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Parents' Involvement in their Children's Education: The Value of Parental Perceptions in Public Education

John Duman

Zenith Learning, guolduman@gmail.com

Hasan Aydin

Florida Gulf Coast University, aydinhytu@gmail.com

Burhan Ozfidan

Texas A&M University, b.ozfidan@tamu.edu

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Abstract

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Keywords

School Choice, Parental School Choice, Case Study, Public School

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John Duman

Zenith Learning, Houston, Texas, USA

Hasan Aydin

Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, Florida, USA

Burhan Ozfidan

Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, USA

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Introduction

In 1983, the National Commission on Education published *A Nation at Risk*—a study concluding that the United States (Winfield, 1991), once a dominant nation, was no longer a forerunner in commerce, industry, and technological innovation. This report issued a warning that the educational system might be a corrosive agent eroding the strength that the United States had as an international leader (Aydin, 2014; Jenkins & Dow, 1996). Dozens of countries outperformed the United States on student achievement, and others boasted of higher college attendance rates (Stewart & Kagan, 2005). Graduation rates were sagging, and racial achievement disparities were wide (De La Ossa, 2005).

As a response to the *A Nation at Risk* report, legislators wanted to create a plan with the intension of stimulating the American schooling system. Subsequently, 20 years later, The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation introduced to public schools the notion of accountability for the performance of their students (United States Department of Education, 2002). For parents, this legislation led to a heightened awareness of student achievement and, in turn, a

greater awareness for schools to maintain higher expectations related to accommodating the needs of children (Brkich & Washington, 2011; Halpern, 2017). Public schools now faced a significant challenge—juggling the dual responsibilities of reinventing education to meet the demands of parents while holding themselves to the standards of state regulations. Consequently, public schools faced a challenge of increased interest of both parents and the state and federal government in a diversification of schooling options (Aydin, Ozfidan, & Carothers, 2017; Shakeel, Anderson, & Wolf, 2016). On the other hand, DeAngelis (2017) argued that, if the aim is to increase the quality of schools available to children, it would be wise for legislators to approve policies that increased the degree of school choice that was available to families.

The NCLB legislation fostered a movement for parental school choice. Acknowledging that this novel movement has gained both staunch supporters and adamant detractors, it has steadily gained ground over time. In addition, the “school choice” has now become synonymous with “parental” or “family” empowerment through choice, and charter schools regularly recruit families as a means of highlighting their experience associated with such schools. In the United States, all 50 states offer some form of school choice options (Crary, 2007). In addition to private schools, religious schools, and home schools, the United States currently has six educational choice options in the public-school sector. Public school choices in the United States include alternative schools, magnet schools, charter schools, schools within schools, online or virtual schools, and open enrollment either within a public school district (i.e., intra-district transfer) or to a different public school district (i.e., inter-district transfer; United States Department of Education, 2005). These schools were first established in the United States in the state of Minnesota in 1992, and since then have expanded throughout the country (Cheng, Hill, Kisida, & Mills, 2017). Currently, students in six states (i.e., Florida, Maine, Ohio, Vermont, Utah, and Wisconsin) are offering government-funded scholarships to attend their school of choice. Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania offer tax credits or tax deductions for educational expenses or contributions to scholarship programs (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 2016; Kafer, 2005). Fifteen states provide public school choice within or between districts. Other states continue to offer optional choice programs, target only specific populations, and require parents to pay out of district tuition (Lips & Feinberg, 2006). According to the US Department of Education (2016), there are approximately 2.5 million U.S. students, representing about 5% of all public school students, are enrolled in charter schools today. In addition, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2017) stated that during the 2015-16 school year, more than 400 new charter public schools opened and an “estimated 250,000 additional students are attending charter public schools in the 2015-16 school year compared with the previous year” (p. 1).

Charter schools have been prominent in defining the school choice movement (Greene et al., 2010). Research about charter schools has shown that there has been a rapid increase in the number of charter schools and students throughout the country, particularly within urban communities (Frankenberg, 2011; Wright, 2017). Many politicians, policymakers, parents, and community members have endorsed and promoted charter schools (Henig, 2008). Proponents believed that charter schools have the potential to become key players in the education of the nation’s children. They claimed that charter schools provided benefits for all stakeholders, including students, parents, and the community as a whole (Corona et al., 2017; Lafer, 2014; Lubienski, 2013; Zimmer & Buddin, 2006). Students were said to benefit from an innovative learning environment provided by unique management and curricular characteristics. Parents were believed to benefit by being able to have an alternate to traditional public schools. Communities also benefited directly because of the pressure of free-market forces on the local school system, which resulted in an increase of school quality across the board (Carothers & Parfitt, 2017; Zimmer & Buddin, 2006).

Alternatively, opponents claimed that charter schools would have negative effects related to racial segregation (Hanushek, Kain, Rivkin, & Branch, 2006; Cheng et al., 2017). According to Zimmer et al. (2009), charter schools have led to increased racial segregation, a claim with some empirical backing. In addition, several studies have shown that charters have either neutral (Ritter, Jensen, Kisida, & McGee, 2010) or positive effects on racial integration (Cheng et al., 2017, p. 211; Ritter, Jensen, Kisida, & Bowen, 2016). Another concern was whether less educated and working-class parents were able to compare schools accurately and for academic versus non-academic reasons, leading to uninformed or misinformed decisions related to the education of their children (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2007; Teske & Reichardt, 2006). In addition, it was also argued that charter schools might have a detrimental effect on public education because they directed resources away from public schools (Teske & Reichardt, 2006). Another criticism of charter schools was that they didn't produce academic performance. For instance, Gronberg and Jansen (2001) found that "while charter schools overall scored lower on the state tests than traditional public schools, schools classified by the state as "at-risk" outscored comparable traditional public schools" (p. 20). Another study found improvement across the 16 states that were studied in 2009, where 8% of charter schools have closed because of low academic performance (Resmovits, 2013). In addition, Layton (2013) emphasized that the nation's public charter schools are growing more effective, but most don't produce better academic results when compared with traditional public schools.

Parents possess various reasons for choosing one charter school over another, or over traditional public schools (Karakus, 2018; Martinez, Vega, & Marquez, 2018). The increasing influence of accountability and the effects of school choice on traditional schools have forced educators, researchers, and legislators to acknowledge parental perceptions into their children's education. There exists a dearth of salient research related to the specific processes related to such decision-making patterns. The school choice option of public schools has grown rapidly over the past several decades and has provided parents with greater power over their children's education (Mavrogordato, & Torres, 2018). Parents' views can shape their children's perceptions about school, affect their level of family-school engagement, and influence their residential and school enrollment decisions. In this study, we examined parents' perceptions on school choice for their children and what factors are behind their decision for school choice.

