

MINNESOTA VOLUNTARY PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

MULTI-YEAR EVALUATION SUMMARY

*Prepared for the Minnesota Department of Education
by ASPEN Associates, Inc.*

May 22, 2009

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BACKGROUND

In 2000, the settlement of an educational adequacy lawsuit filed against the State of Minnesota by the Minneapolis branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Minneapolis parents resulted in an inter- and intradistrict voluntary desegregation initiative known as *The Choice Is Yours*. *The Choice Is Yours* program provides low-income Minneapolis families with enhanced access to suburban schools (“suburban choice”) and selected magnet schools (“Minneapolis choice magnets”) within the Minneapolis school district under the state’s open enrollment policy. Eligible students — those eligible for free or reduced price lunches — receive priority placement into open enrollment through *The Choice Is Yours* program.

In 2002, Minnesota received a 5-year federal grant through the Voluntary Public School Choice (VPSC) program to further enhance educational opportunities for urban and suburban families in the Minneapolis area by expanding upon *The Choice Is Yours* program. Under the MN-VPSC program, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), the Minneapolis branch of the NAACP, and eight suburban school districts from the West Metro Education Program (WMEP) came together to achieve two broad goals: (1) to support parents in choosing the best school for their child and (2) to support student success in school. Key program activities included enhanced or expanded outreach, transportation, and academic tutoring and support, and expanded school choice options under *The Choice Is Yours* program.

On June 30, 2005, the legal settlement that led to for *The Choice Is Yours* program expired. However, ongoing support for the suburban choice option allowed it to continue operating in the eight participating suburban districts, as it had in previous years, under WMEP’s comprehensive desegregation plan.¹ The Minneapolis choice magnet option has also continued, but under the federal school choice grant, which continues through the 2006–2007 school year. State funding to support transportation of students under *The Choice Is Yours* program continues to be available to the program.

This summary highlights key findings from the 2007–2008 evaluation (the 7th year *The Choice Is Yours* program has been in operation). The 2007-2008 school year represents a one-year extension to the five-year grant that began in 2003. This summary also includes key findings since the first comprehensive evaluation in 2003-2004. All findings are drawn from enrollment data, parent and student interviews, student and staff surveys, and student achievement data. The full report will be available on the school choice portion of the MDE website under *The Choice Is Yours*.

¹ A ninth WMEP school district, Eden Prairie, is not a formal partner in the federal school choice grant, but began accepting students to *The Choice Is Yours* program during the 2005–2006 school year under WMEP’s comprehensive desegregation plan.

HOW TO READ THIS SUMMARY

This report summarizes trends in key findings from the comprehensive evaluation of the MN-VPSC program. The MN-VPSC program has been in place for seven years. It began in 2001-2002 and was expanded and enhanced through a five-year federal school choice grant that began in the spring of 2003. Annual comprehensive evaluations have been conducted since the program's third year and include additional data collected during a one-year grant extension that concluded in 2007-2008. As in previous years, the report is organized around the five guiding evaluation questions that relate to outreach, expanded school choice, reducing barriers to choice, and academic support and achievement. In reading this report, it is important for the reader to understand that data collection varied by year. Consequently, what is presented here is a comparison of the baseline data with the final data collection. As such, throughout this report, the tables and figures represent the final status of the program and are accompanied by narrative describing any notable changes over time. (For further information on the program's status in the final year, including detailed data tables, the reader is directed to the evaluation report prepared during the final year of the grant. The "Minnesota Voluntary Public School Choice 2006-2007 Evaluation Report" is available online from the Minnesota Department of Education). This report also includes findings from data collected in the 2007-2008 grant extension year. These data include interviews with current and former student participants and an additional year of student achievement data to examine trends over four consecutive years.

OUTREACH

To what extent did the enhanced outreach ensure that all parents were aware of their school choices?

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that outreach efforts had indeed raised parents' awareness of school choices and provided insight into how parents make these choices to inform future outreach. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

ARE ALL PARENTS AWARE OF THE MANY SCHOOL CHOICES?

- FINDING 1. Throughout the project, suburban choice parents continued to be twice as likely as parents of choice magnet participants and eligible, non-participating families to know of open enrollment options, including *The Choice Is Yours* program.
- FINDING 2. A significant number (more than 20%) of eligible families— participants and non-participants alike — continued to view home schooling and alternative, charter, and private schools as viable school choice options.
- FINDING 3. Parents of suburban choice students tend to be more aware of some school choice options, particularly Open Enrollment and *The Choice Is Yours*. Aside from those two options, midway through the project parental awareness was becoming more comparable across the three groups. In the final year, however, there were a number of changes in parents' awareness across the three parent groups for schooling alternatives, among them that parents of eligible, non-participants fell somewhat behind the other two parent groups in awareness of charter and private school options.

HOW DO PARENTS FIND OUT ABOUT THEIR SCHOOL CHOICES?

- FINDING 4. The primary source of information on school choices for all eligible families continues to be the parent’s social network. Family, friends, neighbors, and representatives from schools and other community organizations were key sources of information. Few families learned about school choices from the major media, including newspapers, television, billboards, and radio.
- FINDING 5. Together, outreach that targeted parents’ social networks and outreach through major media outlets reached 9 out of 10 eligible parents.

HOW DO PARENTS CHOOSE A SCHOOL?

- FINDING 6. The actual decision to enroll their child in a particular school continues to be most influenced by the parents’ social network. Recommendations from family, friends, or neighbors; visits to or contact with the new school; and recommendations from a school attended in the past were the most influential.
- FINDING 7. Most parents — participants and non-participants alike — again said they look for schools with a reputation for providing a high-quality education in a safe and disciplined school environment. For the most part, many parents are also looking for a school that can provide the special academic and/or language support their child may need.
- FINDING 8. Over half of all parents said they would like a school that will educate their child about the history, traditions, and values of their ethnic or cultural group; and one that has a diverse student body and teaching staff. This year parents of choice magnet students were less likely to rate as very important a school that will educate their child about the history, traditions, and values of their ethnic or cultural group.
- FINDING 9. Choosing a school that is close to home continues to be important to parents of non-participants, though less so this year and about the same as parents of choice magnet students. This year parents in all groups were slightly less likely than last year to say finding a school that will educate their child about his/her religion was very important in their choice of school. Like last year, the importance of religious education was about the same across all parent groups.

<h2>EXPANDED SCHOOL CHOICE</h2>

To what extent were school choice options expanded under The Choice Is Yours program?

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that efforts to expand school choice options were successful. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

HOW MANY STUDENTS ENROLL IN THE CHOICE PROGRAMS?

- FINDING 10. Total enrollment in suburban choice schools has increased each year from the program’s inception in 2001-2001 (year 1) with 472 students, to 720 students in year 2 (53% increase), 1,030 students in year 3 (43% increase), 1,435 in year 4 (39%

increase), 1,567 in year 5 (9% increase), 1,867 in year 6 (19% increase), and 1,997 in year 7 (7% increase). This represents a three fold increase over seven years to reach the cap of 2,000 placed on the program by the initial legislation.

- FINDING 11. Students were also able to enroll in a Minneapolis choice magnet school under *The Choice Is Yours* program. Enrollment in the choice magnet option varied over time depending on the number of schools eligible to receive students. Over the course of the project students eligible to enroll in these schools under *The Choice Is Yours* were more likely to qualify and be enrolled under other higher priority placements.

WHO ENROLLS IN THE SUBURBAN CHOICE SCHOOLS?

- FINDING 12. Since the suburban choice program began, more African American students were choosing open enrollment transfers out of Minneapolis into suburban schools. The suburban choice program continues to attract relatively few Native American, Hmong, and Hispanic students. Enrollment levels by ethnic group have remained stable.
- FINDING 13. Less than half (40%) of all students ever enrolled in the suburban choice program were enrolled in a Minneapolis public school the previous year.
- FINDING 14. Just over half (50%) of all students ever enrolled in the suburban choice program live in 2 of the 22 zip codes served by *The Choice Is Yours* program. These zip codes represent the near-north and north Minneapolis neighborhoods (excluding northeast) where the predominant ethnic group is African American.

WHO ENROLLS IN THE CHOICE MAGNET SCHOOLS?

- FINDING 15. Of the eligible students who enrolled in the Minneapolis choice magnet schools, Hispanic students were less likely to enroll.

HOW SATISFIED ARE PARENTS WITH THEIR SCHOOL CHOICE?

- FINDING 16. During the program's first 7 years, each year about two-thirds of students enrolled in the suburban choice program returned the following year.
- FINDING 17. Throughout the project, parents of suburban choice — and to a lesser extent, parents of choice magnet participants — were more satisfied with their school choice and more likely to choose the same school again and recommend it to others than parents of eligible, non-participants.
- FINDING 18. Almost all (96% in the final year) suburban choice parents would recommend the program to others. Each year, two-thirds of these parents had already done so.

REDUCING BARRIERS TO SCHOOL CHOICE

To what extent did transportation and parent information centers reduce barriers to school choice?

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that efforts to enhance transportation options were successful. In addition, the evaluation revealed that efforts to enhance information and support through parent information centers was successful for parents that utilized the centers. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

HOW MANY STUDENTS RECEIVE TRANSPORTATION?

FINDING 19. In Minneapolis, in the final year total of 224 students were transported to higher performing schools in the district. Funding from the federal grant supported this expanded transportation.

FINDING 20. In the final year, almost all students who participated in the interdistrict portion of *The Choice Is Yours* rode a bus to their suburban choice school (91%) compared to 71% of students attending choice magnet schools in Minneapolis and 65% of eligible non-participants. Only a few suburban choice students were transported to school by their parents (3%), drove themselves to school (3%) or took a city bus (1%). By the end of the project, transportation to the suburban choice schools was being coordinated by the receiving districts rather than by a central scheduling office.

HOW IMPORTANT IS TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOL CHOICE?

FINDING 21. The availability of free transportation continued to be important to suburban choice parents over the course of the project. In the end, half of suburban choice parents might choose another school if free transportation to their child's current suburban school is not available. In other words, half of suburban choice parents would "definitely" choose the same school again, even if free transportation is not provided.

FINDING 22. The availability of free transportation also continued to be important to parents of eligible, non-participant students. In the final year, about 1 in 3 parents of choice magnet students said the same.

FINDING 23. Of the many parents who would prefer to choose a school "close to home" — choice magnet students and eligible, non-participants — continued to want to limit the bus ride to school to no more than 30 minutes.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS TO SCHOOL CHOICE?

FINDING 24. Throughout the project, relatively few parents reported visiting or talking to someone at one of the parent information centers. Fewer parents were utilizing the centers in the final year (on average about 1 in 4 parents). Overall, parents rated the Minneapolis Parent Information Centers, Inc. more helpful than the Minneapolis Public Schools' Student Placement Center.

FINDING 25. In the lottery conducted by the Minneapolis Public Schools Student Placement Services during the final year, almost all of the entering kindergarten and most of the

first through eighth graders and high school students received their first or second choice.

FINDING 26. During the final year, the Minneapolis Parent Information Centers, Inc. enrolled 17% of the new students enrolling in the suburban choice schools as compared to 6% in year 5, 12% in year 4 and 28% in year 3.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

To what extent did the enhanced academic support options promote school success for students who changed schools?

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that efforts to enhance academic support were an important part of reducing barriers to school choice. The evaluation also revealed that efforts to enhance academic achievement through participation the MN-VPSC program were mixed. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

HOW IMPORTANT IS ACADEMIC SUPPORT TO SCHOOL CHOICE?

FINDING 27. By the end of the project, just over half of suburban choice parents would choose the same school again if extra support was not available for their child when needed. The number of choice magnet parents reporting the same decreased slightly to just under 2 in 5, and the non-participant parent response fell from about 1 in 2 to 3 in 10.

