner in which to address the identified policy problem. Each survey respondent, academic article and elite interviewee provided a different perspective on solutions to the problems facing public education. Public education policy debates involve multiple stakeholders with differing perspectives and ideals, often leading to conflict between groups. However, stakeholder conflicts and the interests of powerful groups involved in the debate must not serve as an impediment to the implementation of effective policy. Second, the success of each recommended policy alternative in addressing the identified policy problem is highly sensitive to the manner of implementation. New programs and policies must be designed in such a manner that they maintain accountability. Failure to take these considerations into account will render even the most well-intentioned reforms to the public education system largely ineffective.

Appendices

Appendix A

List of Vancouver Independent Schools and FISA Category

Name of School	FISA Category
Anchor Point Montessori School	AMG
Blessed Sacrament School	CIS
Century High School	AMG
Columbia College	AMG
Corpus Christi School	CIS
Crofton House	ISA
Family Montessori School	AMG
Fraser Academy	AMG
Glen Eden School	AMG
Immaculate Conception School	CIS
Khalsa School	AMG
King David High School	AMG
Kingston High School	AMG
Little Flower Academy	CIS
Madrona School	AMG
Notre Dame High School	CIS
Our Lady of Perpetual Help School	CIS
Our Lady of Sorrows School	CIS
S7UMUX Kindergarten	AMG
St. Andrews School	CIS
St. Anthony of Padua School	CIS
St. Augustine's School	CIS

Name of School	FISA Category
St. Francis of Assisi School	CIS
St. Francis Xavier School	CIS
St. George's School	ISA
St. John's International School	AMG
St. John's School	ISA
St. Joseph's School	CIS
St. Jude's School	CIS
St. Mary's School	CIS
St. Patrick's Elementary School	CIS
St. Patrick's Secondary School	CIS
Stratford Hall	ISA
Vancouver Christian School	SCS
Vancouver College	CIS
Vancouver Formosa Academy	AMG
Vancouver Hebrew Academy	AMG
Vancouver Montessori School	AMG
Vancouver Oral Centre	AMG
Vancouver Talmud Torah	AMG
West Coast Christian School	ACSI BC
West Point Grey Academy	ISA
Westside Christian School	SCS
Westside Preparatory School	AMG
York House School	ISA

Appendix B

Number of Independent Schools in BC by Member Group 1969-2005

YEAR	ASSOCIATE MEMBER GROUP (AMG)*	CATHOLIC INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (CIS)**	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION (ISA)	SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS (SCSBC)***	FISA TOTAL	NON-FISA SCHOOLS	GRAND TOTAL
1969-70	6	77	14	15	112		
1970-71	6	75	14	15	110	66	176
1971-72	6	75	12	15	108	66	174
1972-73	6	75	12+	15	108	66	174
1973-74	6	70	12+	15	103	59	162
1974-75	6	69	12+	15	102	59	161
1975-76	6	68	12	15	101	55	156
1976-77	6	65	12	15	98	54	152
1977-78	6	65	10	20	101	55	156
1978-79	7	67	10	23	107	82	189
1979-80	6	66	10	24	106	99	205
1980-81	6	65	10	23	104	120	224
1981-82	7	62	10	22	101	121	222
1982-83	8	65	10	24	107	126	233
1983-84	6	66	10	25	107	137	244
1984-85	9	65	10	26	110	142	252
1985-86	12	69	10	27	118	166	284
1986-87	16	72	10	32	130	171	301
1987-88	28	74	10	31	143	162	305
1988-89	38	73	14	34	159	157	316
1989-90	44	72	14	39	169	122	291
1990-91	47	72	14	42	175	119	294
1991-92	49	71	15	42	177	111	288
1992-93	55	74	15	40	184	121	305
1993-94	70	74	15	39	198	115	313
1994-95	74	76	15	36	201	129	330
1995-96	86	75	15	41	217	118	335
1996-97	91	77	15	41	224	127	351
1997-98	95	78	17	44	234	125	359
1998-99	100	78	18	43	239	118	357
1999-00	113	77	18	42	250	101	351

YEAR	ASSOCIATE MEMBER GROUP (AMG)*		CATHOLIC INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (CIS)**	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION (ISA)	SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS (SCSBC)***	FISA TOTAL	NON-FISA SCHOOLS	GRAND TOTAL
2000-01	113		77	20	41	251	95	346
2001-02	122		76	20	37	255	83	338
2002-03	125		76	20	38	259	78	337
	ACSIBC AMG		CIS	ISA	SCSBC	FISA Total	Non-FISA Total	Grand Total
2003-04	29	101	76	21	38	265	74	339
2004-05	31	103	76	20	40	270	74	344

Source: FISA BC, 2007a.

