

WHY PARENTS CHOOSE A SCHOOL

SIX DRIVERS THAT DETERMINE SCHOOL CHOICE



YARDSTICK
EDUCATION

STUDENT RECRUITMENT PLAYBOOK



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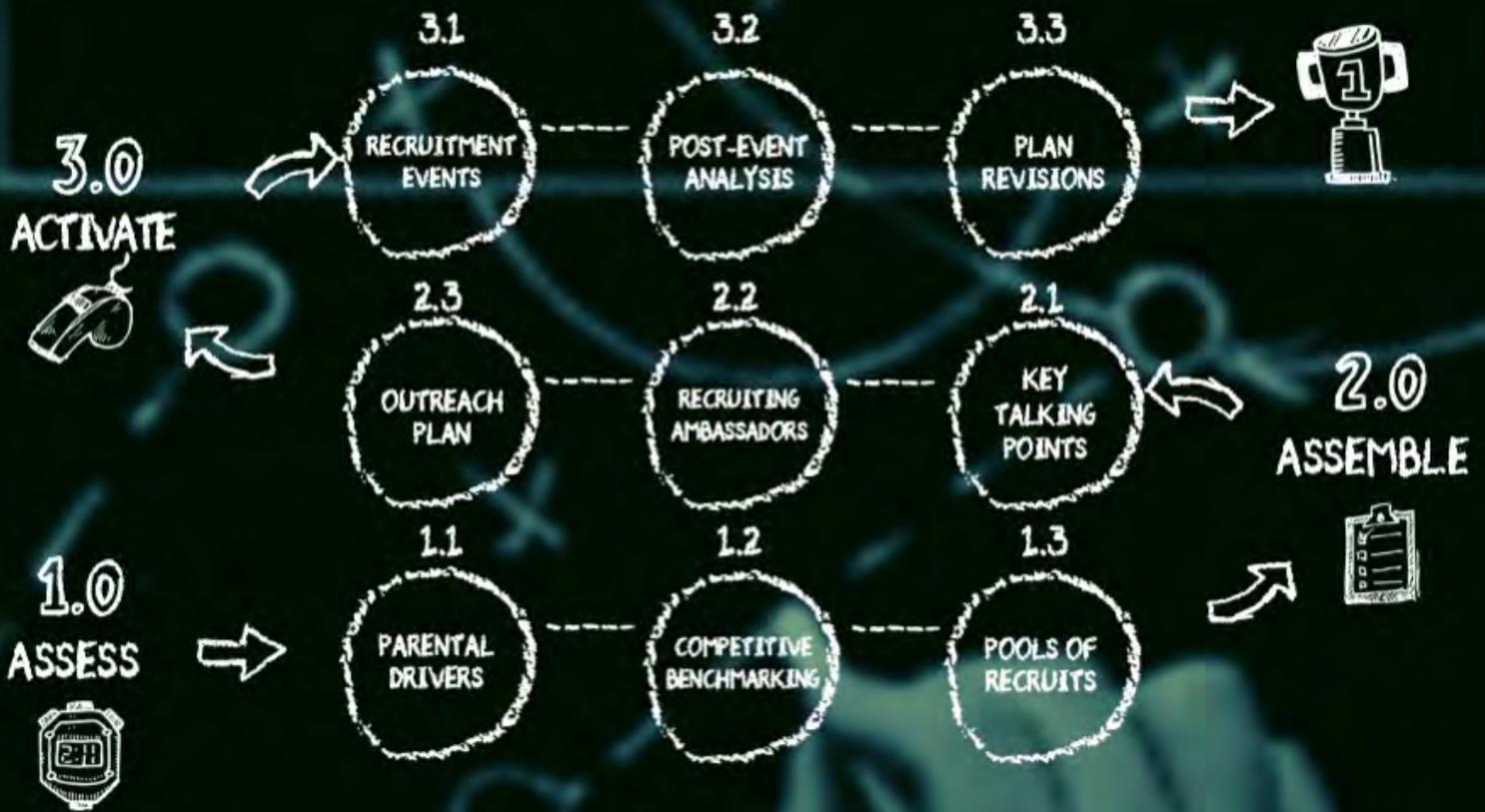
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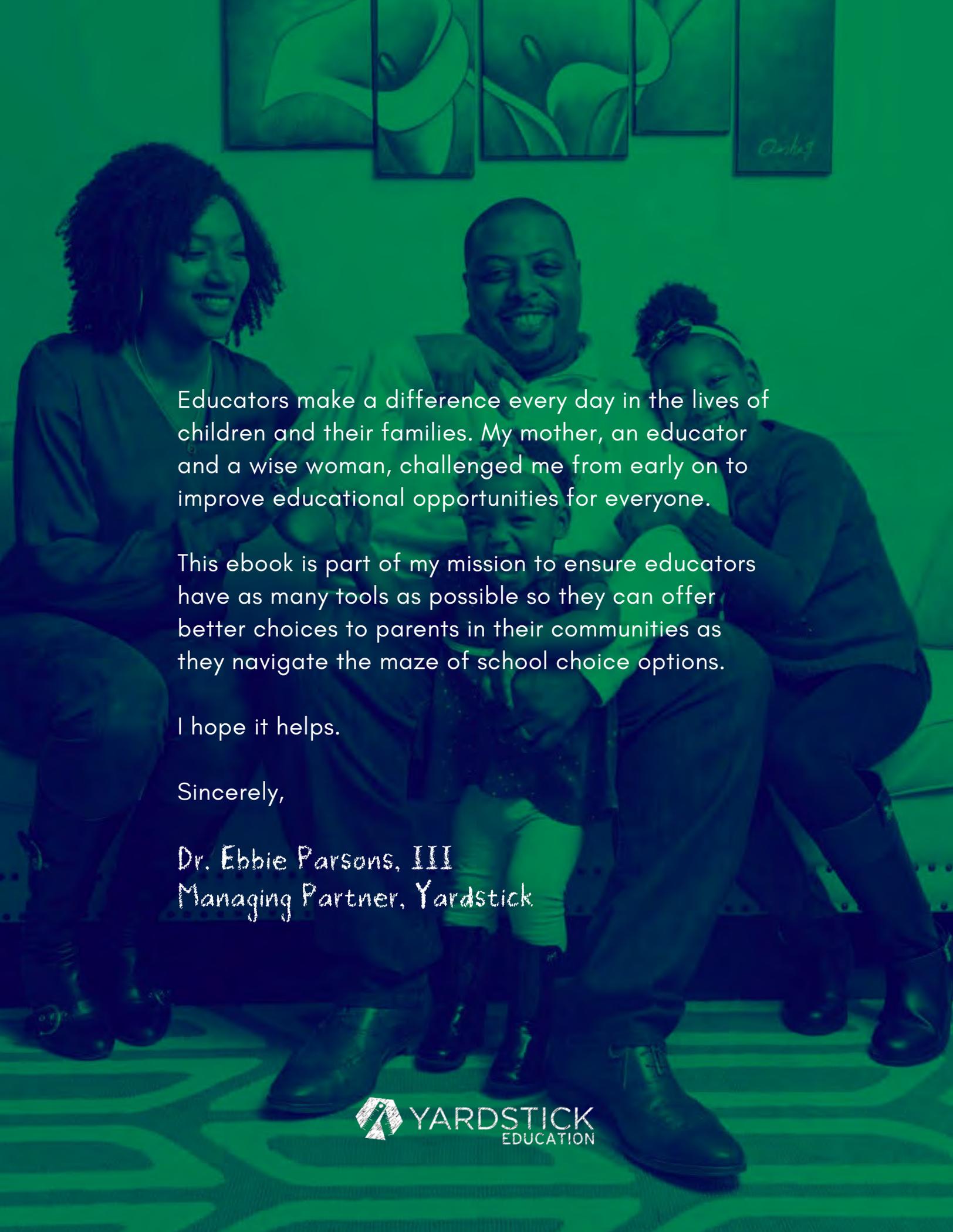