HOW PREPARED ARE SCHOOLS TO HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED?

FINDING 28. Most parents — suburban choice, choice magnet, and eligible, non-participants — continued to agree that their child’s school provided a safe and caring learning environment in which all students were held to high academic standards. However, students and teachers reported regular disruptions to teaching and learning as a result of student misbehavior. Parents of eligible, non-participants gave similar ratings for school climate. (No comparable student or staff data were available for the schools attended by eligible, non-participants.)

FINDING 29. In the final year, most parents of choice magnet students and eligible, non-participants — and many suburban choice parents — consider suburban schools adequately prepared to work with ethnically and economically diverse student populations. All three groups reported schools were somewhat less prepared for language diversity, though an average of about 70% across the groups said the schools were prepared for it.

ARE STUDENTS RECEIVING THE HELP THEY NEED TO SUCCEED?

FINDING 30. Most parents — suburban choice, choice magnet, and eligible, non-participating — believe they are making a significant contribution to their child’s success in school and are doing so, primarily, by helping their child with homework, which most feel prepared to do.

- FINDING 31. Most parents — suburban choice, choice magnet, and eligible, non-participating — continued to feel that the schools are doing enough to help their child adjust to the new school.
- FINDING 32. Many parents — of suburban choice, choice magnet, and eligible, non-participating students — continued to feel that their child is receiving all the help he/she needed to do well in school. In the final year, many parents of eligible, non-participants felt that their child was receiving enough assistance, despite the fact that fewer of these parents reported that their child’s school was providing or arranging for additional help. Also, slightly fewer choice magnet parents felt their child was receiving enough assistance in the final year, despite increased reporting that their child’s school was arranging for additional help. Most choice magnet students reported that they received enough support, while roughly two-thirds of suburban choice students felt they had received adequate assistance.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

- FINDING 33. *Overall, during 2007-2008 suburban transfer students outperformed eligible, non-participants.* Students who transfer to suburban choice schools under *The Choice Is Yours* program outperformed students who chose to not to participate in the program in reading (11 percentile points) and mathematics (20 percentile points). Low-performing suburban choice students also outperformed their counterparts reading (13 percentile points) and mathematics (22 percentile points). There was no difference in performance between students new to the suburban choice program and students who were returning.
- FINDING 34. *Over a four-year period, the achievement results were mixed.* In two of the four years, suburban choice participants outperformed the eligible, non-participants. Another year, the eligible non-participants fared better than the suburban choice participants. One year, they fared equally well. These trends held true for low-performing students. Finally, in all but one year, suburban choice students who were new to the program and those that were returning performed equally well.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

At the end of seven years, implications for policy and practice that may be drawn from the evaluation of *The Choice Is Yours* program have not changed substantially from those posed in previous years:

1. OUTREACH: For all eligible families, word-of-mouth and direct contact through parents’ social networks continue to be more influential in the school choice *decisions* made by low-income families than traditional media campaigns. To *reach* the most parents, however, outreach should continue to access parents’ social networks *and* utilize the major media (e.g., newspapers, television, radio).
2. OUTREACH: Despite ongoing outreach efforts targeting other ethnic groups, the suburban choice program continues to attract primarily African American students and families living on the north and near-north side of Minneapolis. The availability of academics continues to be important to all parents. As the suburban choice program strengthens its language support programs, this option may become more appealing to other ethnic groups.

3. **SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL CHOICE:** Free transportation and academic support continue to be viewed as important features in parents' decision to choose a particular school.
4. **STAFF DEVELOPMENT:** Suburban choice schools need to continue providing staff development to increase teacher capacity to work effectively with language-diverse students.
5. **ACADEMIC SUPPORT:** Suburban choice schools need to examine why secondary students transferring in under *The Choice Is Yours* program do not feel they are receiving all the help they need to do well in school when their parents feel that they are.
6. **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:** After four years of analyzing student achievement data, the findings are mixed as to the effects of the program on student performance. As more and more students remain in the program it will be possible to examine the achievement of cohorts over time.

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BACKGROUND

In 2000, the settlement of an educational adequacy lawsuit filed against the State of Minnesota by the Minneapolis branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Minneapolis parents resulted in an inter- and intradistrict voluntary desegregation initiative known as *The Choice Is Yours*. *The Choice Is Yours* program provides low-income Minneapolis families with enhanced access to suburban schools (“suburban choice”) and selected magnet schools (“Minneapolis choice magnets”) within the Minneapolis school district under the state’s open enrollment policy. Eligible students — those eligible for free or reduced price lunches — receive priority placement into open enrollment through *The Choice Is Yours* program.

In 2002, Minnesota received a 5-year federal grant through the Voluntary Public School Choice (VPSC) program to further enhance educational opportunities for urban and suburban families in the Minneapolis area by expanding upon *The Choice Is Yours* program. Under the MN-VPSC program, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), the Minneapolis branch of the NAACP, and eight suburban school districts from the West Metro Education Program (WMEP) came together to achieve two broad goals: (1) to support parents in choosing the best school for their child and (2) to support student success in school. Key program activities included enhanced or expanded outreach, transportation, and academic tutoring and support, and expanded school choice options under *The Choice Is Yours* program.

On June 30, 2005, the legal settlement that led to for *The Choice Is Yours* program expired. However, ongoing support for the suburban choice option allowed it to continue operating in the eight participating suburban districts, as it had in previous years, under WMEP’s comprehensive desegregation plan.² The Minneapolis choice magnet option has also continued, but under the federal school choice grant, which continues through the 2006–2007 school year. State funding to support transportation of students under *The Choice Is Yours* program continues to be available to the program.

MINNESOTA’S OPEN ENROLLMENT POLICY

Minnesota Statute 124D.03 allows all of Minnesota’s public school students the opportunity to apply to attend school outside of the school district in which they live. More than 30,000 Minnesota students enrolled in a nonresident district in 2002-03. Students must apply to the school district of their choice by January 15 for the following fall to receive the best chance of being admitted. Families generally provide their own transportation. Open enrollment students do not pay tuition.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS: SUBURBAN CHOICE SCHOOLS

Under the interdistrict transfer (“suburban choice”) portion of *The Choice Is Yours* program, Minneapolis residents who qualify for free or reduced price lunch are eligible to receive priority placement in participating K-12 schools in eight suburban school districts when they apply by the January 15 deadline for open enrollment. Beginning with the 2001-02 school year a minimum of 500 priority placement slots each year — for an estimated 2,000 slots over four years — were set aside among the eight suburban school districts for low-income students who live within the city of Minneapolis: Columbia Heights, Edina, Hopkins, Richfield, St. Louis Park, St. Anthony/New Brighton, Robbinsdale, and Wayzata. The cost of transportation to these suburban schools is covered by state desegregation transportation aid funding.

² A ninth WMEP school district, Eden Prairie, is not a formal partner in the federal school choice grant, but began accepting students to *The Choice Is Yours* program during the 2005–2006 school year under WMEP’s comprehensive desegregation plan.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS: MINNEAPOLIS CHOICE MAGNET SCHOOLS

Minneapolis residents who qualify for free or reduced price lunch are also eligible to receive priority placement in participating K-8 magnet schools within the Minneapolis Public School District under the intradistrict transfer (“Minneapolis choice”) portion of *The Choice Is Yours* program. The Minneapolis Public Schools provides transportation to city schools according to school district policies on attendance zones and walking limits. A set percentage of available spaces in kindergarten and in grades 1-5 are made available for eligible students at the Minneapolis choice magnet schools.

MINNESOTA’S VOLUNTARY PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE (MN-VPSC) PROGRAM

In 2003, Minnesota received a 5-year federal grant through the Voluntary Public School Choice (VPSC) program. The federally funded MN-VPSC program began in the spring of 2003 and continued through the 2006-2007 school year. The purpose of the MN-VPSC program is to further enhance educational opportunities for urban and suburban families in the Minneapolis area by expanding upon the existing *The Choice Is Yours* program.

Specifically, the MN-VPSC program activities are designed to achieve two broad goals:

- to support parents in choosing the best school for their child and
- to support student success in school.

Program activities include enhanced or expanded outreach, transportation, and academic tutoring and support, and expanded school choice options under *The Choice Is Yours* program. The program goals, objectives, and key activities are summarized on the next page.

**MINNESOTA VOLUNTARY PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE (MN-VPSC) PROGRAM:
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIVITIES**

GOAL 1: Support Parents in Choosing The Best School for Their Child

OBJECTIVE 1.1: To provide all Minneapolis-area parents with information on *all* of their school choices.

KEY ACTIVITY: Enhance outreach to all Minneapolis-area urban and suburban families

OBJECTIVE 1.2: To expand school choice options for suburban students.

KEY ACTIVITY: Enhance opportunities for suburban students to attend school in Minneapolis

OBJECTIVE 1.3: To reduce barriers to school choice through additional transportation services.

KEY ACTIVITY: Enhance student transportation services within Minneapolis and from suburbs to Minneapolis

OBJECTIVE 1.4: To reduce barriers to school choice through parent centers.

KEY ACTIVITY: Provide information and support to Minneapolis parents during the school choice and enrollment process.

GOAL 2: Support Student Success In School

OBJECTIVE 2.1: To provide greater academic support to students who change schools to ensure academic success.

Key Activity: Enhance academic support for Minneapolis and suburban students

Four organizations are working together on the MN-VPSC program: the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the Minneapolis Parent Information Centers, Inc.³, the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), and the eight suburban districts from the West Metro Education Program (WMEP) that participate in *The Choice Is Yours* program. A summary of the key activities for which each project partner is responsible and the sources of funding that support *The Choice Is Yours* program as enhanced under the federal grant are noted below.

³ During the 2004-2005 school year, the Minneapolis Parent Information Centers formed a nonprofit organization and received 501(c)(3) status. They continue to work cooperatively with the Minneapolis NAACP, one of the original project partners under the federal grant, but are independent from that organization.

MINNESOTA VOLUNTARY PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE (MN-VPSC) PROGRAM: KEY ACTIVITIES AND FUNDING SOURCES BY PROJECT PARTNER			
	OUTREACH	TRANSPORTATION	ACADEMIC SUPPORT
MN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	Federal choice grant	State desegregation transportation funds	
MINNEAPOLIS PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS, INC.	Federal choice grant		Federal choice grant
WEST METRO EDUCATION PROGRAM		State desegregation transportation funds	Federal choice grant
MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Federal choice grant	Federal choice grant	Federal choice grant

OTHER SCHOOL CHOICES IN MINNEAPOLIS

Minneapolis residents have a variety of school choice options in addition to those available under the state’s open enrollment program. Community or neighborhood schools are elementary schools in the city with designated attendance areas that draw most of their students from the community surrounding the school. Magnet schools are another option within the Minneapolis school district, which draw from a larger attendance area. Magnet schools may be organized around a particular philosophy of teaching (such as Montessori or Open schools) or infuse a unifying theme (such as the arts, technology, or language) in all subject areas across the curriculum. Spanish dual immersion schools offer students the opportunity to learn Spanish or English as their second language. At the high school level, Minneapolis also offers “small learning communities” to provide secondary students with the opportunity to learn in smaller groups and focus on particular themes — such as the arts, technology, liberal arts, business, automotives, language, and engineering. The district also sponsors charter schools.

In recent years, enrollment in Minneapolis Public Schools has continued to decline as a significant number of students take advantage of other school choices, including private schools, charter schools, open enrollment, and *The Choice Is Yours* program.

GUIDING EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The purpose of the MN-VPSC evaluation was to gather data to document the extent to which the overall purpose and goals of the MN-VPSC program were achieved. The evaluation was authorized by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and was designed to examine the nature, effectiveness, and impact of key activities funded by the MN-VPSC federal grant.

