

MMSD Open Enrollment-Leaver Survey - 2016

Key Findings

1. The two most common reasons parents cited for transferring their children out of MMSD were *the school has a better academic environment*, 26%, followed by *the school has a better culture or climate*, 23%.
2. The top two programs in the other district that influenced parents' decisions to leave MMSD were *Advanced learner programming*, 22%, and *Advanced Placement courses*, 15%.
3. The most common districts parents transferred their children to were: Monona, 21%, McFarland, 17%, Verona, 14% and Other District, 13%.

Background

Madison Metropolitan School District wanted to learn more about parents' reasons for participating in the state's open enrollment program. MMSD last conducted an open enrollment parent survey in 2009. The original parent survey, which included items derived from school selection studies by the National Center for Education Statistics, was reviewed and revised to include questions about current MMSD programs. This report focuses on data from the 2016 open enrollment parent survey.

Data and Methods

Between March 18 and April 16, 2016, MMSD emailed links to the electronic survey to 965 parents who open-enrolled their children out of the district between 2010 and 2015. A total of 320 parents responded to survey for a response rate of 33%. Demographics in Table 1 below were self-reported by respondents.

Table 1: Race/Ethnicity of Respondents	(n)	%
African American	12	4%
Asian	14	4%
Hispanic/Latino	9	3%
Multiracial	10	3%
White	244	77%
No Response	28	9%

Respondents to the survey were overwhelmingly white, 77%, compared to all other racial/ethnic groups that comprised only 3% and 4% of responses. No comparison can be made to the demographics of the district's parents overall as parent race/ethnicity is not collected in student enrollments.

We calculated response distributions for each closed-ended question. No disaggregation of data by race/ethnicity was done at the question level due to the small numbers of respondents in most demographic group.

Due to the time that elapsed between parents' decisions to open enroll their children out of MMSD and the time of the survey – as long as 4 years – the potential for reporting error is greatly increased. More than one-third of respondents, 39%, open-enrolled their children out of the district between 2012 and 2015. Parents were not surveyed about their reasons for open enrollment until 2016. Because research affirms that recent events are reported more accurately than past events (Fowler 93), great caution should be taken when interpreting the survey findings. More complete data on MMSD open enrollment is available on pages 15-24 the [Enrollment Reports 2015-16](#).



Findings

Question 1: Please indicate your family's reason(s) for transferring your child(ren) to a school outside the Madison Metropolitan School District? (Check all that apply).

The most commonly cited reasons parents chose for transferring their children out of MMSD were *the school has a better academic environment*, 26%, followed by *the school has a better culture or climate*, 23%. The third most common reason was “*other reasons*,” 14%. Among the “*other reasons*” that parents specified, in order, were: safety, staff and programming. Full responses are available in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Reasons for Transferring Out of MMSD (Check all that apply)	(n)	%
The school has a better academic environment.	203	26%
The school has a better culture or climate.	184	23%
Other reasons	107	14%
The school is closer to where we live.	62	8%
It was my child's/children's choice.	55	7%
The school has special academic programs.	49	6%
The school has extra-curricular activities (sports, arts, clubs, etc.)	30	4%
The school is a virtual, online school.	30	4%
The school is closer to my place of work.	28	4%
The desire to attend school with a friend(s).	18	2%
The school has after school programs or activities.	17	2%
The school offers religious instruction.	8	1%

Question 2: Please check the programs offered in the other school that influenced your decision to leave MMSD? (Check all that apply).

The most common response parents selected when asked what program offered in the other district influenced their decision to leave MMSD was “*other, please specify*,” 29%. Sixty-four percent, 64%, of the comments in “*other*” were restatements of parents’ reasons for transferring specified in Q1. The next most common responses were *Advanced learner programming*, 22%, and *Advanced Placement courses*, 15%. Full responses are available in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Academic Programs that Influenced Your Decision to Leave MMSD. (Check all that apply)	(n)	%
Other	98	29%
Advanced learner programming	73	22%
Advanced Placement courses	51	15%
After school programs	32	9%
Special education programming	32	9%
Fine arts	31	9%
Dual language immersion	10	3%
Multilingual education	10	3%

Question 3: What school district did your child(ren) transfer to?

The most common districts parents transferred their children to were: Monona, 21%, McFarland, 17%, Verona, 14% and Other District, 13%. Full responses are available in Table 4 below.

Table 4: What School District Did Your Child(ren) Transfer to?		
Child(ren) Transfer to?	(n)	%
Monona	63	21%
McFarland	52	17%
Verona	43	14%
Other (please specify)	40	13%
Oregon	26	9%
Middleton-Cross Plains	24	8%
Sun Prairie	22	7%
Waunakee	16	5%
Deforest	11	4%
Stoughton	2	1%

Question 4: At what grade(s) did your child(ren) transfer to the new district?

The most common grades at which parents open-enrolled their children out of the district were Kindergarten, 32%, followed by Grade 9, 15%, and Grades 1 and 6, 7% each. Full responses are available in Table 5 below.

Table 5: At What Grade(s) Did Your Child(ren) Transfer to the New District?		
Child(ren) Transfer to the New District?	(n)	%
KG	122	32%
Gr 1	28	7%
Gr 2	21	6%
Gr 3	22	6%
Gr 4	21	6%
Gr 5	21	6%
Gr 6	26	7%
Gr 7	19	5%
Gr 8	9	2%
Gr 9	58	15%
Gr 10	9	2%
Gr 11	16	4%
Gr 12	4	1%

Question 5: Did your child(ren) ever attend a school in MMSD?

Sixty-two percent, 62% of parents who responded to the survey had children who previously attended MMSD while the remaining 38% did not.

Citations

Fowler, Jr., Floyd J. *Survey Research Methods*. Sage, 2014.