Several studies have examined the reasons that parents and students select public schools. Educational programs, opportunities for parental involvement, safety, technology, better teachers, and location were cited as the chief motivating factors in choosing public schools (Araslan & Yigit, 2016; Schneider & Buckley, 2006). Dissatisfaction with the previous school was a factor for parents of students with disabilities, and probably for other parents as well (Zimmer et al., 2009). Surveys commonly were used to gather parents' input in these research studies. The most common parental criteria for schools is that, regardless of ethnicity or socio-economic level, academic factors like high test scores, college acceptance rates, and teacher quality are important aspects of schools (Hall & Quinn, 2014; Schneider & Buckley, 2002). According to Teske and Reichardt (2006), public-charter school parents whose income was \$50,000 or less were most likely to choose a school based on academic factors rather than on values, safety, and school culture

Some studies have shown that public-charter school parents were more satisfied with their child's school than were regular public-school parents (Hanushek et al., 2006). In addition, however, it has also been shown that most charter-public schools do not academically perform significantly better than their counterpart regular public schools (Zimmer & Buddin, 2006). Thus, it is in the interest of the present researchers to understand whether such areas of importance fall within parental perception. While introducing significant areas of research, these results are open to the criticism that they are based on survey responses. Consequently, these surveys miss a deeper dialogue and open-ended conversation with parents that can make

connections to their perceptions, backgrounds, and experiences of schooling. Systematic research regarding why parents might have different expectations from schools is lacking in the literature. While most studies have included survey or interview results showing a difference in the way parents prioritize certain school characteristics, they did not go further in trying to explain why this might be (DiFerdinando, 2017; Hanushek et al., 2006; James, 2018).

As the current enrollment trend continues in STEM-oriented schools, one important area for research would be the relationship between parents' perceptions and the schools' broader success (Nasir & Vakil, 2017). Specifically, how are parents choosing a STEM-oriented schools for their children? A throughout examination of the available research on parental choice public schools for their children indicates that there was no systematic study of parental satisfaction or dissatisfaction or an understanding of why they chose these schools for their children, even though, a growing body of research examining the impact of school choice has emerged over the past several decades. Therefore, a need exists for comprehensive research that examines the perceptions of STEM-oriented schools related to the choice of parents for a specific school for their child. In this context, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of parents on why and how they choose different public-school settings rather than traditional public schools.

Contexts of the Researchers

The school choice option of public schools has grown rapidly over the past several decades and has given parents greater power over their children's education. Parents' views can shape their children's perceptions about school, affect their levels of family-school engagement, and influence their residential and school enrollment decisions. As a case study is incomplete without situating the researcher, a process of self-description is necessary, to either enable identification of potential subjectivities or to enable a bracketing out of the self (Thomas, 2018). The first author of this study has several years of experience working in charter schools as a teacher and as a principal. While conducting research for his doctoral dissertation he was able to conduct research on parents' perceptions pertaining to school choice for their children, particularly in Texas where there is the highest rate of increase in charter schools in the country (Texas Education Agency, 2010). He questioned whether parents chose charter schools because they thought charter schools would allow their children to attain higher academic achievement. As a result of his questioning and research, and our combined experiences in the field of education, we identified a need to delve into exploring parental perceptions on school choice as they seek the best educational opportunities for their children. We sought to inquire into the factors that assisted parents in making the decision to choose charter or traditional public schools. As researchers, we possessed the interest in the experience, but did not have the means to experience it thus, we invited parents to participate in the study and share their experiences. It is our intention to provide readers with an understanding of parental perceptions and experiences pertaining to both charter schools and traditional public schools. Our experiences as educators in both higher education and public schools made the setting a familiar one. Our experiences interviewing parents and observing a school where the study was conducted was helpful as we collected and analyzed data. However, we approached the study from the researchers perspective and designed the study to purposely address issues of trustworthiness.

Method and Data Sources

Research Design

This study used a case approach as the methodological basis for eliciting study methodology to explore the perceptions of 22 multi-racial parents about school climate and their child's school choice. The particular method of research uses "in-depth interviews, open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents" for the purposes of data collection (Patton, 2002, p. 4). Conducting a "qualitative case study allows the researcher to explore an issue or problem by using a specific case that is within a real-life context or setting" (Creswell, 2014; Tygret, 2018, p. 713; Yin, 2014). The objective was to collect rich, thick depictions of the phenomenon under study for the purposes of later analysis, as well as the development of a detailed textural description of the study findings (Creswell, 2005; Patton, 2002, 2015; Yin, 2014). For this piece analysis, the case study design provided a detailed picture of the experiences and perceptions of parents on school choice. The goal was to bring to life, to make real, and to illuminate from parents' perspectives, the experiences that they went through with their children's school (Stake, 1995).

The School: STEM-Tiger Secondary School

This study was conducted at STEM-Tiger Secondary School (pseudonym) public high school, which is located in Houston, a metropolitan center and the most diverse city in Texas. STEM-Tiger Secondary School students are provided with the latest technology available to support their learning. STEM-Tiger Secondary School's curriculum immerses students in hands-on, problem- and project-based learning. Such experiences allow students to create, invent, and solve challenging real-world problems in science and mathematics, as well as to learn about engineering and powerful technological tools in this environment. In addition to the student participation in a wide variety of different math-, science-, engineering-, and technology-based competitions, the STEM-Tiger Secondary School is a member of the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) initiative. Functioning as a central component of the Texas High School Project (THSP), T-STEM is a public-private conglomeration of academies, professional development centers, and networks designed to improve instruction and academic performance in science- and mathematics-related subjects at secondary schools. Several this initiative's key mandates mirror those stated and/or implied within the STEM-Tiger Secondary School mission—namely, increasing graduation rates, college enrollment and matriculation into STEM-based fields, and, as an eventual corollary, positively contributing to innovation in the nation's workforce.

STEM-Tiger Secondary School's core high school curriculum is designed to provide each student with the essential elements of a college preparatory education; yet it also grants students opportunities to engage in the exploration of intense study of particular fields of personal interest. Furthermore, in addition to regular classroom instruction, the schools offer extensive (free) after-school tutorials, as well as special Saturday classes for students who may need extra help. These sessions are conducted throughout the entire year. They also include tutorials for Gifted and Talented student, and they are offered in each subject area.