The MN-VPSC evaluation was organized around the two program goals and five objectives. As such, it was designed to answer five key questions:

1. To what extent did the enhanced outreach ensure that all parents were aware of their school choices? (Goal 1, Objective 1.1)
2. To what extent did the program expand school choice options under *The Choice Is Yours* program? (Goal 1, Objective 1.2)
3. To what extent did the enhanced transportation reduce barriers to school choice? (Goal 1, Objective 1.3)
4. To what extent did the parent centers reduce barriers to school choice? (Goal 1, Objective 1.4)
5. To what extent did the enhanced academic support options promote school success for students who changed schools? (Goal 2, Objective 2.1)

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

ORGANIZATION

This report summarizes trends in key findings from the comprehensive evaluation of the MN-VPSC program. The MN-VPSC program has been in place for seven years. It began in 2001-2002 and was expanded and enhanced through a five-year federal school choice grant that began in the spring of 2003. Annual comprehensive evaluations have been conducted since the program's third year and include additional data collected during a one-year grant extension that concluded in 2007-2008 (see Evaluation Design below). As in previous years, the report is organized around the five guiding evaluation questions that relate to outreach, expanded school choice, reducing barriers to choice, and academic support and achievement.

In reading this report, it is important for the reader to understand that data collection varied by year. Consequently, what is presented here is a comparison of the baseline data with the final data collection. As such, throughout this report, the tables and figures represent the final status of the program and are accompanied by narrative describing any notable changes over time. (For further information on the program's status in the final year, including detailed data tables, the reader is directed to the evaluation report prepared during the final year of the grant. The "Minnesota Voluntary Public School Choice 2006-2007 Evaluation Report" is available online from the Minnesota Department of Education). This report also includes findings from data collected in the 2007-2008 grant extension year. These data include interviews with current and former student participants and an additional year of student achievement data to examine trends over four consecutive years.

RESPONDENT GROUPS

The MN-VPSC evaluation was designed to gather data from program participants and non-participants, including parents, at participating and non-participating schools. As such, it includes a “main sample” that includes the following groups:

- “Suburban choice participants” are interdistrict transfer students who enrolled in participating suburban schools under *The Choice Is Yours* program.
- “Minneapolis choice participants” are intradistrict transfer students who enrolled in participating Minneapolis magnet schools.
- “Eligible, non-participants” are students who were eligible to participate in *The Choice Is Yours* program but chose neither the suburban choice nor the Minneapolis choice schools. Instead, these students chose to remain in a Minneapolis public school.

NOMENCLATURE

To simplify the reporting of findings, the following nomenclature is used throughout this report:

- “Many” refers to at least 70% of respondents while “most” refers to at least 80% of respondents. Readers interested in the actual percentage may refer to the data tables in Appendix A as referenced in the text.
- All discussions of differences between program participants and eligible, non-participants represent statistically significant differences. Statistically significant differences in the data tables are marked with an * to represent statistical significance of at least $p \leq .05$.
- Any significant changes from one year to the next are noted as such in the text.

EVALUATION DESIGN

In 2003, one year after the state received the federal grant to enhance programming around *The Choice Is Yours* program, a comprehensive evaluation of the program was initiated. This report summarizes key findings from the evaluations conducted during the four years remaining in the grant and the fifth extension year in which a scaled back evaluation was conducted (see Table 1 on next page). Thus, this report includes key findings from the four-year comprehensive evaluation from 2003-2004 through the final year of the grant in 2006-2007 and limited data from the 2007-2008 extension year. The full report will be available on the school choice portion of the MDE website under *The Choice Is Yours*.

This summary report includes data from the following sources:

- interviews with parents of students participating and not participating in *The Choice Is Yours* program,
- interviews with current and former students participating in *The Choice Is Yours* program,
- student surveys,
- staff surveys,
- student achievement data, and
- program enrollment records.

The only new data collected during the 2007-2008 extension year was student achievement data, updated program enrollment data, and interviews with current and former participating students.

TABLE 1. PROJECT AND EVALUATION TIMELINES

PROJECT TIMELINES	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
<i>THE CHOICE IS YOURS PROGRAM (TCIY)</i>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
ENHANCED TCIY (FEDERAL MN-VPSC)	--	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6 (extension)
EVALUATION COMPONENTS AND TIMELINES							
Teacher Online Survey	School climate & satisfaction			X		X	
Student Paper Survey	School climate & satisfaction			X		X	
Student Telephone Interviews	Social & academic experiences of current and former students						X
Parent Telephone Interviews	School climate, awareness, satisfaction, & parent involvement		X	X	X	X	
Student Achievement	Comparison of annual growth for participants & non-participants		X	X	X	X	X
Student Enrollment	Enrollment in TCIY schools		X	X	X	X	X

OUTREACH

1. TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE ENHANCED OUTREACH ENSURE THAT ALL PARENTS WERE AWARE OF THEIR SCHOOL CHOICES? (GOAL 1, OBJECTIVE 1.1)

NATURE OF ACTIVITIES — OUTREACH

The purpose of the outreach activities under the MN-VPSC program was to ensure that the approximately 100,000 urban and suburban families living in the Minneapolis area were aware of all their school choices. A variety of outreach activities were implemented by the program partners during the grant. The following list is representative of the types of outreach activities in place at the end of the grant.

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. The Minnesota Department of Education led a comprehensive outreach effort to inform all parents in the Minneapolis area of all available school choice options. The wide-ranging outreach efforts included:

- **TABLE DISPLAY.** To tap into the effectiveness of “word of mouth” with regard to outreach, a table display was created, which allowed department staff and project partners to engage in direct marketing at strategic locations in south Minneapolis. The display supported distribution of information packets about *The Choice Is Yours* program to families in Latino and Somali shopping malls, and park and recreation centers. The table display will continue to be used at various tabling events, school fairs, and job fairs.
- **SCHOOL CHOICE VIDEO IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES.** At the beginning of the project, the department created a school choice video on DVD in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali that continued to be distributed to community organizations, faith communities, home- and center-based daycare providers, and small businesses in immigrant communities and communities of color throughout the project.
- **“SCHOOL CHOICE” MEDIA CAMPAIGN.** A variety of newspaper, television, billboard, and radio advertisements and public service announcements, many of which targeted high-poverty areas and non-English-speaking populations, were again developed and fielded. Paid advertising slots were purchased and public service announcements ran on radio stations with high listenership among communities of color. Free and paid play time of the school choice video occurred on local cable channels and thirty-second spots at the Mall of America. Light rail cars were also wrapped with the inscription “*The Choice Is Yours*”.
- **SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA WEBSITE.** The department continued to update and maintain an online database of school data to inform parents’ school choices, including demographic characteristics of the student population, student achievement data, staff characteristics, school funding, and adequate yearly progress status.
- **COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS.** A variety of collaborative marketing/outreach efforts to inform Minneapolis-area families about school choices were again coordinated by the department. Participation included, to varying degrees, representatives of Minneapolis Public

Schools, West Metro Education Program, charter schools, and the Minneapolis Parent Information Centers, Inc.

- SCHOOL CHOICE TELEPHONE INFORMATION LINE. A local and toll-free telephone number for families to call with questions about school choices continued to be made available by the department. Telephone interpreters were provided for multiple languages.
- PARTNERSHIP WITH HEAD START. The department continued to share information about options for kindergarten with Head Start families.
- PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS. Partnerships between the department and organizations serving immigrant communities to support dissemination of the information and resources listed above were expanded each year.

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Several outreach efforts were conducted by the Minneapolis Public Schools in an effort to inform families in Minneapolis and the surrounding suburban school districts of school choices available within the Minneapolis Public School district:

- ANNUAL SCHOOL CHOICE FAIRS. Throughout the project, the district offered prospective parents information about all Minneapolis Public Schools and the opportunity to meet with staff and administrators to discuss various educational programs available in the district through three separate annual school choice fairs held on different dates and locations.
- SEARCHABLE SCHOOL CHOICE DATABASE. The Minneapolis Public Schools continued to host a school choice website (School Choice Center), which was redesigned early in the project, to allow parents of prospective students to search for and compare schools by features important to them (e.g., arts, achievement data) within the district. The database includes charter schools in Minneapolis. An average of more than 200,000 visits are made to this website during each school choice season; typically late fall through late winter.
- DIRECT MAILINGS. Minneapolis continued outreach to parents of prospective students in Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs, and parents of students currently enrolled in Minneapolis Public Schools. The direct mailing included charter school students that were graduating from the highest grade offered at their current school.
- PARENT INFORMATION MEETINGS. Small group meetings continued to provide information to parents of prospective K–8 students in Minneapolis and surrounding suburbs, including parents of children attending charter schools and current Minneapolis Public School parents, were held again this year. Meetings were held at Head Start-PICA locations, daycares, churches, community agencies, YMCAs, charter schools, and Minneapolis Public Schools.
- COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS. Minneapolis Public Schools continued to participate in various collaborative marketing/outreach efforts at various locations around the city.
- MINNEAPOLIS STUDENT PLACEMENT CENTER AND OFF-SITE ASSISTANCE. Minneapolis Public Schools continued to operate a parent information/student placement center in north and south Minneapolis. Staff from the center coordinated the various marketing campaigns and events to inform area families of the school choices available in Minneapolis.

MINNEAPOLIS PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS, INC. (NORTH AND SOUTH). The Minneapolis Parent Information Centers (MPIC) have progressively continued to build relationships and partner with

parents and other primary caregivers of Minneapolis to provide nonbiased, culturally sensitive information and resources that will enhance their ability to make informed educational choices for their children. Although MPIC has been distinguished from the Minneapolis NAACP as its own 501(c)(3), both organizations continue to work cooperatively as needed.

- PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS provided information to families on all available school choice options in Minneapolis and the suburban school districts participating in *The Choice Is Yours* program via telephone, literature distribution, parent informational meetings, support groups, and walk-in appointments. Each of the centers also assisted interested parents in accessing Web-based data on schools and districts in their computer labs. The north PIC also began hosting biquarterly parent involvement/informational sessions to support and assist parents in becoming better equipped as advocates for their children, and provided a support group for parenting grandparents.
- COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS. Throughout the project, the MPIC participated in several community events as a means of outreach to families, which were inclusive of but not limited to: Minneapolis School Choice Fair, Juneteenth Parade, Sabathani Days, Minneapolis Urban League’s Family Day, and PICA Kindergarten Round-up, Jehovah Jireh Church College and Career Day, Up and Rising Festival, North Side Information Fair, and the Academy for Accelerated Learning Kwanzaa celebration. MPIC also distributed informational packets to suburban districts, and collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Education to provide “Choice” informational meetings to Somali families at the Brian Coyle Center. MPIC continued to distribute brochures and calendars of events to local churches, businesses, and social service agencies on a quarterly basis, and provided informational sessions for several organizations. As part of a community “blitz” MPIC placed ads in “One Nation News” (online and print) and The Spokesman Recorder, and placed infomercials on KMOJ radio.
- COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS. MPIC continued to develop relationships with suburban school districts, churches, and other community agencies. The collaboration between MPIC and NdCAD (Network for the Development of Children of African Descent) to provide after-school tutoring and summer “Lunch and Learn” continues to be a very successful relationship for the benefit of families. MPIC also developed a collaborative relationship with Lutheran Social Services (Grand Families Connection” to provide the “Generations” parenting grandparents support group. MPIC also sponsored the Men Cook King of the North BBQ contest in collaboration with Minneapolis Public Schools and North Point (Gateway Project).

WEST METRO EDUCATION PROGRAM. Outreach activities in each of the eight⁴ suburban WMEP districts continued to include filling requests for information about their schools, talking with interested families, and conducting school tours for prospective students. As in previous years, the districts also attended community outreach events sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Education.

