Parents’ Experience with Public School Choice
Learning from Parents in Eight High Choice Cities
Charter sector growing nationwide

In some cities, choice goes mainstream

DC 41% vouchers
Detroit 34% vouchers
New Orleans 76% vouchers
Policy debates often focus on “horse race”

Charters not outperforming nation’s traditional public schools, report says

By Lyndsey Layton  June 25, 2013  Email  Follow @lyndseylay

The nation’s public charter schools are growing more effective but most don’t produce better academic results when compared with traditional public schools, according to a report released Tuesday.
Consultants Steer Parents Through Maze of School Choice

Laura Barr, left, founder and owner of e.Merging Educational Consulting in Denver, advises Liz and Justin Wasserman on the school choices available for their 4-year-old daughter. Ms. Barr’s services are popular with middle-income parents in the high-choice city.
—Nathan W. Arnes for Education Week

As public K-12 options expand, parents pay for guidance

By Arianna Prothero

The rapid expansion of charter schools and other public school options is fueling growth in another industry: education consulting.
What challenges and opportunities do parents face in high-choice cities today?
Parent surveys in eight cities:

- Baltimore
- Cleveland
- Denver
- Detroit
- Indianapolis
- New Orleans
- Philadelphia
- Washington, DC
Challenges parents face in making choices

• Information and transportation are problems for about a quarter of parents

• Confusion over eligibility requirements the most-cited problem
Information a problem for less than 1 in 4

Philadelphia
Washington DC
Baltimore
Detroit
New Orleans
Indianapolis
Cleveland
Denver

“I was able to get the information I needed to choose the best school for my child”
Transportation a problem for about 1 in 4

“Finding transportation for my child made choosing a school difficult…”
Most common problem: Eligibility confusion

“Did understanding which schools your child was eligible to attend make choosing a school difficult?”
Eligibility confusion bigger issue for parents with students in special education

“Did understanding which schools your child was eligible to attend make choosing a school difficult?”
Finding “good” schools pose bigger challenges

• Many say finding a school that fits is difficult
  – Especially parents of children with special needs

• About half say they don’t have good option besides current school

• Wide range of outlooks about performance trajectory of cities’ schools
Finding a fit can be difficult

Philadelphia
New Orleans
Baltimore
Washington, DC
Detroit
Denver
Cleveland
Indianapolis

"Available schools weren't a good fit for my child… "

Predicted probability

- yes, finding fit a problem
- no, finding fit not a problem
Fit especially problematic for SPED students

“Available schools weren’t a good fit for my child…”

Predicted probability
About half say they don’t have other options

“…if your child couldn’t attend current school, is there another public school currently available to you that you would be just as happy to send him or her to?”
Are city schools getting worse, same, better?

- Getting worse
- Staying the same
- Getting better

- Washington DC
- Denver
- New Orleans
- Detroit
- Cleveland
- Baltimore
- Indianapolis
- Philadelphia

Predicted probability: 0, 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8, 1.0

Colors:
- Red: Getting worse
- Yellow: Staying the same
- Green: Getting better
Cities invest in systems to support parents in school choice

School Choice

- Enrollment
- School Information
- Transportation
- School Supply