Another activity commonly practiced among STEM-Tiger Secondary School administrators and staff is the home visit. Teachers are encouraged to visit students' home settings and discuss the academic and social progress of students with their parents. The main goal of the home visit is to strengthen the overall relationships with parents and students. In addition, the general notion of this activity is to encourage greater student performance and progress in terms of academics and discipline at school vis-à-vis increased parent-teacher

collaboration, communication, and fidelity. Hence, in practice, this activity is thought to be particularly effective in that it encourages critical dialogue between parents and teachers regarding individual students' performance, behaviors, successes, and their overall expectations (a female parent, personal communication). In sum, such critical dialogue may allow school staff to communicate better any of the following building blocks of the STEM-Tiger Secondary School culture: High academic standards; a "rigorous, relevant, and relationships" model; and an environment that is safe, small, and nurturing.

Participants, Settings, and Procedures

In total, 22 parents (6 male and 16 female) participated in the interviews. The ethnicities of the parents and guardians were: White (8), African American (3), Hispanics (5), and Asian (6) different ethnicities were represented for this study. In addition, participants also reported that 19 were married, 2 were divorced, and 1 was a single parent. Three parents were between the ages of 26 to 55, the mean age of participants was 41. Three different interviews, with a group of five or six parents in each group, were conducted at different locations and at different times. For the qualitative phase of the study, purposive sampling was used. For purposive sampling, "researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population" (Berg, 2009, p. 50). For the interview, parents who had their child in public school settings more than one year were invited for a focus group interview. The rationale behind this criterion is that parent's experience and interaction with schools must be long enough to reflect a holistic parental perception. A focus group is essentially a group discussion focused on a single theme (Kreuger, 1988). The goal is to create a candid conversation that addresses the selected topic, in depth. The underlying assumption of a focus group is that, within a permissive atmosphere that fosters a range of opinions, a more complete and revealing understanding of the issues will be obtained. Focus groups are planned and structured but are also flexible tools (Vaughn, Schumn & Sinagub, 1996). Kreuger and Casey (2000) listed various uses of focus groups, many of which fit well with this study's purpose. These are to: (a) elicit a range of feelings, opinions, and ideas; (b) understand differences in perceptions; (c) uncover and provide insights into factors that influence opinions; and (d) seek ideas that emerge from the group.

After piloting the interview protocol, a member check with the participants was done by asking them to review the interpretation of the interview data to establish credibility, reliability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The same process also was completed following the data collection and analysis. After identifying themes across the interviews, observations and evaluations, member-checking was performed by sharing the themes, interpretations, and conclusions with three participants in the study (Creswell, 2014), and no changes were needed in the findings. Throughout this process, the researchers sought peer debriefing by discussing and attaining feedback from the principals of the campuses included in the study. In addition, peer debriefing was conducted on a regular basis throughout the study (Patton, 2002) by presenting to peers in the classroom and receiving their feedback. The researchers' professional experience in the field with the sample group also provided an opportunity to check the validity of the process.

Parents were notified that their participation was voluntary and that they could choose not to answer any question. Additionally, participants were advised that they could withdraw their participation in the study at any point. Before beginning the discussion, the researcher used a demographic instrument to collect minimal data about participants, thinking it might provide some guidance in the analysis of the findings. The set of questions was designed to elicit perceptions of participants during the focus group interview. Each focus group discussion

was estimated to take between one and one-and-half hour. The interviews were tape-recorded and were later transcribed.

The first author made field notes about the participants' physical actions, appearance, reactions, and overall demeanor throughout the discussion. A field journal was kept to gathering general notes on things learned and separating personal perceptions on the part of the first author from the facts of the study.

The researchers ensured that all standards for working with human subjects were followed while working with the school and parents. In addition, the researcher protected the identity of participants by exercising confidentiality. Parent questionnaire respondents were coded as P1, P2 ... Focus group participants were coded as F1, F2 ... Each participant was also asked whether he or she fully understood the purpose of the study before being allowed to participate.

In an effort to contribute to the trustworthiness of the data that were collected in this study, complementary multiple-data-collection methods were employed (Creswell, 2007). The data were collected from in-depth individual and focus group interviews, field-notes, observations and documents from schools such as the mission statement, implementation of programs and curricula, quality of the instruction, evidence of best practice and understanding of pedagogy, as well as commonalities among the campuses as far as school culture and climate. The principle of using multiple sources of evidence to develop "converging lines of inquiry" (Yin, 1994, p. 93) has been identified as triangulation. Maxwell (1996) explained triangulation as a technique that reduces the possible risk that the resulting conclusions are biased or limited by a specific method, and it enables the researcher to determine better the validity of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first step in initiating this study was to receive proper approval for collecting data from the district. The researcher sought and received approval from the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) at the University of Houston Clear Lake. Subsequently, documentation of the research to be conducted was submitted to the District Institutional Review Board (IRB) of STEM-Tiger Secondary School as ethically required by the CPHS. After approval from school district, the researchers contacted the school principals via email to inform them of the scope and nature of the study. The researchers assured the principal that the data gained from this study were secured, confidential, and only reported in aggregate form to protect individuals. After receiving the parent contact information from STEM-Tiger Secondary School's head office, a pre-notification email about the study was sent to parents through the "school outreach" program. One week later, 22 parents agreed and signed an information sheet to participate in this study.

Once both individual and focus group interviews were completed, we coded and organized all transcripts. Coding data is a process in qualitative research of categorizing information into segments and describing details and implications for each category identified based on themes, topics, ideas, terms, phrases, and key words (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005). To analyze all data, the researchers created brief descriptive summary statements arising from common categories (Giorgi, 1975). The responses and notes were identified as units and then compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what was stated was rephrased further into brief and overriding thematic statements. This process also allowed for the alignment of common themes and the creation of the summary statements from which the researchers were able to interpret parents' perceived patterns of the characteristic variables that they sought in choosing a school. Later, the researchers utilized the constant-comparative method to further exhaust the data analysis (Grove, 1988). The researchers then analyzed the

research questions under data categories, and themes to determine if there was enough information to substantiate the findings and make interpretations.