⁴ A ninth WMEP district, Eden Prairie, is not a partner in the federal school choice grant, but participates in *The Choice Is Yours* program under WMEP’s comprehensive desegregation plan.

KEY FINDINGS — OUTREACH⁵

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that outreach efforts had indeed raised parents' awareness of school choices and provided insight into how parents make these choices to inform future outreach. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

ARE ALL PARENTS AWARE OF THE MANY SCHOOL CHOICES?

- FINDING 24. Throughout the project, suburban choice parents continued to be twice as likely as parents of choice magnet participants and eligible, non-participating families to know of open enrollment options, including *The Choice Is Yours* program.
- FINDING 25. A significant number (more than 20%) of eligible families— participants and non-participants alike — continued to view home schooling and alternative, charter, and private schools as viable school choice options.
- FINDING 26. Parents of suburban choice students tend to be more aware of some school choice options, particularly Open Enrollment and *The Choice Is Yours*. Aside from those two options, midway through the project parental awareness was becoming more comparable across the three groups. In the final year, however, there were a number of changes in parents' awareness across the three parent groups for schooling alternatives, among them that parents of eligible, non-participants fell somewhat behind the other two parent groups in awareness of charter and private school options.

HOW DO PARENTS FIND OUT ABOUT THEIR SCHOOL CHOICES?

- FINDING 27. The primary source of information on school choices for all eligible families continues to be the parent's social network. Family, friends, neighbors, and representatives from schools and other community organizations were key sources of information. Few families learned about school choices from the major media, including newspapers, television, billboards, and radio.
- FINDING 28. Together, outreach that targeted parents' social networks and outreach through major media outlets reached 9 out of 10 eligible parents.

HOW DO PARENTS CHOOSE A SCHOOL?

- FINDING 29. The actual decision to enroll their child in a particular school continues to be most influenced by the parents' social network. Recommendations from family, friends, or neighbors; visits to or contact with the new school; and recommendations from a school attended in the past were the most influential (see Figure 1).
- FINDING 30. Most parents — participants and non-participants alike — again said they look for schools with a reputation for providing a high-quality education in a safe and disciplined school environment. For the most part, many parents are also looking

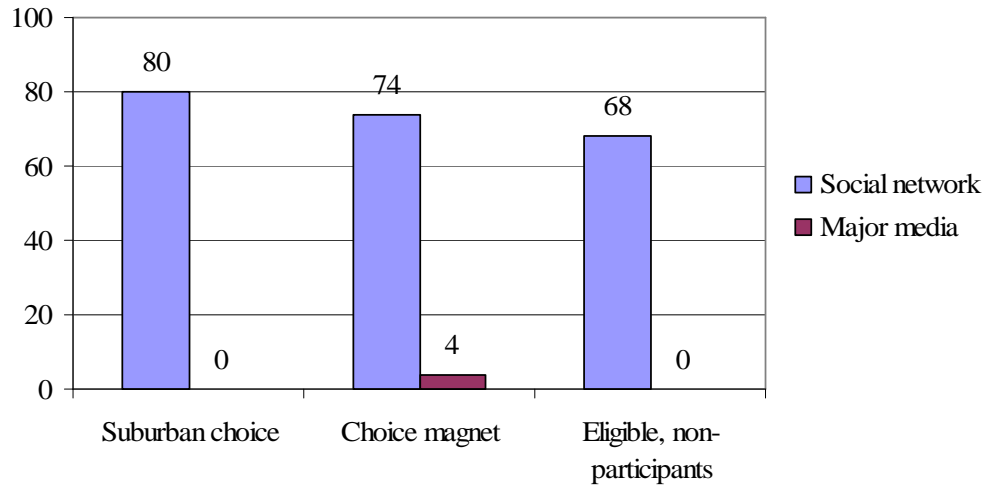
⁵ “Many” generally refers to at least 70% of respondents; “most” refers to at least 80% of respondents.

for a school that can provide the special academic and/or language support their child may need.

FINDING 31. Over half of all parents said they would like a school that will educate their child about the history, traditions, and values of their ethnic or cultural group (see Figure 2); and one that has a diverse student body and teaching staff (see Figure 3). This year parents of choice magnet students were less likely to rate as very important a school that will educate their child about the history, traditions, and values of their ethnic or cultural group.

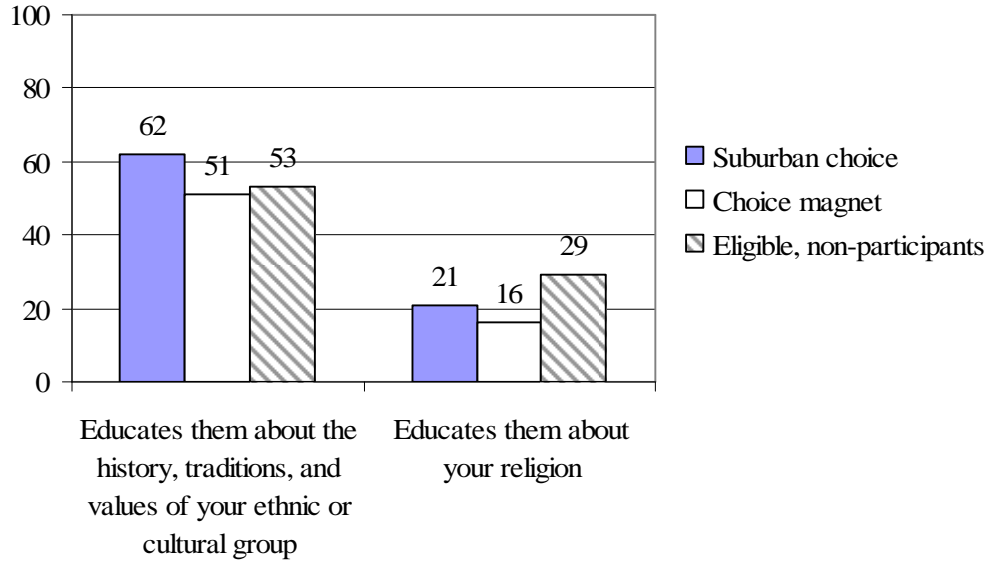
FINDING 32. Choosing a school that is close to home continues to be important to parents of non-participants, though less so this year and about the same as parents of choice magnet students (see Figure 4). This year parents in all groups were slightly less likely than last year to say finding a school that will educate their child about his/her religion was very important in their choice of school. Like last year, the importance of religious education was about the same across all parent groups (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS SAYING “SOCIAL NETWORK” OR “MAJOR MEDIA” OUTREACH EFFORTS WERE MOST INFLUENTIAL IN THEIR SCHOOL CHOICE DECISION.



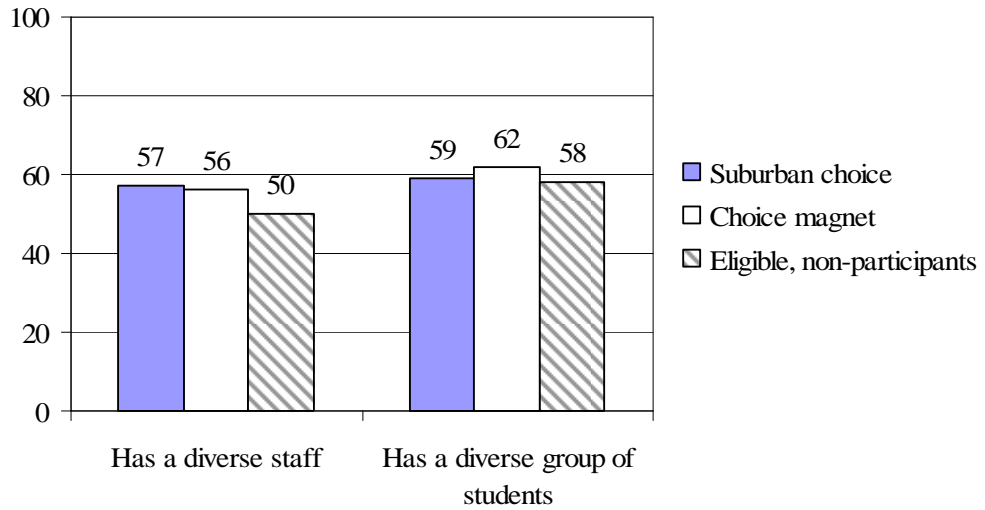
Source: 2007 TCIY Parent Interview.

FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO SAY FINDING A SCHOOL THAT WILL EDUCATE THEIR CHILD ABOUT THEIR OWN CULTURE AND RELIGION IS “VERY IMPORTANT” WHEN CHOOSING A SCHOOL.



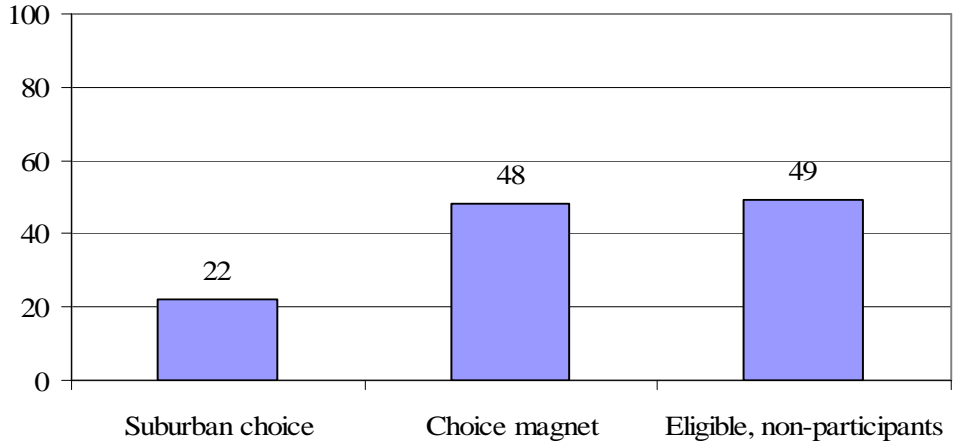
Source: 2007 TCIY Parent Interview.

FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO SAY FINDING A SCHOOL THAT HAS A DIVERSE STAFF AND STUDENT BODY IS “VERY IMPORTANT” WHEN CHOOSING A SCHOOL.



Source: 2007 TCIY Parent Interview.

FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO SAY FINDING A SCHOOL CLOSE TO HOME IS “VERY IMPORTANT” WHEN CHOOSING A SCHOOL.



Source: 2007 TCIY Parent Interview.

EXPANDED SCHOOL CHOICE

2. TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE PROGRAM EXPAND SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS UNDER *THE CHOICE IS YOURS* PROGRAM? (GOAL 1, OBJECTIVE 1.2)

NATURE OF ACTIVITIES – SCHOOL CHOICE

In addition to engaging in intentional outreach activities the MN-VPSC program partners also offered expanded school choice opportunities for urban and suburban students. A variety of expanded school choice options were implemented by the partners during the grant. The following list is representative of the types of expanded opportunities in place at the end of the grant.

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Under the federally funded MN-VPSC program, Minneapolis Public Schools was able to expand opportunities for both urban and suburban students.