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STUDENT RECRUITMENT PLAYBOOK





Educators make a difference every day in the lives of children and their families. My mother, an educator and a wise woman, challenged me from early on to improve educational opportunities for everyone.

This ebook is part of my mission to ensure educators have as many tools as possible so they can offer better choices to parents in their communities as they navigate the maze of school choice options.

I hope it helps.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ebbie Parsons, III
Managing Partner, Yardstick

WHY PARENTS CHOOSE: SIX KEY DRIVERS

One of the most important decisions parents make is where their children are educated. Because of the importance of this choice, parents weigh dozens of factors in making this decision.

For educators, understanding the needs and desires of parents is critical in creating educational environments that both attract and retain students. Meeting every parent's needs is nearly impossible. With limited resources, schools must focus efforts on the MOST IMPORTANT parental drivers of school choice.

Since 2012, Yardstick has worked with school districts, charter schools and independents to identify what parents are looking for in choosing a school for their children. In surveying thousands of parents across the United States, we have identified six key drivers that consistently rank at or near the top.

The six key drivers are:

- Small class size
- Cachet/prestige
- Safety
- Transportation
- Extracurricular activities
- Academic performance

The following is a description of each driver and why, if it is a strength for your school, it is in your best interest to emphasize that strong point.



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WHY PARENTS CHOOSE: SIX KEY DRIVERS



SMALL CLASS SIZE/ INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION

Parents often believe in the importance of focused individual attention for their children, and that such attention is best achieved in a school with a low student-to-teacher ratio. This is especially true for parents who choose private, public charter or home schooling for their children.

According to the 2019 EdChoice report “2019 Schooling in America,” both individual/one-on-one attention and class size ranked at or near the top for factors influencing parents’ decision to choose a type of school for their children.

Individual/one-on-one attention was the **most important** factor for 12% of parents choosing home school, 11% choosing public charter, and 10% choosing private. However, only 3% of parents choosing public school said it was the most important factor.

Class size was a top three factor for 25% of private school parents, 24% of public charter and 20% of home school. Only 12% of public school parents put class size in their top three factors.

WHY PARENTS CHOOSE: SIX KEY DRIVERS



CACHET / PRESTIGE

All things considered, the majority of parents – regardless of the type of school they end up choosing – view academic reputation as the most important factor when choosing a school.

This was especially true for surveyed parents of children who went to private or public charter schools, where 17% and 12%, respectively, named academic reputation as the top deciding factor when choosing a type of school, according to the "2019 Schooling in America" report. For public school parents, academic reputation matched safe environment as the top deciding factor, with 10% of parents naming each of those factors.

About one-third of parents who chose private or charter for their children listed academic reputation in the top three factors that influenced their decision, and 27% of public school parents listed it as well.

According to a 2013 EdChoice survey, 81.3% of parents chose a private school because they believed it offered a better education than their public school options.

WHY PARENTS CHOOSE: SIX KEY DRIVERS



SAFETY

Many parents value safety over many other factors as they seek to ensure that a school provides a safe learning environment for their most precious cargo.

A safe environment was the No. 1 factor for parents of home schooled children, with 22% of those surveyed saying it was the most important factor, compared with the second most-important factor, individual attention, at 12%.

Safe environment was listed as a top three factor by 41% of home school parents. That was the most of any factor.

For parents of private school children, safety was the second most important factor at 13%, behind only academic reputation at 17%, and a full 36% of those parents listed it among their top three deciding factors.

It was second most-important factor for charter school parents as well, at 11%, behind academic reputation at 12%. 27% of charter school parents listed safe environment as a top three deciding factor in their school choice decision.

Safe environment tied at 10%, with academic reputation, among public school parents asked about their most important deciding factor, and a full quarter of public school parents listed safe environment in their top three deciding factors.

WHY PARENTS CHOOSE: SIX KEY DRIVERS



TRANSPORTATION

Many parents look for schools that offer transportation to and from home or that are located in the neighborhood where they live or work. In many markets, this factor is a priority. Parents of students attending every type of school listed location as one of the 14 deciding factors in their school choice in the 2019 EdChoice survey.

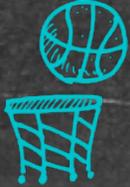
Not surprisingly, 22% of parents of public school students listed “assigned district/neighborhood school” as the most important deciding factor, followed by “location/close to home or work” at 19%.

In the top three factors part of the survey, 28% of parents of charter school students listed “location/close to home or work” as one of the three deciding factors for their choice of school. Among those whose children attended private schools, 11% listed location among their top three deciding factors. Nearly half of public school parents – 49% – listed location as one of their top three factors.

In a 2009 survey of 600 parents in Denver and Washington, D.C., 25% to 40% of parents surveyed said that transportation options affected their choice of school, and 80 percent said they would be willing to travel farther to a higher-quality school if there were better transportation options available.

Public neighborhood schools, and schools close to home or work, are important to parents. But private and charter schools in states with student transportation provisions have an advantage that can be touted as well. If there is additional transportation available, or a school location allows for public transportation, these options will likely also be desirable.

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EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extracurricular activities are vulnerable amid budget cuts, school closures and Common Core requirements in public school settings. Conversely, in many private schools extracurricular activities are not really considered “extra” but instead are integral to the educational experience.

For parents who choose private or charter schools for their children, extracurricular options play a distinct factor. Nearly one-first of parents of charter school students surveyed in cited extracurriculars as one of the top three deciding factors for their choice, and 14% of parents of private school students listed it as a factor.

For public school parents, extra-curricular activities wasn't a major factor, but the socialization that comes with these activities was a very important factor. Socialization had the second highest percentage of top three factors (32%) behind only location (49%) among these parents.