The process ensured accuracy because the information was not drawn from a single source or individual (Creswell, 2005). The analysis focused on interviews and comprehensive analysis of all data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). From this stage forward, categories and codes were generated and revised several times by three researchers. The researchers listed thematic summaries for each of the interviews by carefully identifying issues and themes that subsequently emerged from the interviews themselves. From these summaries, the researchers then continued to identify emergent themes. Next, the researchers continued to analyze extensively the transcribed data, using various codes and sub-codes several times until similar themes came out repeatedly. The researchers further analyzed the interview data to substantiate and confirm all of the evidence to support an emerging theme. This overall process ensured valid results because of the information being drawn from various sources (Creswell, 2007).

Results

Four major themes emerged from the data regarding parental perceptions about the school to which they sent their children. The themes that emerged were: (1) *factors that parents value in schools*, (2) *concerns about other school choices*, (3) *the features and programs that appeal to parents*, and (4) *parental perceptions of the chosen school*. These are discussed as follows.

Theme One: Factors that Parents Value in Schools

The parents in this study provided important data concerning their beliefs about their children's schooling. The researchers first sought to investigate which features parents valued in schools. The responses revealed that parents possessed a wide range of reasons and motivations for choosing a school for their children. Of the 22 total participants interviewed, 20 parents reported that they valued the academic program the most. P14 said "I value a fostering environment where academics is important," and she continued "I think for me the most important thing is a strong curriculum." P19 valued "a healthy and conducive environment for learning." Through the employment of varied wording and language, such as "value of education," "curriculum," and "instruction," they unanimously prioritized the *academic quality* of a school. P5 simplified it: "education [academics] obviously is the top [reason]" P13 reiterated "students are going to schools mainly for education [academics]," but she worried that we were losing the "academic priority." Similarly, P13 shared the same concern:

Students go to school mainly for education. Therefore, academics must be very strong. My kids did band, sports, and other things but academics is more important to me. I think we are having issue, now: in a lot of schools, sports is the number one thing, not academics.

The second most valued attribute (15 out of 22) that parents reported was *school culture and climate*. Parents discussed various descriptions/aspects of school culture and climate. Any comment pertaining to the school environment and atmosphere was considered to relate to school culture and climate. For example, P20 valued "a healthy and conducive environment." P21 linked academics and school culture together saying, "I value a school culture that appreciates the academics." More specifically, one of the most highlighted aspects that parent interview respondents noted was a culture of "high expectations" (i.e., holding students

accountable and responsible to the high standards and expectations). P4 thought “we must hold our kids accountable.” She maintained “public schools are failing to do so,” because they are giving “second and third and fourth fifth chances and retests.” She complained “that’s not how life works! Life’s not going to give you a chance to retest. You either do it or you don’t.” P2 shared similar feelings “there is high expectation here [the school], I don’t think they are able to have those in the public school anymore because they have just gotten too large.” Parents also reported that teachers were held accountable to high expectations as well. P1 shared “if the teacher does not perform, then the school has the option of not bringing that teacher back the following year unlike other public schools.”

Additionally, some parents said they valued “diversity” and “respect to multi-cultures”; yet, they did not elaborate upon these terms until the second and third questions about *the school* were asked. Therefore, explanations and examples regarding “diversity” will be provided in the later sections.

Eleven parents reported that they valued the *quality of teachers*. P17 expressed it authentically saying, “What I value from schools is true involvement from teachers to the principal.” P9 specified the characteristic of a quality teacher as “caring,” and she did not mind if the teacher was “new” or “young” as long as she/he is “caring for students and working hard.”

Parents also emphasized *discipline and safety*. A safe and secure environment is highly important to them. When safety is concerned, parents meant “a place where there is discipline, no bullying, no gang, no drugs, and other issues.”

Other valued attributes were *small school size* and *parent involvement and communication*. P9 thought that small school size gives a feeling of a private school. It fostered “teachers to give more time to individual students,” and “more communication between teachers, students, and parents.”

Theme Two: Concerns about Other School Choices

The second major theme that emerged from analysis of the data was that parents were concerned about other school choices, particularly traditional public schools. As depicted in Table 1, the area of most concern (16 parents) about other school choices was the *school culture and climate*. Eight parents specifically complained about a culture of *low expectations*. P2 believed “mediocrity is okay in public schools.” She continued with the social aspect of expectations, by contending “we have lost respect in our world and in our cultures and in our schools.” She observed that unlike public schools “you don’t hear kids talking back to teachers or certainly not slandering them with verbal abuse on the school campus.” P1 tied both the academic and social aspects of high expectations together as “a culture of expectation where the students are not only expected to perform, but also respect their peers and teachers.”

Table 1: School Programs and Features

Programs and Features	Count
Curriculum	
AP Program	8
Art Program	2
Field Trips	4
Character Education	4
Extra Curriculum	2

Afterschool Clubs	3
Talent Shows	2
<hr/>	
Academic Opportunities	10
Science Fair	5
Math Count	1
Robotics	2
Tutorials	2
<hr/>	
Home Visits	2
Online Database	2
<hr/>	

Another area of concern (eight parents) with public schools was *big school size*. According to P2, there was more emphasis on crowd control because of a “too large” size at her zoned district, and, therefore, “teachers do not have as much time in their day to educate as they should.”

In conjunction with the school size, *discipline and safety concerns* were mentioned (seven parents). P15’s observation was “they [the schools] have too many clashes with gangs and too many clashes with kids’ discipline.” She was concerned with this outcome, saying “I understand, a lot of teachers...are teachers...even though they have their degrees—that’s fine—but our children need teachers who have a love for kids and that’s what people are looking for.” Her observation also fed into the next area of concern (seven parents): *The quality of teachers*. Parents commonly used the word “caring” when they were talking about the quality of teachers. They complained about teachers’ treatment of parents and students, and they believed that many teachers were not caring appropriately for students. Rather than caring for students, teachers were blamed for seeking personal interests and selfishness. P3 believed teachers were at schools just because it was convenient to be off on certain holidays and all summer. She contended:

Teachers don't have the passion to teach the students. All they are trying to do is their portion of teaching with students, to keep their lesson plan intact for them, but they don't look at what students are being left behind or looking at what students are not getting

P18, who commutes forty-five minutes one way to *the school* every day, shared one of her observations at the public school her daughter had previously attended.

Well, my kids were a year in public school. I used to go and have lunch with them every day. I used to see one kid and he was not eating lunch at all. I told the teacher he is not eating, and she goes “No, that’s okay he never eats.” So, I was...like...okay, you’re telling me he goes the whole day without eating? That’s not right, and she was like... “Oh yeah, whatever!”

She thought this teacher’s approach demonstrated “the kids were just a number to teachers.”