- **SPANISH IMMERSION SCHOOL.** Midway through the project, a Spanish Immersion Magnet School option was initiated at the Windom school. Initially, students could enroll in Kindergarten and first grade bilingual classrooms. By the end of the project this option was expanded to include Kindergarten through fourth grade. Key project activities to support this expansion included staff development, publicity, and purchase of supplies.
- **TRANSFERS TO HIGHER PERFORMING SCHOOLS.** Throughout the project, Minneapolis students attending schools that had not made adequate yearly progress were given the option to transfer to a higher performing school in the district. Grant funding paid for expanded transportation to allow these students to select higher performing schools outside their regular transportation zones.
- **INTRADISTRICT TRANSFERS TO CHOICE MAGNET SCHOOLS.** The MN-VPSC program also provided continued funding to support the intradistrict (Minneapolis choice magnet) transfer portion of *The Choice Is Yours* program. Minneapolis residents who were eligible for free or reduced price lunches and who lived in the targeted attendance areas (e.g., 90% or more students of color and/or 90% or more students eligible for free or reduced price lunches), were eligible to attend a Minneapolis choice magnet school under *The Choice Is Yours*.
- **EXPANDED FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN.** Minneapolis increased opportunities for full-day kindergarten at high-performing schools to attract families to these schools. Six higher performer schools received funding to support six additional full-day kindergarten sessions. Often students that choose to go to a higher performing school may have to choose the option to give up their full-day kindergarten option as a number of the schools that are higher performing only can afford half-day kindergarten. Research shows that full-day kindergarten is one way to eliminate the achievement gap.
- **NEW INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (IB) PROGRAMS.** Hall Elementary, Whittier Elementary, and Franklin Middle schools in Minneapolis received staff development, support for publicity and recruitment, and supplies to support these schools in their transition to IB programs. The schools provide an early-years and middle-years IB option to families and are also open for suburban to urban transfers.

- CHARTER SCHOOLS. *The Choice Is Yours* program has been expanded to include charter school options. Beginning in the fall of 2005, eight new charter schools opened in Minneapolis.

WEST METRO EDUCATION PROGRAM. The federal grant also provided continued funding for the interdistrict (suburban choice) transfer option under *The Choice Is Yours* program.

- INTERDISTRICT TRANSFERS TO SUBURBAN SCHOOLS. Students living in Minneapolis who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch were eligible to attend selected schools in the eight⁶ suburban districts participating in *The Choice Is Yours* interdistrict transfer program.
- EXPANSION OPTIONS FOR INTERDISTRICT TRANSFERS TO SUBURBAN SCHOOLS. The suburban choice option expanded to include schools in the Eden Prairie school district under the WMEP desegregation plan in 2005–2006. The district continues to enroll more students each year.

KEY FINDINGS — EXPANDED CHOICE⁷

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that efforts to expand school choice options were successful. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

HOW MANY STUDENTS ENROLL IN THE CHOICE PROGRAMS?

FINDING 33. Total enrollment in suburban choice schools has increased each year from the program’s inception in 2001-2001 (year 1) with 472 students, to 720 students in year 2 (53% increase), 1,030 students in year 3 (43% increase), 1,435 in year 4 (39% increase), 1,567 in year 5 (9% increase), 1,867 in year 6 (19% increase), and 1,997 in year 7 (7% increase). This represents a three fold increase over seven years to reach the cap of 2,000 placed on the program by the initial legislation (see Table A1 in Appendix).

FINDING 34. Students were also able to enroll in a Minneapolis choice magnet school under *The Choice Is Yours* program. Enrollment in the choice magnet option varied over time depending on the number of schools eligible to receive students (see Background). Over the course of the project students eligible to enroll in these schools under *The Choice Is Yours* were more likely to qualify and be enrolled under other higher priority placements.

WHO ENROLLS IN THE SUBURBAN CHOICE SCHOOLS?

FINDING 35. Since the suburban choice program began, more African American students were choosing open enrollment transfers out of Minneapolis into suburban schools (see Table A2 in Appendix). The suburban choice program continues to attract relatively few Native American, Hmong, and Hispanic students. Enrollment levels by ethnic group have remained stable (see Table A3 in Appendix).

⁶ Includes a ninth district, Eden Prairie, which is not a partner in the federal grant but included in *The Choice Is Yours* program under WMEP’s comprehensive desegregation plan.

⁷ “Many” generally refers to at least 70% of respondents; “most” refers to at least 80% of respondents.

FINDING 36. Less than half (40%) of all students ever enrolled in the suburban choice program were enrolled in a Minneapolis public school the previous year (see Table A4 in Appendix).

FINDING 37. Just over half (50%) of all students ever enrolled in the suburban choice program live in 2 of the 22 zip codes served by *The Choice Is Yours* program. These zip codes represent the near-north and north Minneapolis neighborhoods (excluding northeast) where the predominant ethnic group is African American (see Table A5 in Appendix).

WHO ENROLLS IN THE CHOICE MAGNET SCHOOLS?

FINDING 38. Of the eligible students who enrolled in the Minneapolis choice magnet schools, Hispanic students were less likely to enroll.

HOW SATISFIED ARE PARENTS WITH THEIR SCHOOL CHOICE?

FINDING 39. During the program's first 7 years, each year about two-thirds of students enrolled in the suburban choice program returned the following year (see Table A1 in Appendix).

FINDING 40. Throughout the project, parents of suburban choice — and to a lesser extent, parents of choice magnet participants — were more satisfied with their school choice and more likely to choose the same school again and recommend it to others than parents of eligible, non-participants.

FINDING 41. Almost all (96% in the final year) suburban choice parents would recommend the program to others. Each year, two-thirds of these parents had already done so.

REDUCING BARRIERS TO SCHOOL CHOICE THROUGH TRANSPORTATION

3. TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE ENHANCED <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> REDUCE BARRIERS TO SCHOOL CHOICE? (GOAL 1, OBJECTIVE 1.3)

NATURE OF ACTIVITIES — TRANSPORTATION

The purpose of the transportation activities under the MN-VPSC program was to provide expanded transportation services within Minneapolis and, if possible, from the suburbs to Minneapolis to reduce barriers to choosing a Minneapolis public school. A variety of expanded transportation options were implemented by the partners during the grant. The following list is representative of the types of expanded transportation in place at the end of the grant.

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Minneapolis continued to provide expanded transportation options to support school choice for Minneapolis residents.

- **TRANSFERS TO HIGHER PERFORMING SCHOOLS.** Students who previously attended schools identified as not making adequate yearly progress could choose to attend higher performing schools outside their regular transportation zones and receive free transportation.
- **HIGH SCHOOL SHADOWING.** The district provides transportation to allow eighth-grade students to “shadow” a high school student who is already attending a program they are interested in attending. Students attend classes and talk with teachers and students to get an up-close look at nearly 30 small learning communities offered by Minneapolis Public Schools.

WEST METRO EDUCATION PROGRAM. Under the federal grant, eight⁸ suburban districts continued to provide transportation for suburban choice students to encourage full participation in all their schools had to offer.

- **INTERDISTRICT TRANSFERS TO SUBURBAN SCHOOLS.** Transportation of Minneapolis students to suburban schools under *The Choice Is Yours* suburban choice option was provided through the Wide Area Transportation System (WATS). The cost of this transportation was covered in its entirety by state desegregation transportation funding and not funding from the MN-VPSC program.
- **SUPPLEMENTAL TRANSPORTATION.** Participating WMEP districts continued to provide supplemental transportation to after school, summer school, tutoring, and orientation programs for Minneapolis students attending its suburban schools under *The Choice Is Yours* program. WMEP districts also provided transportation to ensure that parents of suburban choice students could attend school conferences and other family events.

⁸ Transportation to the ninth district, Eden Prairie, is also covered by state desegregation funding.

KEY FINDINGS - TRANSPORTATION⁹

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that efforts to enhance transportation options were successful. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

HOW MANY STUDENTS RECEIVE TRANSPORTATION?

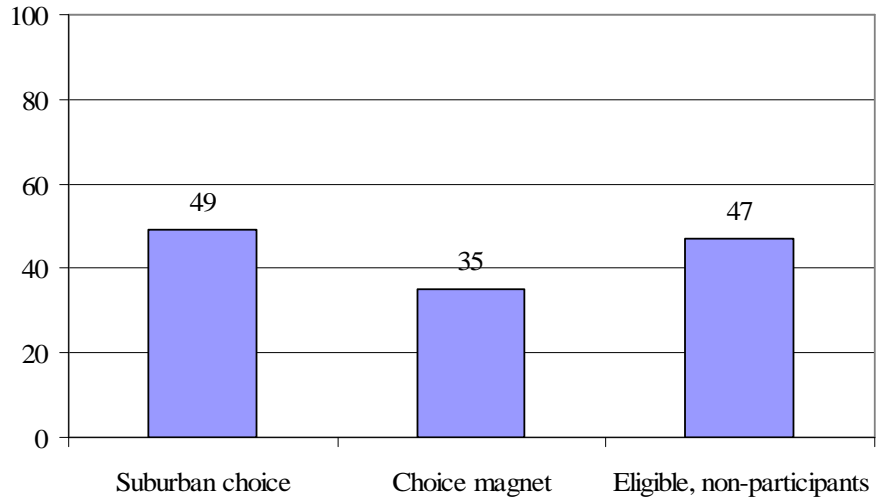
- FINDING 42. In Minneapolis, in the final year total of 224 students were transported to higher performing schools in the district. Funding from the federal grant supported this expanded transportation.
- FINDING 43. In the final year, almost all students who participated in the interdistrict portion of *The Choice Is Yours* rode a bus to their suburban choice school (91%) compared to 71% of students attending choice magnet schools in Minneapolis and 65% of eligible non-participants. Only a few suburban choice students were transported to school by their parents (3%), drove themselves to school (3%) or took a city bus (1%). By the end of the project, transportation to the suburban choice schools was being coordinated by the receiving districts rather than by a central scheduling office.

HOW IMPORTANT IS TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOL CHOICE?

- FINDING 44. The availability of free transportation continued to be important to suburban choice parents over the course of the project. In the end, half of suburban choice parents might choose another school if free transportation to their child's current suburban school is not available. In other words, half of suburban choice parents would "definitely" choose the same school again, even if free transportation is not provided (see Figure 5).
- FINDING 45. The availability of free transportation also continued to be important to parents of eligible, non-participant students. In the final year, about 1 in 3 parents of choice magnet students said the same (see Figure 5).

⁹ "Many" generally refers to at least 70% of respondents; "most" refers to at least 80% of respondents.

FIGURE 5: PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO WOULD DEFINITELY CHOOSE THE SAME SCHOOL IF FREE TRANSPORTATION WAS *NOT* AVAILABLE.



Source: 2007 TCYI Parent Interview.

FINDING 46. Of the many parents who would prefer to choose a school “close to home” — choice magnet students and eligible, non-participants — continued to want to limit the bus ride to school to no more than 30 minutes.

REDUCING BARRIERS TO SCHOOL CHOICE THROUGH PARENT CENTERS

<p>4. TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE <u>PARENT CENTERS</u> REDUCE BARRIERS TO SCHOOL CHOICE? (GOAL 1, OBJECTIVE 1.4)</p>

NATURE OF ACTIVITIES – PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS

The purpose of the MN-VPSC program with regard to the parent centers was to provide information and support to all Minneapolis parents during the school choice and enrollment process. A variety of information and support was provided by the partners during the grant. The following list is representative of the types of information and support in place at the end of the grant.

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Minneapolis Public Schools has two offices called Student Placement Services, one in the north area of the city and the other in the south area of the city. Both offices service PreK-12 students and families.

The primary function of Minneapolis Student Placement Services (SPS) is to place PreK-12 students into schools that families choose as quickly and efficiently as possible. As noted under the section on outreach, another goal of SPS is to effectively market the Minneapolis Public Schools as schools of choice. SPS assists parents in examining their school choices and completing their School Request Card over the telephone and through walk-in appointments. Information on the school choices available to Minneapolis residents is available at the center or by mail.

MINNEAPOLIS PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS, INC. (MPIC) As noted earlier under the Outreach section, the MPICS has maintained the two sites established by the Minneapolis branch of the NAACP; one on the north side of Minneapolis and the other on the south side. Both sites are still housed in buildings with ties to the African American community: the former Urban League building in North Minneapolis and the Sabathani Community Center in South Minneapolis. During the 2005-2006 school year, the MPIC continued to distinguished itself from the Minneapolis NAACP as a free-standing nonprofit organization.