Appendix C

Enrolment in Independent Schools in BC by Member Group, 1969-2006

YEAR	ASSOCIATE MEMBER GROUP (AMG)*	CATHOLIC INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (CIS)**	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION (ISA)	SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS (SCSBC)***	FISA TOTAL	NON-FISA SCHOOLS	GRAND TOTAL
1969-70	709	14,905	3,159	1,665	20,438	1,921	22,359
1970-71	1,250	14,493	2,902	2,049	20,694	625	21,319
1971-72	1,070	13,737	2,898	2,014	19,719	2,058	21,777
1972-73	1,148	14,213	3,172	2,009	20,542	1,519	22,061
1973-74	1,177	13,342	3,260	2,070	19,849	1,572	21,421
1974-75	1,330	13,657	3,329	2,105	20,421	634	21,055
1975-76	1,359	13,855	3,637	2,207	21,058	2,013	23,071
1976-77	1,298	13,750	3,653	2,178	20,879	2,439	23,318
1977-78	1,357	13,264	3,559	2,471	20,651	3,040	23,691
1978-79	1,411	13,395	3,556	2,702	21,064	3,492	24,556
1979-80	1,273	13,226	3,667	2,946	21,112	3,715	24,827
1980-81	1,498	13,712	3,661	3,239	22,110	4,204	26,314
1981-82	2,056	14,077	3,839	3,436	23,408	4,528	27,936
1982-83	2,002	14,620	3,872	3,592	24,086	4,194	28,280
1984-85	1,756	15,421	3,886	3,969	25,032	5,294	30,326
1985-86	2,047	16,592	4,331	4,149	27,119	6,434	33,553
1986-87	2,563	16,934	4,484	4,639	28,620	5,622	34,242
1987-88	3,396	17,029	4,697	5,133	30,255	6,469	36,724
1988-89	3,755	16,734	4,814	5,509	30,812	6,919	37,731
1989-90	4,570	16,845	5,196	6,281	32,892	5,546	38,438
1990-91	5,344	17,354	5,158	7,476	35,332	5,049	40,381
1991-92	6,034	17,633	5,268	8,272	37,207	5,653	42,860
1992-93	7,667	18,227	5,386	8,232	39,512	6,512	46,024
1993-94	9,112	19,192	5,639	8,680	42,623	6,779	49,402
1994-95	10,548	19,903	5,766	8,700	44,917	7,483	52,400
1995-96	13,180	20,431	5,830	8,479	47,920	6,287	54,207
1996-97	13,734	20,937	5,885	8,588	49,144	6,722	55,866
1997-98	14,162	21,468	7,078	8,732	51,440	7,057	58,497
1998-99	14,906	21,623	7,475	8,834	52,838	6,768	59,606
1999-00	16,346	21,314	8,056	8,321	54,037	5,683	59,720
2000-01	16,025	21,193	8,317	8,982	54,517	5,226	59,743

2001-02	16,906		20,875	8,436	9,057	55,274	4,677	59,951
2002-03	17,974		21,313	8,700	9,698	57,685	4,916	62,601
	ACSIBC	AMG	CIS	ISA	SCSBC	FISA total	Non-FISA schools	GRAND TOTAL
2003-04	7,251	10,593	21,430	9,532	9,527	58,333	5,054	63,387
2004-05	7,386	10,681	21,390	9,886	9,558	58,901	6,040	64,941
2005-06	7,599	11,076	21,305	10,113	9,643	59,736	6,499	66,235

Source: FISA BC, 2007b.

Appendix D

Public and Independent School Enrolment in BC, 1977-2006.

Year	Enrolment Public	Annual Growth %	Enrolment Independent	Annual Growth %	Enrolment total	Independent Proportion of total %
77/78	527,771	-1.6	23,691	1.6	551,462	4.3
78/79	517,786	-1.9	24,556	3.7	542,342	4.5
79/80	511,671	-1.2	24,827	1.1	536,498	4.6
80/81	509,805	-0.4	26,314	6.0	536,119	4.9
81/82	503,371	-1.3	27,936	6.2	531,307	5.3
82/83	500,336	-0.6	28,280	1.2	528,616	5.3
83/84	497,312	-0.6	29,118	3.0	526,430	5.5
84/85	491,085	-1.3	30,326	4.1	521,411	5.8
85/86	486,692	-0.9	33,553	10.6	520,245	6.4
86/87	486,221	-0.1	34,242	2.1	520,463	6.6
87/88	491,234	1.0	36,724	7.2	527,958	7.0
88/89	499,994	1.8	37,731	2.7	537,725	7.0
89/90	512,926	2.6	38,438	1.9	551,364	7.0
90/91	519,958	1.4	39,772	3.5	559,730	7.1
91/92	539,300	3.7	42,815	7.7	582,115	7.4
92/93	554,590	2.8	45,989	7.4	600,579	7.7
93/94	568,668	2.5	49,334	7.3	618,002	8.0
94/95	582,781	2.5	52,274	6.0	635,055	8.2
95/96	594,773	2.0	54,207	3.4	648,980	8.35
96/97	607,644	2.2	55,866	3.1	663,510	8.4
97/98	615,980	1.4	58,497	4.7	674,064	8.7
98/99	614,458	-0.2	59,606	1.9	674,064	8.8
99/00	613,607	-0.1	59,720	0.2	673,327	8.9