Last, in addition to the *quality of teachers*, four parents were concerned about parent involvement and communication at other school options. P2 observed that parents were not “welcomed” or “encouraged to come” to their zoned public elementary school. P6 compared other public schools to STEM-Tiger Secondary school to express what a parent wants to see as far as communication is concerned.

My son's school to me feels like a small company that is easily flexible and willing to change. You're not engrained in this huge massive system that they cannot change or takes years to change. I have a feeling that, if I express something, they really do listen to me and that's nice.

She wanted to be heard and validated as a parent, which she could not see as possible with public schools because of the “massive system.” Her “two-way” communication with STEM-Tiger Secondary School made her feel that she was heard and perceived well by school staff.

Aside from the aforementioned concerns about other school choices, receiving recommendations from other people is one of the most powerful reasons that lead parents to seek more information about school choices. Inevitably, once these parents attain this information, they end up enrolling their children in these schools. Five of the parents mentioned that they had chosen *the school* because of recommendations they had received from their friends. Once the parents made the decision to enroll their children at *the school*, they began to experience the features and programs of *the school*, as emerged in the next major theme.

Theme Three: The Features and Programs that Appeal to Parents

Parents identified many attributes that initially attracted them to choose the school. As shown in Table 2, parents reported both curricular and extra-curricular programs that appealed to them. Some of the appealing curricular programs were accelerated reader (AR), art, field trips, and character education classes. P1 thought that rather than the AP program itself, the implementation of it made the difference.

What is interesting about the way the school does it [AR], not just rolling out the program; they introduce the program and make sure that the teachers are trained and tracking the student and sitting with the student and setting goals.

Similarly, P20 expressed her appreciation for the implementation of the character education program.

It has been a big contrast to what our last school had been because that school gave a lot of lip service to values; yet, it was not like the way that it lived. They talked about having good character, but they didn't do anything if the children were mean to each other, said bigoted things, or were lying.

Table 2: Parents' Perceptions of the School

Themes & Subthemes	Count
Academics	20
Emphasis on math, science and technology	5
School Culture and Climate	19
Peers	3
High Expectations	10
Diversity/Multicultural	10
College Bound	7
Individual Attention	4

Not Sports Focused	1
Quality of Teachers	15
Discipline and Safety	11
Small School Size	8
Caring	

In addition to the curricular programs listed, some parents expressed their satisfaction with extra-curricular activities such as talent shows and after-school clubs. Aside from the strong individualized academic program, P4 also shared “fun stuff! William [her son] loves the fun stuff! He loves the performances they put on and the talent shows, and he loves that they celebrate Dr. Seuss, the hundred days of school and all that is huge for him.”

Eight parents expressed their particular appreciation for their school’s academic enrichment opportunities. Five of them talked highly of the *science fair* and how it helped students to progress academically. P8 stated “science fair is really big,” and it teaches kids how to be successful.

Those steps that they are doing from building their boards to understanding what the scientific factors are, all of that is helping them to be business minded when they get out into the business world.

Likewise, P12 appreciated how the robotics program was implemented effectively and how students get excited, and therefore work harder and for longer hours.

They really don't mind staying until 7 or 7:30 late and then coming home to do homework. They enjoy it. They even organize field trips on the weekends; they have their study time and fun time, so that's kind of nice. It's like study and fun together.

After school and Saturday tutorials also were appealing for parents whose children needed additional support. In addition, it was mentioned that teachers were conducting home-visits to discuss the academic and social progress of student. For two parents, this was an indication of caring and individual attention.

Last, two parents mentioned the [*the school*] *online database*, which was created and used for communicating with parents online. Through this up-to-the-minute system, parents were able to see student records, including grades, homework, class assignments, attendance, discipline records, lunch balance, and others. In particular, these parents were very satisfied with this feature, especially because it allowed them to be informed and to be involved at any point in time.

After discussing what parents’ value in schooling, their concerns with other school choices, and the features and programs of STEM-Tiger Secondary School, finally the focus of this research, parental perceptions of STEM-Tiger Secondary School, will be reported in the following section.

Theme Four: Parental Perception of [The School]

Parents’ perceptions of STEM-Tiger Secondary School focused on five themes as shown on Table 2. Overall, almost all parent focus group participants (20 of 22) cited the *strong*

academic program as at the top of the list as far as their perceptions of STEM-Tiger Secondary School were concerned. Simply stated, they were very satisfied with the academic program of STEM-Tiger Secondary School. Using different perspectives, and with different wording, such as “quality of academic program,” “rigorous curriculum,” “education,” “value of education,” they unanimously (and repeatedly) agreed that STEM-Tiger Secondary School offered a strong overall academic program. P10 said, “the big difference here is the focus on the academics. Your child is going to succeed here, and they won't let him fall through the cracks.” Some parents also were able to provide specific reasons to support their thoughts and perceptions. For example, five parents appreciated that the STEM-Tiger Secondary School emphasized a math-, science- and technology-based school curriculum. They thought the “focus on math, science, and technology is a significant tool for their children’s future.”

Four parents believed that their children received significantly more individual attention and instruction and, therefore, had a greater chance of succeeding at STEM-Tiger Secondary School. Parents were satisfied with a flexible instruction that was differentiated according to the individual needs of their children. P12’s belief was;

Everyone is learning; not just the kids who are working below grade level who need help with the tutorials, but also the other kids that may be ahead are also being challenged.

P9 had this view:

You have some children—they learn faster than others, and then you have some that learn slower than others and if you teach them all on one level, how can you expect them [to succeed]. You are going to lose some of them along the line.

P10 agreed with this sentiment and added that, if a student has a problem learning something at STEM-Tiger Secondary School, then “the teachers, they’ll catch it a whole a lot faster.”

The second major theme (19 parents) was appreciation of the *school culture and climate* of STEM-Tiger Secondary School. They perceived STEM-Tiger Secondary School as a “caring,” “respectful,” “comfortable,” “diverse,” “multi-cultural” environment with a culture of high expectations and a college-bound focus that was supported by “positive peer competitiveness.” P8 summarized the climate at STEM-Tiger Secondary School as “...very positive...uplifting...good things are going on with the school as far as a moral concern.” P2 observed the respect level at STEM-Tiger Secondary School as:

You are expected to respect people. I think we have lost that in our world and in our cultures and in our schools. You don't hear kids talking back to teachers or certainly not slandering them with verbal abuse. You do hear that in regular schools.