Each of the MPIC sites continues to provide information to families on all available school choice options in Minneapolis and the suburban school districts participating in *The Choice Is Yours* program over the telephone and through walk-in appointments at hours that are convenient for families. The MPIC also continues to maintain its school choice website, which provides objective and subjective information to assist parents in accessing information to inform their school choice. MPIC representatives are very active in the community, attending a variety of events to talk directly to parents and partnering with community organizations to spread the word about services available through the MPIC.

The MPIC actively enrolled students into the suburban choice program by assisting parents in completing the school application forms. Parents interested in enrolling their child in a Minneapolis Public School were also assisted through MPIC. In addition to assisting many parents through the school choice process, staff continued to advocate for parents/students and work schools to resolve school-related questions and issues that arise before and after enrolling in a school.

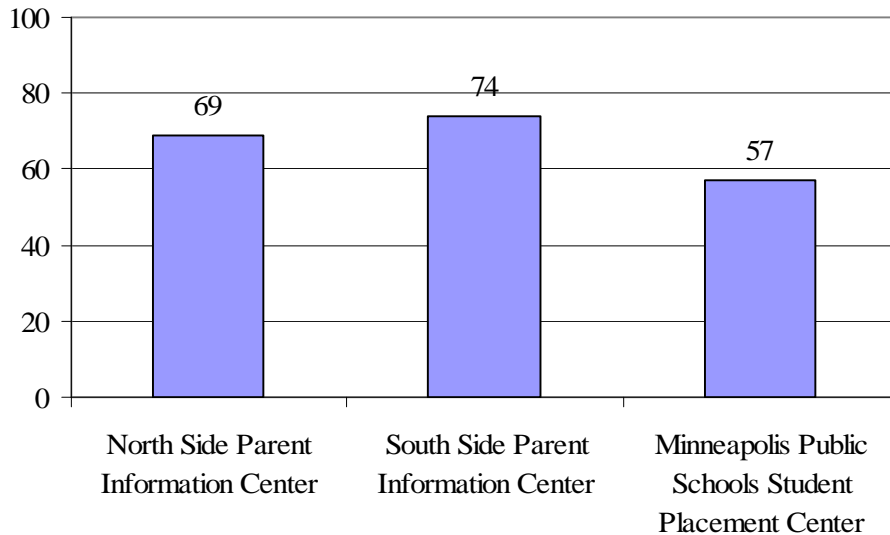
KEY FINDINGS – PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS¹⁰

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that efforts to enhance information and support through parent information centers was successful for parents that utilized the centers. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS TO SCHOOL CHOICE?

- FINDING 24. Throughout the project, relatively few parents reported visiting or talking to someone at one of the parent information centers. Fewer parents were utilizing the centers in the final year (on average about 1 in 4 parents). Overall, parents rated the Minneapolis Parent Information Centers, Inc. more helpful than the Minneapolis Public Schools’ Student Placement Center (see Figure 6).
- FINDING 25. In the lottery conducted by the Minneapolis Public Schools Student Placement Services during the final year, almost all of the entering kindergarten and most of the first through eighth graders and high school students received their first or second choice.
- FINDING 26. During the final year, the Minneapolis Parent Information Centers, Inc. enrolled 17% of the new students enrolling in the suburban choice schools as compared to 6% in year 5, 12% in year 4 and 28% in year 3.

FIGURE 6. PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO UTILIZED PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS AND RATED THEM AS “VERY HELPFUL.”



Source: 2007 TCIY Parent Interview.

¹⁰ “Many” generally refers to at least 70% of respondents; “most” refers to at least 80% of respondents.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

5. TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE ENHANCED <u>ACADEMIC SUPPORT</u> OPTIONS PROMOTE SCHOOL SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS WHO CHANGED SCHOOLS? (GOAL 2, OBJECTIVE 2.1)

NATURE OF ACTIVITIES – ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The purpose of the MN-VPSC program with regard to academic support was to provide enhanced support to Minneapolis and suburban students that transfer to new schools. The eight suburban WMEP districts, the Minneapolis Public Schools, and the Minneapolis Parent Information Centers, Inc. all provided some form of enhanced academic, social, and emotional support for newly transferred students through services and supplies to support academic success and the schools' ongoing efforts to provide educational environments where all students can learn.

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Minneapolis provided funding for curriculum and instructional materials, professional development opportunities, all-day kindergarten, and transportation to academic support programs to ensure that students who transferred to higher performing schools from lower performing schools would have the resources they needed to achieve academic success.

- **CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS.** The Windom Spanish immersion program received supplies and instructional materials.
- **ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN.** The district continued to offer all-day kindergarten at high-performing schools and provided access to these programs to families in areas with traditionally lower performing schools.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.** Administrators and staff attended workshops on middle grades International Baccalaureate Program to support IB authorization.

MINNEAPOLIS PARENT INFORMATION CENTERS, INC. (MPIC) In addition to supporting parents through the school choice process, the MPIC continued to provide academic support to students and advocacy for families.

- **TUTORING PROGRAM.** The MPIC launched a pilot tutoring program, called “Lunch and Learn,” in partnership with the Minneapolis Public schools food program at its north Minneapolis site. The tutoring program’s primary focus was to enhance student understanding of math, reading, African American history and culture, and themselves utilizing a curriculum developed by Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu called SETCLAE (Self-Esteem Through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence). The students were able to explore African American History and culture through a positive lens. The long-range goal of the program is to promote a joy of learning (self-empowerment) and to encourage parental involvement in their child’s education. The program met 4 days a week (for 7 weeks) for 4 hours a day. Through the Lunch and Learn project students also participated in experiential learning opportunities via field trips to the Sumner Library, Fire Safety Fair, Twins games, and the

Minnesota Science Museum. The MPIC summer tutoring program was open to all choice students.

- **HOMEWORK HELP.** The MPIC offered Saturday morning Homework Help sessions. The program offered homework assistance for students in grades 2-6 and established mentoring relationships between high school students and elementary school students.
- **ADVOCACY.** Counselors from the MPIC continued to assist parents in identifying school and community resources to promote student success in school (e.g., referrals to test their child's language or developmental skills), accompany parents to meetings with school officials to discuss school-related issues, and give presentations at schools on issues of diversity and equity.

WEST METRO EDUCATION PROGRAM. The eight participating suburban districts each provided some form of academic, social, or emotional support to students transferring into their districts through the suburban choice component of *The Choice Is Yours* program.

- **STUDENT SUPPORT SPECIALISTS.** Several suburban choice schools continued to utilize the federal funding to support a liaison/outreach position to work with families in *The Choice Is Yours* program. The liaisons provided support to families and students around attendance, social issues, academic planning, and parent involvement. The WMEP collaborative itself continued to provide a full-time family liaison to work directly with families and schools participating in *The Choice Is Yours* program.
- **TUTORING AND/OR TEST PREPARATION.** Students at risk of failing the state's eighth-grade Basic Skills Test were again able to participate in test preparation classes at some of the schools.
- **DIRECT INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT.** Reading and mathematics specialists who worked directly with students in the classroom were another type of academic support made available at some of the schools through the grant funds.
- **NEW-STUDENT ORIENTATION PROGRAMS.** All of the suburban districts had some form of orientation program for new students. Some, however, continued to provide additional programming to welcome and orient participants in *The Choice Is Yours* program as they made the transition to their new suburban school.
- **EXTENDED LEARNING PROGRAMS.** Some suburban districts used funding from the MN-VPSC program to provide scholarships for students in *The Choice Is Yours* program to participate in summer school programming. Other districts offered extended day classes to support math, reading, and writing skills.
- **LANGUAGE SUPPORT PROGRAMS.** Some suburban districts provided additional support for students with limited English proficiency.
- **INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS.** Some suburban schools provided supplies, materials, and equipment to support improved academic performance, including computer and musical instrument loan programs, and books for recreational reading.

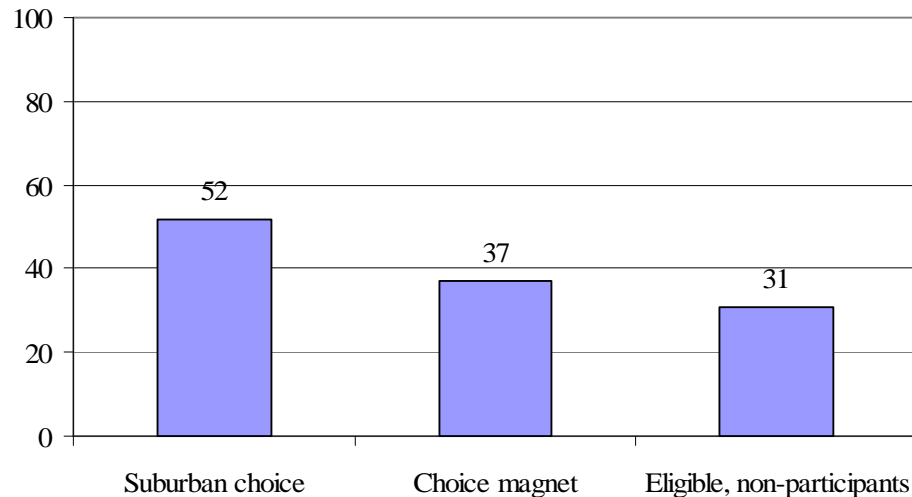
KEY FINDINGS – ACADEMIC SUPPORT¹¹

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that efforts to enhance academic support were an important part of reducing barriers to school choice. The following findings represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

HOW IMPORTANT IS ACADEMIC SUPPORT TO SCHOOL CHOICE?

FINDING 27. By the end of the project, just over half of suburban choice parents would choose the same school again if extra support was not available for their child when needed. The number of choice magnet parents reporting the same decreased slightly to just under 2 in 5, and the non-participant parent response fell from about 1 in 2 to 3 in 10 (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO WOULD CHOOSE THE SAME SCHOOL AGAIN IF EXTRA ACADEMIC SUPPORT OR ASSISTANCE WAS *NOT* AVAILABLE.



Source: 2007 TCIY Parent Interview.

¹¹ “Many” generally refers to at least 70% of respondents; “most” refers to at least 80% of respondents.

HOW PREPARED ARE SCHOOLS TO HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED?

FINDING 28. Most parents — suburban choice, choice magnet, and eligible, non-participants — continued to agree that their child’s school provided a safe and caring learning environment in which all students were held to high academic standards. However, students and teachers reported regular disruptions to teaching and learning as a result of student misbehavior. Parents of eligible, non-participants gave similar ratings for school climate. (No comparable student or staff data were available for the schools attended by eligible, non-participants.)

FINDING 29. In the final year, most parents of choice magnet students and eligible, non-participants — and many suburban choice parents — consider suburban schools adequately prepared to work with ethnically and economically diverse student populations. All three groups reported schools were somewhat less prepared for language diversity, though an average of about 70% across the groups said the schools were prepared for it.

ARE STUDENTS RECEIVING THE HELP THEY NEED TO SUCCEED?

FINDING 30. Most parents — suburban choice, choice magnet, and eligible, non-participating — believe they are making a significant contribution to their child’s success in school and are doing so, primarily, by helping their child with homework, which most feel prepared to do.

FINDING 31. Most parents — suburban choice, choice magnet, and eligible, non-participating — continued to feel that the schools are doing enough to help their child adjust to the new school.

FINDING 32. Many parents — of suburban choice, choice magnet, and eligible, non-participating students — continued to feel that their child is receiving all the help he/she needed to do well in school. In the final year, many parents of eligible, non-participants felt that their child was receiving enough assistance, despite the fact that fewer of these parents reported that their child’s school was providing or arranging for additional help. Also, slightly fewer choice magnet parents felt their child was receiving enough assistance in the final year, despite increased reporting that their child’s school was arranging for additional help. Most choice magnet students reported that they received enough support, while roughly two-thirds of suburban choice students felt they had received adequate assistance.