Year	Enrolment Public	Annual Growth %	Enrolment Independent	Annual Growth %	Enrolment total	Independent Proportion of total %
00/01	610,851	-0.4	59,743	0.0	670,594	8.9
01/02	607,437	-0.5	59,951	0.2	667,388	9.0
02/03	599,514	-1.3	62,601	4.4	662,115	9.5
03/04	594,553	-0.8	63,387	1.3	657,940	9.6
04/05	589,107	-0.9	64,941	2.46	654,048	9.9
05/06	586,389	-0.5	66,235	2.0	652,624	10.1

Source: FISA BC, 2007c.

Appendix E



<p>1. How many children do you have, including those not of school age?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> One <input type="checkbox"/> Two <input type="checkbox"/> Three <input type="checkbox"/> Four <input type="checkbox"/> Five or More </p>	<p>2. Please list the ages of your children and their grade level, where applicable:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 5px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 60%;"></th> <th style="width: 20%;">Age</th> <th style="width: 20%;">Grade</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Child #1</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Child #2</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Child #3</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Child #4</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Child #5</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Child #6</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Age	Grade	Child #1			Child #2			Child #3			Child #4			Child #5			Child #6																																																					
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<p>3. Do you volunteer at your child's school?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </p>	<p>4. Do you regularly attend parent teacher nights, PAC meetings, or other events at your child's school?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </p>																																																																								
<p>5. Please indicate the three factors that are most important to you when selecting a school for your child. Factors may include, but are not limited to, academic characteristics of the school, social characteristics of the school, and teacher characteristics,</p> <p>The most important factor is: _____</p> <p>The 2nd most important factor is: _____</p> <p>The 3rd most important factor is: _____</p>																																																																									
<p>6. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of your child's school:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 5px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;"></th> <th style="width: 10%;">At no time</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Few times</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Sometimes</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Many times</th> <th style="width: 10%;">All of the time</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>a. Are you satisfied with what your child is learning at school?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>b. Are you satisfied with the development of your child's reading skills at school?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>c. 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PLEASE TURN OVER TO COMPLETE

<p>7. At school, does your child currently participate in clubs outside of class hours? (e.g. clubs, sports teams, arts)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>15. Do you believe that teachers should be deemed an essential service (i.e., can be legislated back to work in the event of strike)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>8. Does your child currently participate in activities not affiliated with the school? (e.g. music lessons, volunteer activities, athletics)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>16. What is your gender?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female</p>
<p>9. What do you think is the average class size in Vancouver's <u>public elementary</u> schools?</p> <p>_____ students per class</p>	<p>17. Which best describes your ancestral background?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Southeast Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino <input type="checkbox"/> White/Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Canadian <input type="checkbox"/> South Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>10. What do you think is the average class size in Vancouver's <u>private elementary</u> schools?</p> <p>_____ students per class</p>	<p>18. Were you born in Canada?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>11. What do you think is the percentage of students in Vancouver's <u>public elementary</u> schools that speak English as a second language?</p> <p>_____ % of <u>public school</u> students speak English as a second language</p>	<p>19. If you answered no to question 18, how many years have you lived in Canada?</p> <p>_____ years</p>
<p>12. What do you think is the percentage of students in Vancouver's <u>private elementary</u> schools that speak English as a second language?</p> <p>_____ % of <u>private school</u> students speak English as a second language</p>	<p>20. Do you mainly speak English in your home?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>13. If you were provided with a school voucher allowing your child to attend any public or private elementary school in Vancouver, regardless of cost, would you place your child in a different school?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>21. What is the highest level of education that <u>anyone</u> in your household has completed (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Did not complete high school <input type="checkbox"/> High school <input type="checkbox"/> Trade certificate <input type="checkbox"/> College certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor degree <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree</p>
<p>14. If you answered yes to question 13, which school (public or private) would you choose to send your child to?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>22. What is your annual <u>household</u> income?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> less than \$39,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$120,000-139,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000-59,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$140,000-159,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000-79,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$160,000-179,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$80,000-99,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$180,000-199,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000-119,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$200,000 or more</p> <p>23. Postal Code: _____</p>

Appendix F

List of Choice Options Currently Provided in Vancouver Public Schools

Elementary Options:

- Early and Late French Immersion
- Mandarin Bilingual
- Fine Arts
- Multi-Age
- Montessori
- MACC
- Distributed Learning

Secondary Options

- IB
- Mini
- French Immersion
- Montessori
- Challenge
- Computer Tech Immersion
- SPARTS
- TREK
- Odyssey

Summit

Leadership

Distributed Learning

Source: Strategic Choice". Vancouver School Board Position Paper, 2006

Appendix G

Queen Mary - Discretionary Budget 2006-2007

QUEEN MARY

Final 2006/2007 School Funding Allocation

Student Enrolment: 2006 September 30

VSB FUNDING

A. CARRY FORWARD FROM 2005/2006 BUDGET \$ (7,040)

B. 2006/2007 FLEXIBLE BUDGET

For further details and guidelines on these allocations, please refer to the explanatory notes, reference numbers as indicated. A definition of Flexible Budget is outlined in the 'Guidelines' section of this book.

	Account #	Ref #	Allocations
Per Student Allocations			
General Allocation to Schools (\$67.89/student)	5001-11- 618	-	\$32,248
Replacement-Furniture and Equipment (\$7.04/student)	5004-11- 618	-	3,343
			35,591
Other Entitlements			
Computer Hardware	5005-11- 618	-	1,990
Field Trip DOC	5001-11- 618	-	1,170
Library Resources **	5001-11- 618	11	4,191
Special Education	5001-11- 618	17	500
			7,851
Total			43,442

* Flexible Purchasing account total: **\$ 38,109**

** This budget is to be fully allocated to the Library Resources account within the Flexible Budget

C. 2006/2007 TARGETED FUNDS

Targeted funds are monies that schools must spend in designated areas. For further details and guidelines on these allocations, please refer to the explanatory notes, reference numbers as indicated.

	Account #	Ref #	Allocations
VTE/VSB Joint Professional Development Funds	5003-11- 618	12	893
Professional and Staff Development	5007-11- 618	12	2,200
			3,093

D. TOTAL VSB FUNDING (A + B + C) **\$ 39,495**

SCHOOL GENERATED FUNDS (As at 2006 August 31)

A. Restricted	\$ 3,822
B. Unrestricted	6,325
C. Total	<u>\$ 10,147</u>

Appendix H

Community School Teams

East Side

1) Britannia Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Britannia Elementary, Grandview, Nelson, Garibaldi, Queen Victoria Annex, Seymour, Strathcona

2) Gladstone Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Beaconsfield, Cunningham, Selkirk, Selkirk Annex, Tye

3) David Thompson Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Douglas, Douglas Annex, Fleming, Kingsford Smith, Oppenheimer, Tecumseh, Tecumseh Annex

4) John Oliver Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Henderson, Henderson Annex, Mackenzie, Moberly, Trudeau

5) Killarney Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Champlain Heights, Champlain Heights Annex, Cook, Maccorkindale, Waverley, Weir

6) King George Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: King George, Roberts, Roberts Annex, Elsie Roy

7) Templeton Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Franklin, Nelson, Garibaldi, Hastings, Tillicum, Lord, Macdonald)

8) Tupper Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Brock, Dickens, Dickens Annex, Livingstone, McBride, McBride Annex, Nightingale

9) Vancouver Technical

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Begbie, Maquinna, Maquinna Annex, Mount Pleasant, Queen Alexandra, Secord, Thunderbird

10) Windermere Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Bruce, Carleton, Collingwood, Grenfell, Norquay, Renfrew, Nootka

West 1

11) Hamber Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Carr, Cavell, Fraser, Osler, Van Horne, Wolfe, L'Ecole Bilingue

12) Magee Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: McKechnie, Maple Grove

13) Churchill

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Jamieson, Laurier, Laurier Annex, Lloyd George, Sexsmith

14) Point Grey

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Kerrisdale, Kerrisdale Annex, Quilchena, Southlands

West 2

15) Prince of Wales Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Prince of Wales, Carnarvon, Shaughnessy, Trafalgar

16) Lord Byng Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Kitchener, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Elizabeth Annex, Queen Mary, Jules Quesnel

17) University Hill Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: University Hill Elementary

18) Kitsilano Secondary School

Affiliated Elementary Schools: Bayview, False Creek, Gordon, Hudson, Tennyson

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Key Informant Interviews

Name	Title/Organization	Date
Bill Barrie	Principal, Queen Mary Elementary	01/15/2007
Susan Fisher	Retired Teacher and Former Union Rep., Southlands Elementary	02/18/2007
Gary Little	Associate Superintendent, Vancouver School Board	08/25/2006
Dan Marriott	Community School Teams Coordinator, VSB	01/19/2007
James McConnell	Head of School, Stratford Hall School	01/29/2007
Esther Reid	Parent Advisory Committee Member, Queen Mary Elementary	01/15/2007