Furthermore, P2 added a comment on the culture of appreciation of education among students. She thought “here [at STEM-Tiger Secondary School], it’s cool to be smart.” She supported that by giving an example: “any kid can walk down the hall and have a book in his hand; you do that in public school you're called a nerd. You're going to get bullied.” She also pointed out a “very healthy competition” among students.

You don't want to be the one who makes a C on that paper. You really don't because all your friends in the classes are making A's and B's. You don't want to be the one to make a C, so you push yourself.

P1 joined her with his observation.

Sometimes I come to lunch with her [his daughter]. The kids are talking about what books they're reading. The kids started reading the Harry Potter series just because other kids are reading. They were kind of embarrassed because if they couldn't talk about it. They started like in the third grade in a class together, so it was like that competitiveness in a constructive way.

P14 touched upon another aspect of school culture. She thought that the biggest difference was that “STEM-Tiger Secondary School is not so political.” She said “your child may be performing very well, but they wouldn't necessarily be in Science Olympiad or be in Math Counts because it's all political. Some of those spots would be reserved for the teachers' student or their favorites.” Her observation is that there was no favoritism in STEM-Tiger Secondary School. In fact, she actually witnessed that “teachers' kids are treated harder with discipline, and they are not treated [as] special.”

P5 highlighted another aspect of the STEM-Tiger Secondary School culture “I love the diversity of STEM-Tiger Secondary School. I love that she likes people because of who they are; it has nothing to do with what their religious belief is or what nationality they are, and I see that not just in my child but in the other children as well.” P5 thought respect for diversity would also help her daughter in real life when she graduates from STEM-Tiger Secondary School because “she is going to be able to get along in the world because it started young, she basically does not have any preconceived prejudice.” P2 added “we are completely different people now that we have been here at STEM-Tiger Secondary School. I've learned. I've stretched myself. I have a greater appreciation for the cultures now because I understand them better.”

Parents repeatedly cited that teachers and administrators at STEM-Tiger Secondary School set high expectations and expected every student to achieve. For instance, P21 compared STEM-Tiger Secondary School versus public schools in terms of expectations.

Teachers set the standards high. They expect the children to learn. Sometimes in public school, they don't always get the children to learn; they're just passed on and I really would prefer that he know. And I feel like here, before they pass him on, he will know what he needs to know in order to go on.

P1 thought that it is not only students, but also teachers who were held accountable to high expectations. He said “teachers are accountable to the administrators and parents for the progress of students. Teachers' performance reviews are based on assessments and how well the students are doing.” He underlined that the “teacher contracts are one year. So, if the teacher doesn't perform satisfactorily, then STEM-Tiger Secondary School has the option of not inviting this teacher back.”

Four of the parents' observations were that STEM-Tiger Secondary School fostered a culture that focuses on being college bound. P10 found this out before they chose STEM-Tiger Secondary School. It appealed to her when the principal told her daughter “you have to commit to graduate from high school and you are going to go to college” during the informative meeting when they applied for enrollment at STEM-Tiger Secondary School.

P3 offered similar thoughts about her high school-aged daughter. She liked that “they [STEM-Tiger Secondary School] strive for all of the students to get into college,” because her “number one focus” is “she wants her daughter to go to college.” She believed that “kids are not going to make their minds up on their own. They need some kind of supportive environment with friends and teachers.” Another parent (P15) mentioned how great it was to have organized

field trips to local universities, such as Texas A&M and the University of Texas. P5 experienced this college-bound school culture even in the middle school level.

My daughter is in eighth grade. She already knows what she wants to be and what college she wants to go to. I don't remember in eighth grade thinking about what college I was going to go to. She has now decided that she wants to major in two things. That to me is impressive for eighth grade.

A summary of *school culture and climate* at STEM-Tiger Secondary School, according to parents, was that the major attributes were “care,” respect, “diversity,” multicultural,” “high expectations,” and “college bound focus.”

The third major perception (15 parents) is satisfaction with the *quality of the teachers* at STEM-Tiger Secondary School. Many parents reported that the individual teachers and administrators at the STEM-Tiger Secondary School were focused on their children’s academic success. Yet, even more importantly, parents also believed that these teachers genuinely cared for their children individually. Teachers were repeatedly referred to as “loving,” “caring,” and “wonderful people.” According to P4, other teachers, even if they were not his son’s teacher, knew his son and they were involved with his behavior and education by interacting with him. She said:

I love that the other teachers even though they are not his teachers necessarily they know him. and they say “hey William don't do that” or “you know you're not supposed to be doing that” or “way to go or you're doing great” so I think it's great that the other teachers are involved, too.

She thought this was an indication that teachers care about not only their students but also the whole school in general. Another mother, P8, agreed that the teachers cared about all of the children at STEM-Tiger Secondary School. Moreover, Mrs. P8 contended “they’re here for the heart of the child and that’s what we need.” She supported her feelings with a very specific observation:

if you look at any of the STEM-Tiger Secondary School yearbooks what I loved even from the very first year [was] reading the teachers’ comments in the yearbooks. You could tell how much the teachers loved the kids and what their ambitions were for them to be successful. So that goes back to what the teachers are all about and wanting to see the kids are successful.

Likewise, P9’s observation was that teachers had relationships with students and parents that were more personal. According to her, home-visits were a good example that indicated “teachers’ care.” Teachers were spending time with students beyond the school hours during afterschool or even on the weekends. She concluded “so the environment they created is like they care.”

One of the parents, P2 expressed her trust in teachers and administrators as:

I like the fact that teachers aren't here just for a paycheck but that they really are here because they're invested in the students and invested in the school. They take this so seriously and it's a passion for them.

P22 highlighted the “two-way communication” between teachers and parents at STEM-Tiger Secondary School, “which is not common at other big public schools.” She believed that if this

two-way communication did not exist, then “parents would never know what was going on and happening at school.”

In contrast to the options and perceptions offered by other parents, a different view was shared by P7. Although P7 appreciated teachers’ performance, he did not agree that “all teachers are that good.” He shared his experience of the year that his daughter was paired with a “not so good teacher” who was motivated with a positive attitude; yet, this novice teacher actually did not know how to teach in an effective manner. The next year they had a great teacher. Thus, he thought that there were both “good” and “not so good teachers.” He pointed out that because the “STEM-Tiger Secondary School’s vision is strong,” the system has capacity to keep good people and eliminate those “who are not good.”

The fourth major perception of STEM-Tiger Secondary School was of *discipline and safety*. Simply stated, parents wanted a safe learning environment for their children. Seven parents indicated that they sought this school because they believed it could provide their children a safe and secure environment. P7 said “safe environment means there is discipline, no bullying and no other issues.” P13 expressed her appreciation about implementation of discipline rules.