KEY FINDINGS – ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT¹²

Over the course of the 5-year grant, the evaluation revealed that efforts to enhance academic achievement through participation in the MN-VPSC program were mixed. The following section describes findings that represent the final status of the grant and any notable changes over time.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

FINDING 33. *Overall, during 2007-2008 suburban transfer students outperformed eligible, non-participants.* Students who transfer to suburban choice schools under *The Choice Is Yours* program outperformed students who chose to not to participate in the program in reading (11 percentile points) and mathematics (20 percentile points). Low-performing suburban choice students also outperformed their counterparts reading (13 percentile points) and mathematics (22 percentile points). There was no difference in performance between students new to the suburban choice program and students who were returning.

FINDING 34. *Over a four-year period, the achievement results were mixed.* In two of the four years, suburban choice participants outperformed the eligible, non-participants. Another year, the eligible non-participants fared better than the suburban choice participants. One year, they fared equally well. These trends held true for low-performing students. Finally, in all but one year, suburban choice students who were new to the program and those that were returning performed equally well.

METHODOLOGY

Since 2004–2005, the suburban portion of *The Choice Is Yours* program evaluation was designed to answer the question: “What impact does *The Choice Is Yours* program have on student achievement?” To answer this question, the annual growth of suburban choice participants in reading and mathematics was compared to that of eligible, non-participants.

In keeping with the same methodology, during the 2007–2008 school year, third- through seventh-grade students in *The Choice Is Yours* interdistrict transfer (“suburban choice”) program were tested in the fall and spring using the Northwest Achievement Level Tests in reading and mathematics. Suburban choice students for whom achievement data was available for both fall and spring were matched one-to-one with eligible, non-participating students on demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, special education status, and limited English proficiency) and baseline achievement.

A total of 886 suburban choice students were enrolled in grades 3–7 at some point during the 2007–2008 school year. Of these, 486 had both fall and spring achievement data in reading and 499 had fall and spring data in mathematics. The suburban choice students included in the achievement data analyses are representative of the population from which they were drawn in terms of grade level, ethnicity, gender, limited English proficiency, and special education status.

The annual growth in reading and mathematics demonstrated by suburban choice participants and eligible, non-participants were compared. The first comparison examined the annual growth for all students — suburban choice participants and comparable non-participants — in the matched sample. The second comparison examined annual growth for a subset of students: those with pretest scores at

¹² “Many” generally refers to at least 70% of respondents; “most” refers to at least 80% of respondents.

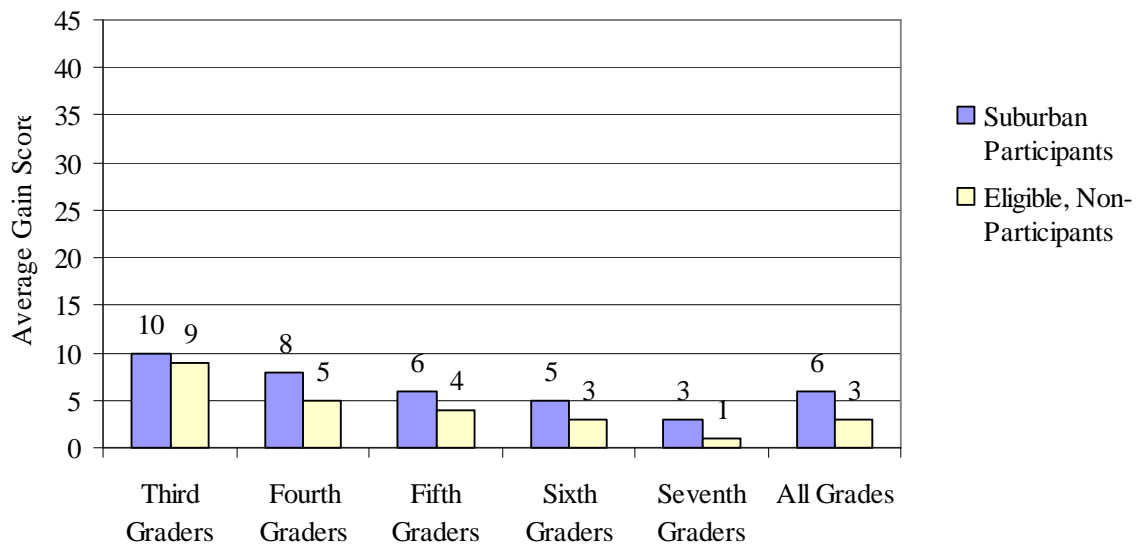
or below the 50th percentile. In addition, the annual growth of students returning to and new to the suburban choice program was compared.

Average gain scores reflect the calibration of a particular test at a particular grade level. To allow for comparison of annual growth across grade levels, the difference in the average gain scores for participants and non-participants shown in Figures 8 through 11 was expressed as an effect size (to create standardized scores across grade levels). These effect size scores were then translated into percentile differences for ease of interpretation (see Tables A1, A2, A3, and A4 in Appendix).

ANNUAL GROWTH IN READING — ALL STUDENTS

- Overall, suburban choice students made small but significantly¹³ *greater* gains in reading than the comparable non-participants. Figure 8 below shows these differences expressed as average gain scores (see also Table A1 in Appendix). These annual “gains” translate into reading scores for suburban choice students that were, on average, 11 percentile points *higher* than those of comparable non-participants (see Table A3 in Appendix).
- Suburban choice students made small but significantly *greater* gains in reading than the comparable non-participants in grades 4 through 7. Figure 8 below shows these differences expressed as average gain scores (see also Table A1 in Appendix). The annual “gains” made by suburban choice students at these grade levels translated into reading scores that were 9 to 12 percentile points *higher* than those of comparable non-participants (see Table A3 in Appendix).
- On average, returning suburban choice students *did not* gain more in reading over the course of a year than students new to the program (see Table A3 in Appendix).

FIGURE 8: ANNUAL GROWTH IN READING FOR SUBURBAN CHOICE PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBLE, NON-PARTICIPANTS, 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR.



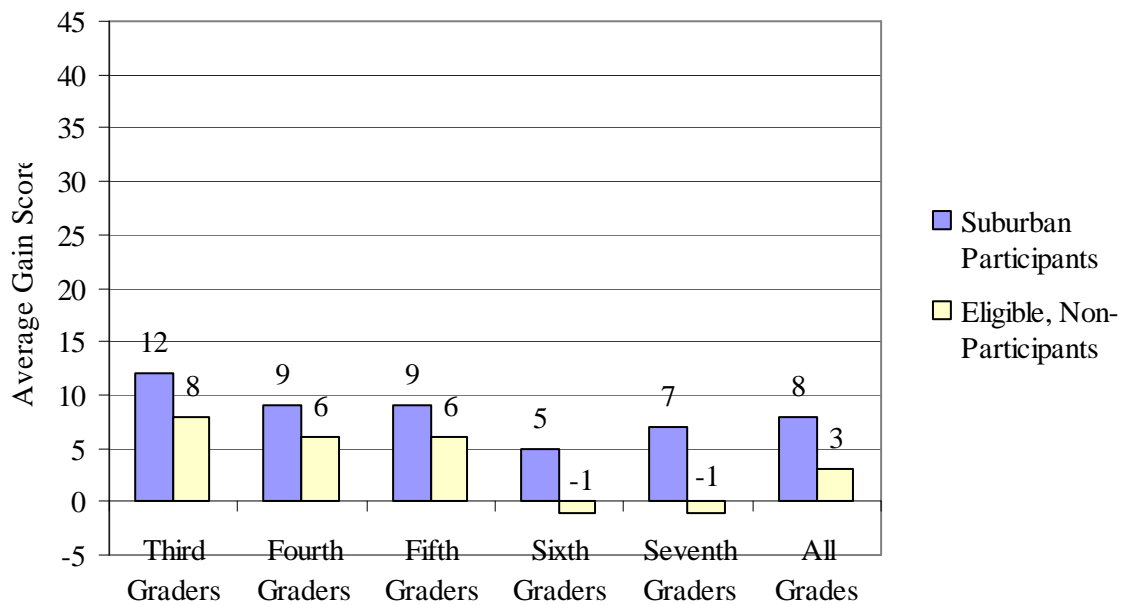
Source: NWEA Reading Scale Scores.

¹³ The difference in the average gain score was “practically significant” as noted by all effect sizes being greater than 0.20. The fact that the effect size was not “statistically significant” at some grade levels is due to the slightly smaller sample which diminishes the power to detect a statistically significant difference. Effect sizes are not biased by sample size and thus are used here to determine the magnitude of the difference in gain scores between suburban choice and eligible, non-participants.

ANNUAL GROWTH IN MATHEMATICS — ALL STUDENTS

- Overall, suburban choice students made moderate and significantly *greater* gains in mathematics than the comparable non-participants. Figure 9 below shows these differences expressed as average gain scores (see also Table A1 in Appendix). These annual “gains” translate into reading scores for suburban choice students that were, on average, 20 percentile points *higher* than those of comparable non-participants (see Table A3 in Appendix).
- Suburban choice students made small to moderate and significantly *greater* annual gains in mathematics than the comparable non-participants in grades 3 through 7. Figure 9 below shows these differences expressed as average gain scores (see also Table A1 in Appendix). The annual “gains” made by suburban choice students at these grade levels translated into mathematics scores that were 12 to 27 percentile points *higher* than those of comparable non-participants (see Table A3 in Appendix).
- On average, returning suburban choice students *did not* gain more in mathematics over the course of a year than students new to the program (see Table A3 in Appendix).

FIGURE 9: ANNUAL GROWTH IN MATHEMATICS FOR SUBURBAN CHOICE PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBLE, NON-PARTICIPANTS, 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR.

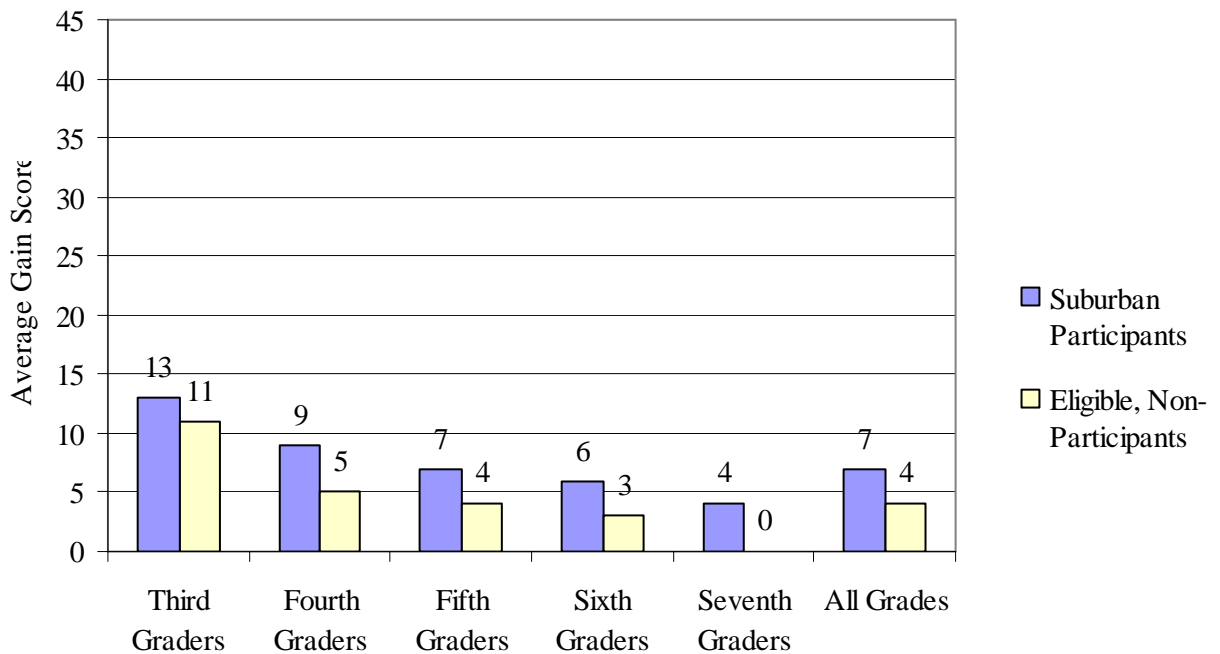


Source: NWEA Mathematics Scale Scores.