Having strong extracurricular activities, especially in dedicated areas focused on future career goals, can provide an edge in college admissions, experts say. Schools that integrate extracurriculars with curriculum often offer better opportunities for such an advantage.

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ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Academic performance is critical to student recruitment across markets. While academic reputation is cited as the top factor for choosing private or charter schools, taken together with test scores it's clear that parents value academics above all else in making these choices.

Test scores were listed as the top deciding factor by 6% of parents surveyed who chose private school for their children, and by 4% by charter school parents. When asked to name their top three deciding factors for their choice of schools, 17% of parents who chose private schools listed test scores and 13% of parents who chose charter schools did so. And although test scores were not most highly ranked for public school parents, a full 12% did list that factor among their top three factors in their school choice.

When asked why they chose a particular school type, 17% of charter school parents and 14% of private school parents listed "academics/curriculum/standards/results" as one of their five reasons for their choice. There was only one reason - "better education/quality" - that matched these results.

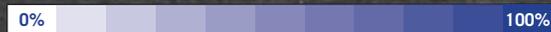
Although standardized test scores have become less of a factor in college admissions decisions, nearly half of colleges and universities responded to a 2017-2018 survey by the National Association of College Admission Counseling saying test scores are "considerably important." Parents are still considering this factor as important in their school choices as well.

DATA FROM EDCHOICE, 2019 SCHOOLING IN AMERICA SURVEY

TABLE 1

Top Three Factors Influencing Decisions to Choose Type of School for Children

Percentage of Current and Former Parents by School Type Children Attend(ed)



Factors	Public District School (N=467)	Private School (N=185)	Public Charter School (N=176)	Home School (N=171)
Academic Reputation	27%	36%	32%	22%
Test Scores	12%	17%	13%	16%
Safe Environment	24%	36%	27%	41%
Discipline	11%	22%	21%	27%
School Size	15%	16%	23%	16%
Class Size	12%	25%	24%	20%
Individual/One-on-One Attention	13%	26%	21%	36%
Morals/Character/Values Instruction	13%	31%	19%	24%
Religious Environment/Instruction	3%	19%	7%	25%
Diversity	16%	13%	21%	11%
Socialization/Peers/Other Kids	32%	16%	18%	14%
Extracurricular Activities	19%	14%	18%	6%
Location/Close to Home or Work	49%	11%	28%	15%
Our Assigned District/Neighborhood School	37%	11%	15%	10%

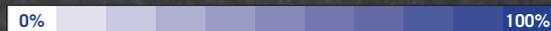
Notes: All percentages reflect the count of responses divided by the total number of weighted interviews. Unweighted N's are provided so the reader can roughly assess the reliability of reported percentages.

Source: EdChoice, 2019 Schooling in America Survey (conducted July 10–31, 2019), Q4, Q5, Q6, and Q7

TABLE 2

Top Factor Influencing Decisions to Choose Type of School for Children

Percentage of Current and Former Parents by School Type Children Attend(ed)



Factors	Public District School (N=467)	Private School (N=185)	Public Charter School (N=176)	Home School (N=171)
Academic Reputation	10%	17%	12%	7%
Test Scores	3%	6%	4%	5%
Safe Environment	10%	13%	11%	22%
Discipline	4%	7%	9%	8%
School Size	3%	6%	6%	3%
Class Size	3%	5%	6%	8%
Individual/One-on-One Attention	3%	10%	11%	12%
Morals/Character/Values Instruction	3%	12%	6%	9%
Religious Environment/Instruction	1%	8%	3%	8%
Diversity	5%	3%	7%	3%
Socialization/Peers/Other Kids	9%	3%	3%	4%
Extracurricular Activities	3%	5%	4%	1%
Location/Close to Home or Work	19%	3%	11%	6%
Our Assigned District/Neighborhood School	22%	2%	4%	2%

Notes: All percentages reflect the count of responses divided by the total number of weighted interviews. Unweighted N's are provided so the reader can roughly assess the reliability of reported percentages.

Source: EdChoice, 2019 Schooling in America Survey (conducted July 10–31, 2019), Q4, Q5, Q6, and Q7

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SOURCES

[2019 Schooling in America](#), EdChoice

[More Than Scores, An Analysis of Why and How Parents Choose Private Schools](#), EdChoice (formerly Friedman Foundation) 2013

[The Benefits of Extracurricular Activities](#), College Board

[How Extracurriculars Help Your College Application](#), Princeton Review.

[Transporting School Choice Students](#), EdChoice 2020

[2017 State of College Admission](#), National Association for College Admission Counseling