When I first got here and read the student handbook, I was a little freaked out, but I have been so impressed at how it’s been implemented here and how, you know, it’s done with a very loving hand so it’s not punishment as much as it’s correction.

When STEM-Tiger Secondary School parents talked about “discipline,” it was not necessarily the rules, punishments, or enforcement; rather, they referred to a structured, welcoming and respecting environment among students and staff. For instance, P21 expressed the following sentiment.

The discipline—and it’s not discipline in terms of control; you know we had a previous experience at a school where there was a lot of discipline, but it wasn’t very constructive. It was like the top down. Here the children are encouraged to develop their own self-discipline.

One parent (P4) expressed a particular concern with the discipline issues at big public schools and said “you do not have drugs and gangs at this school. So, middle school students can feel safe at school. They are not exposed to the same things that they would be exposed to in a public school.”

Four parents were satisfied with the requirement of uniforms. They also helped students to discipline themselves. P3 was very happy with the uniform policy. She thought “this gives her time management. It doesn’t give her a lot of options to worry about her image. She has more time to worry about her curriculum and her academics at school.”

Finally, the fifth major theme related to STEM-Tiger Secondary School being a *small size school* and how this engendering a feeling of a small, caring environment for students and parents. Parents clearly stated that they valued a smaller school environment. For example, P14 said “we know all of the teachers, we walk into the school, you know everybody, you can talk to the principal.” Additionally, P14 stated “they know us by the last names. We have always been important. You are not a number anymore.” Another parent, P12, supported this feeling “I was stunned that the principal actually came in for breakfast and sat down with us and had breakfast with us. We never had that at any of the other schools.” P14 expressed her feelings “it’s very personal, it is very close.”

At the end of the interview, parents were also asked their overall perception of STEM-Tiger Secondary School. In general, they had a “very positive, encouraged view of STEM-Tiger Secondary School.”

According to P6,

STEM-Tiger Secondary School is like a small company that is easily flexible and willing to change. You're not engrained in this huge massive system that they cannot change or take years to change. I have a feeling that, if I express something, they really do listen to me and that's nice.

P16 thought “in a nutshell, STEM-Tiger Secondary School is a place that is focused on everybody’s success, teachers and students.” P21 added “I think of STEM-Tiger Secondary School as being very forward thinking. STEM-Tiger Secondary School has a big plan, a master plan and they are looking forward.” Finally, P2 summarized his perception of STEM-Tiger Secondary School as “the building of the children’s future.”

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was an effort to investigate parental perceptions of the school where they send their children for several aforementioned reasons. To explore overall parental perceptions of STEM-Tiger Secondary School, first what parents valued in schools, and what motivated them to choose STEM-Tiger Secondary School were investigated.

The parents in this study were drawn to STEM-Tiger Secondary School schools for multiple reasons. Some of them first became dissatisfied with other school choices and chose to exit them because of negative experiences they and their children had had. Other parents, whose children had never attended a school before, chose STEM-Tiger Secondary School because they thought that their children would be better served in STEM-Tiger Secondary School. The programs and features that STEM-Tiger Secondary School offered appealed to most parents. They valued the fact that STEM-Tiger Secondary School offered a strong academic program. They appreciated the dynamics of the school culture and climate that set high expectations, embraced diversity and multi-cultures, and provided a college readiness atmosphere. They perceived that the teachers truly cared about and loved their children, and that administrators were involved and committed. In addition, they thought STEM-Tiger Secondary School was a safe and secure place that fostered focus on instruction in a small caring environment.

Factors that Parents Value in Schools

Based on findings of this study, while all of the given factors were relevant to parents, there were some differences as far as the priorities are concerned. *The quality of teachers, academic program, and discipline and safety* were reported as the most significant values. *Parent involvement and communication, school culture, and class size* were reported as being between *very important* and *important*. In addition, *extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, clubs), unique programs such as special education, dyslexia, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Gifted and Talented (G&T), recommendations from family members and friends, and school size* were closer to the “important” rating. The least decisive factor was a *convenient location* according to the parent responses.

Overall, the findings of this study were consistency with several other studies. For example, parents value *academic programs* the most (Berends, Springer & Walberg, 2008; Ersoy, 2015; Ersoy & Deniz, 2016; Ogurlu & Sevim, 2017). Aside from academic quality,

parents value school culture, and climate, discipline and safety, quality of teachers, and a small school environment (Berends et al., 2008; Ersoy & Ugur, 2015; Schnaiberg, 2000; Walberg, 2007; Wayessa, 2017; Wilder et al., 2017). Berends et al. (2008) stated that parents are also looking for an emphasis on science, mathematics, and technology and college-bound programs to choose schools for their children, which also is mentioned by parents as one of the strengths of STEM-Tiger Secondary School according to the results of this study. Another similarity between the results of this study and the literature is that Schnaiberg (2000) found that some school parents value individual campus effects upon achievement; exposure to culturally sensitive educational environments; increased individualized instruction and perceptions related to educators' willingness (Alanay & Aydin, 2016; Damgaci & Aydin, 2013) to use innovative educational approaches.

Based on the review of all findings of this study and the literature review, the conclusion can be made that parents value academic programs, discipline and safety, parent involvement and communication, school culture and climate. In addition to this unanimously agreed upon list in this study, other researchers might extend this list of factors, depending on the purpose and study sample. However, it can be concluded that parents are seeking simple but fundamental characteristics at schools including *quality education, safe and secure environment, a nurturing and healthy school culture and climate*.

Concerns about Other School Choices

Parents stated that their decisions in choosing STEM-Tiger Secondary School was influenced by their perceptions from the rising concerns at public schools because some parents have had negative direct experiences that their children have attended. Similarly, Marsh, Carr-Chellman, and Sockman (2009) also stated that parents often become frustrated when realizing that traditional schools fail to help their children to reach their full potential. These perceptions of failure are brought about by the perceived current challenges and issues of traditional public schools. More specifically, parents reported to be concerned about other choices in the following areas: (1) school culture and climate, (2) academic concerns, (3) large school size, (4) quality of teachers, (5) discipline and safety, (6) parent involvement and communication, and (6) large classroom size. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research. For example, Martinez and Thomas (1994) indicated that reasons parents did not send their children to the local traditional public schools were poor academic quality, a lack of safety, culture, unchallenging academics, a lack of student help, and a lack of concern for students. Additionally, it is also mentioned that, for some parents, the option of attending private school was not available because of its cost. This concern was shared with research by Ahmed-Ullah (2009), who added that parents thought the homeschool approach often was less restrictive, and charter schools provided a more structured approach to learning.

STEM-Tiger Secondary School's Features and Programs that Appeals to Parents

Increasingly, researchers are finding that the current conditions and challenges of traditional public schools can even compel parents to seek distinct characteristics in alternative schools (Marsh et al., 2009). As an alternative, STEM-Tiger Secondary School offers parents greater educational opportunities such as innovative curriculums, small class size, individual instruction, and funding that do not have all of the red-tape bureaucracy that traditional schools have (Plastrik & Trimer-Hartley, 2009). This study also revealed similar findings. Parents identified many attributes and programs that attracted them to STEM-Tiger Secondary School. From to least most frequently observed, these features and programs are curricular programs such as the accelerated reader program, art, field trips, character education, extra-curricular

programs such as after-school clubs and talent shows, academic opportunities such as science fairs, math count, robotics, tutorials, home-visits, and an online database. Moreover, it is not only the variety of these curricular and extra-curricular activities, but also “the way they are implemented” that is appreciated by parents. Considering that most of these programs are not unique to STEM-Tiger Secondary School, an academically focused nurturing and fostering environment is identified to be a key for the successful implementation of these programs.

Parental Perception of STEM-Tiger Secondary School

Because the focus of this study is to examine the perceptions of STEM-Tiger Secondary School parents about their children’s schooling, this theme (Parental Perception of STEM-Tiger Secondary School) is the most critical section of the study. The content is driven mainly by the themes that are revealed from the interviews with parents and then compared with the literature.

Overall, almost all of the parent focus group participants cited the *strong academic program* as the top of the list as far as their perceptions of STEM-Tiger Secondary School were concerned. Simply stated, they were extremely satisfied with the academic programs of STEM-Tiger Secondary School. Using different perspectives, and with different wording, such as “quality of academic program,” “rigorous curriculum,” “education,” and “value of education,” they unanimously (and repeatedly) agreed that STEM-Tiger Secondary School offers a strong academic program.

Quantitative results also supported that the parents are most satisfied with the academic program of STEM-Tiger Secondary School. In addition, previous studies have indicated that *academic program* is the most important factor that affects parents’ choice of schools for their children. Marsh et al. (2009) claimed that the basic goal of charter schools is to provide better educational opportunities for the students served through the schools. Additionally, May (2006) stated that parents perceive an enhanced educational experience, and they sought to improve the quality of their child’s education and the academics and/or curriculum.

Some parents were also able to provide specific reasons to support their thoughts and perceptions. Parents appreciated that the STEM-Tiger Secondary School emphasized a mathematics, and science- and technology-based school curriculum. They think, “focus in mathematics, science, and technology is a significant tool for their children’s future,” and it will prepare their children to pursue careers that will be relevant in a technologically evolving society. This is in line with the findings of a study by the Center on Reinventing Public Education (2007) at the University of Washington, which found that parents searched for a particular school that emphasized the basics of mathematics, science, and technology. In addition, Riley (2000) found that parents chose schools that they believed emphasized the kind of education and focus that they aspired to for their children. It is also worth mentioning that the focus on STEM was also clearly stated in the mission statement of STEM-Tiger Secondary School.

Another specific reason for parents to support their perception of a “strong academic program” is that they believed that their children receive significantly more individual attention and instruction and, therefore, have a greater chance of succeeding at STEM-Tiger Secondary School. Parents were satisfied with the flexible instruction that is differentiated according to the individual needs of their children. This is in line with findings of Finn and Raub (2006) who thought that charter schools offered specific instructional approaches that could best meet the students’ individualized needs. Additionally, Leiding (2008) found that charter schools provide motivating and challenging instruction that is personalized for each student. Parents believe STEM-Tiger Secondary School offer better educational opportunities by providing a better curriculum than a traditional school, providing more of a challenge to the children, providing more

time for slow learners so that they too are successful, and by providing pretesting and requiring that students master subjects before advancing to the next level (Ahmed-Ullah, 2009).

The second major perception that emerged from the results of analysis of the interviews is the appreciation of *school culture and climate* at STEM-Tiger Secondary School. Parents believed that STEM-Tiger Secondary School had a decidedly positive and strong school culture. It is perceived as a “caring,” “respectful,” “comfortable,” “diverse,” and “multicultural” environment with a culture of “high expectations” and a “college-bound” focus that is supported by “positive peer competitiveness.” Parents value “the healthy and conducive environment, and a school culture that appreciates academics.” P2 described it with her own words “You are expected to respect people,” which refers to the respect among (e.g., student-student, student-teacher, and teacher-parent). She then linked respect and academics and says, “It is cool to be smart here [STEM-Tiger Secondary School].” Supportively, parents repeatedly cited that teachers and administrators at STEM-Tiger Secondary School set high expectations and expected every student to achieve. Likewise, the study conducted by Izumi and Yan (2005) indicated that charter schools set high expectations for producing student achievement.

Another commonly observed aspect of STEM-Tiger Secondary School culture was the “diversity” and “respect to diversity.” Parents appreciated the environment was diverse in terms of the background, economic status, ethnicity, and even nationality and religion. One of the parents said, “I love the diversity of STEM-Tiger Secondary School. I love that she [her daughter] likes people because of who they are. It has nothing to do with what their religious belief, background, or nationality.”

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Author Note

John Duman hold his PhD in Educational Leadership from University of Houston, TX. Currently, he is research coordinator at Zenith Educational Learning. His research expertise is in parental involvement in public schools, social justice, curriculum development and evaluation, and learning and evaluation. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: gurolduman@gmail.com.

Hasan Aydin is an Associate Professor of Multicultural Education at Florida Gulf COast University. His research focuses on multicultural education, diversity, curriculum evaluation, citizenship education and democracy. He is an author of several books and published over a hundred articles. He is currently a chief-editor of *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies (eJECS)*, and *American Journal of Qualitative Research (AJQR)*. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: aydinhytu@gmail.com.

Burhan Ozfidan received his BA with distinction in 2011 specializing in Teaching English Language and earned his Master's Degree of Arts in Secondary Education and Teaching specializing in Curriculum and Instruction. He holds his Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M University, USA. His current research area is bilingual education programs, ESL, curriculum development, and intercultural education. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: b.ozfidan@tamu.edu.

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