ANNUAL GROWTH IN READING — LOW-PERFORMING STUDENTS

- Overall, suburban choice students who initially scored at or below the 50th percentile made small but significantly *greater* gains in reading than the comparable non-participants. Figure 10 below shows these differences expressed as average gain scores (see also Table A2 on in Appendix). These annual “gains” translate into reading scores for suburban choice students that were, on average, 13 percentile points *higher* than those of comparable non-participants (see Table A4 in Appendix).
- Of the students who initially scored at or below the 50th percentile, suburban choice students made small but significantly *greater* annual gains in reading in grades 4 through 7. Figure 10 below shows these differences expressed as average gain scores (see also Table A2 in Appendix). The annual “gains” made by underperforming suburban choice students at these grade levels translated into reading scores that were 11 to 18 percentile points *higher* than those of comparable non-participants (see Table A4 in Appendix).
- On average, returning suburban choice students who initially scored below the 50th percentile *did not* gain more in reading over the course of a year than their counterparts who were new to the program (see Table A4 in Appendix).

FIGURE 10: ANNUAL GROWTH IN READING FOR SUBURBAN CHOICE PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBLE, NON-PARTICIPANTS WHO INITIALLY SCORED AT OR BELOW THE 50TH PERCENTILE, 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR.

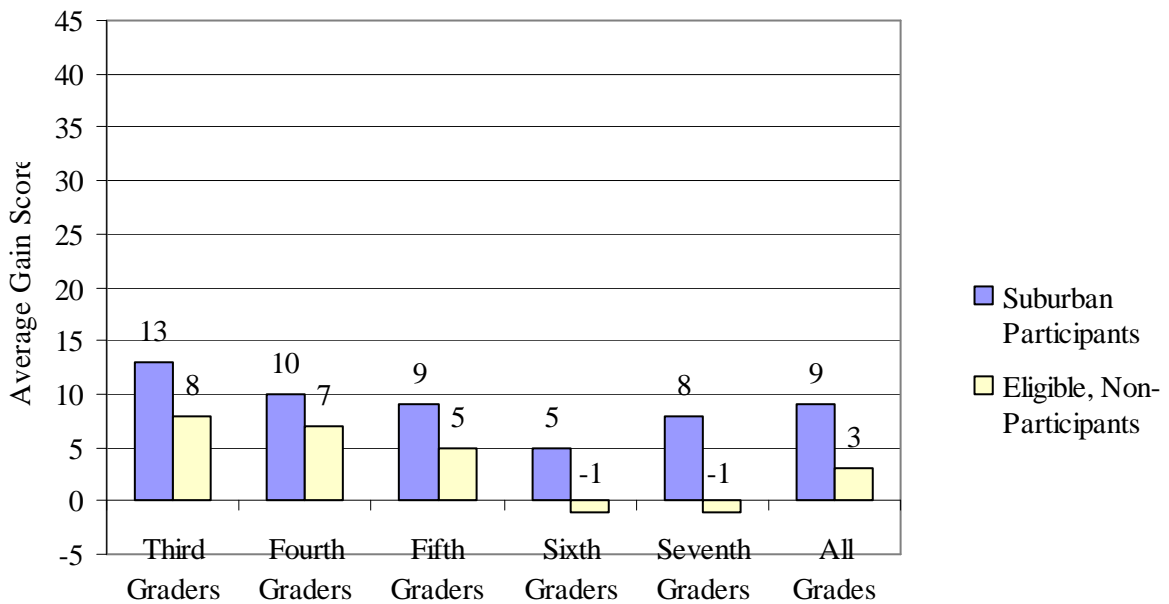


Source: NWEA Reading Scale Scores.

ANNUAL GROWTH IN MATHEMATICS — LOW-PERFORMING STUDENTS

- Overall, suburban choice students who initially scored at or below the 50th percentile made moderate and significantly *greater* gains in mathematics than the comparable non-participants. Figure 11 below shows these differences expressed as average gain scores (see also Table A2 in Appendix). These annual “gains” translate into reading scores for suburban choice students that were, on average, 22 percentile points *higher* than those of comparable non-participants (see Table A4 in Appendix).
- Of the students who initially scored at or below the 50th percentile, suburban choice students made small to large and significantly *greater* annual gains in mathematics in grades 3 through 7. Figure 11 below shows these differences expressed as average gain scores (see also Table A2 in Appendix). The annual “gains” made by underperforming suburban choice students at these grades translated into mathematics scores that were 13 and 31 percentile points *higher* than those of comparable non-participants (see Table A4 in Appendix).
- On average, returning suburban choice students who initially scored below the 50th percentile *did not* gain more in mathematics over the course of a year than their counterparts who were new to the program (see Table A4 in Appendix).

FIGURE 11: ANNUAL GROWTH IN MATHEMATICS FOR SUBURBAN CHOICE PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBLE, NON-PARTICIPANTS WHO INITIALLY SCORED AT OR BELOW THE 50TH PERCENTILE, 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR.



Source: NWEA Mathematics Scale Scores.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OVER FOUR YEARS

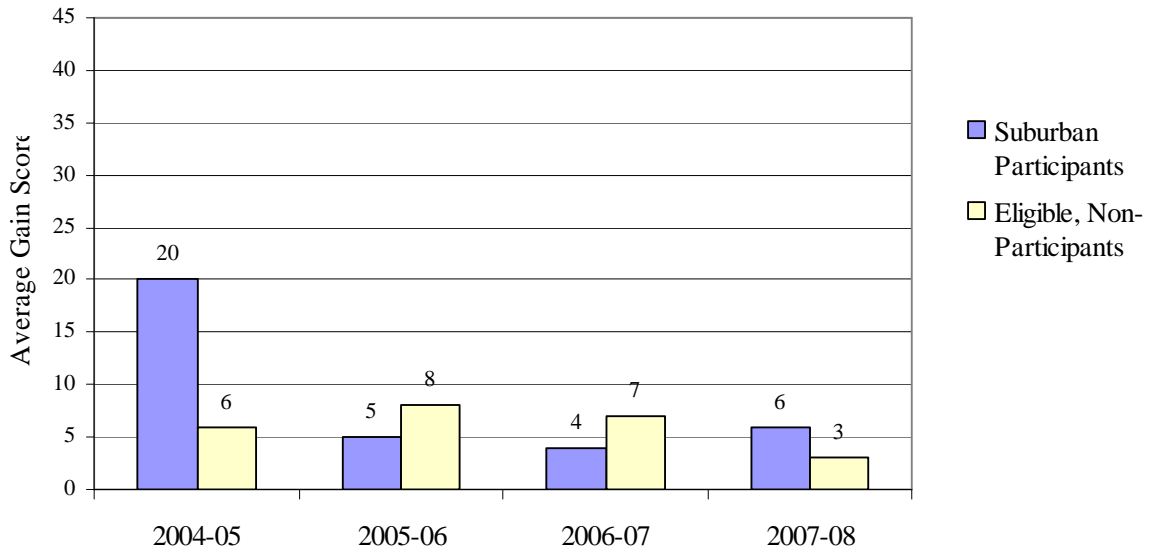
After four years, the answer to the question, “What impact does *The Choice Is Yours* program have on student achievement?” remains unanswered. A comparison of the annual growth of suburban choice participants in reading and mathematics to that of eligible, non-participants revealed mixed results over the years (see Figures 12 – 15).

In two of the four years, suburban choice participants outperformed the eligible, non-participants. Another year, the eligible non-participants fared better than the suburban choice participants. One year, they fared equally well. These trends held true for low-performing students. Finally, in all but one year, suburban choice students who were new to the program and those that were returning performed equally well.

- **Suburban Choice performs *better than* Eligible, Non-Participants:** In 2004–2005, the first year that student achievement data was available, the findings revealed that students opting to transfer into a suburban choice school under *The Choice Is Yours* program appeared to benefit from their participation.
- **Eligible, Non-Participants perform *better than* Suburban Choice:** In contrast, the analysis of student achievement data the following year (2005–2006) suggested the reverse to be true as suburban choice students were outperformed by a comparable group of eligible, non-participants.
- **Suburban Choice performs *at same level as* Eligible, Non-Participants:** In 2006–2007, with one exception, the findings indicated that overall (i.e., across grades 3–7) the suburban choice students performed at the same level as the eligible, non-participants. Suburban choice students as a whole were slightly outperformed by non-participants in reading.
- **Suburban Choice performs *better than* Eligible, Non-Participants:** In 2007–2008, suburban choice students outperformed the comparable group of eligible, non-participants.

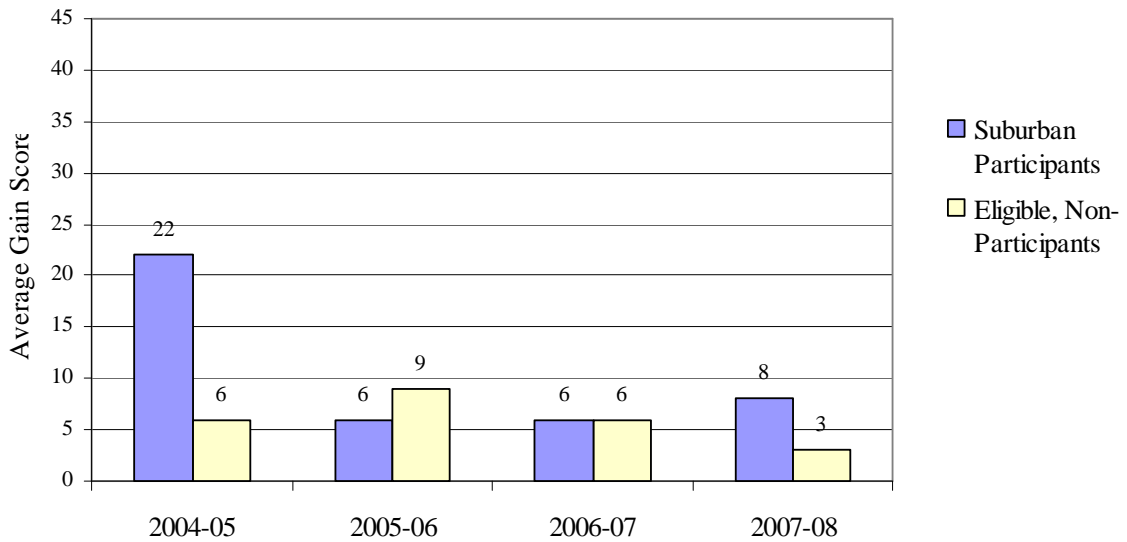
To determine what might account for the reversal of findings from one year to the next the data were examined further. The most probable reason for this change in findings is the fact that the suburban choice students tested each year are not the same students. From one year to the next, only half of the students in the grade levels being tested (i.e., grades 3–7) were enrolled the previous year (this reflects enrollment data showing that the return rate for students in these grade levels is about 50% from one year to the next). As such, the annual findings regarding student achievement should be viewed independently as they represent different groups of suburban choice students.

FIGURE 12: FOUR-YEAR TRENDS IN READING FOR SUBURBAN CHOICE PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBLE, NON-PARTICIPANTS, 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR.



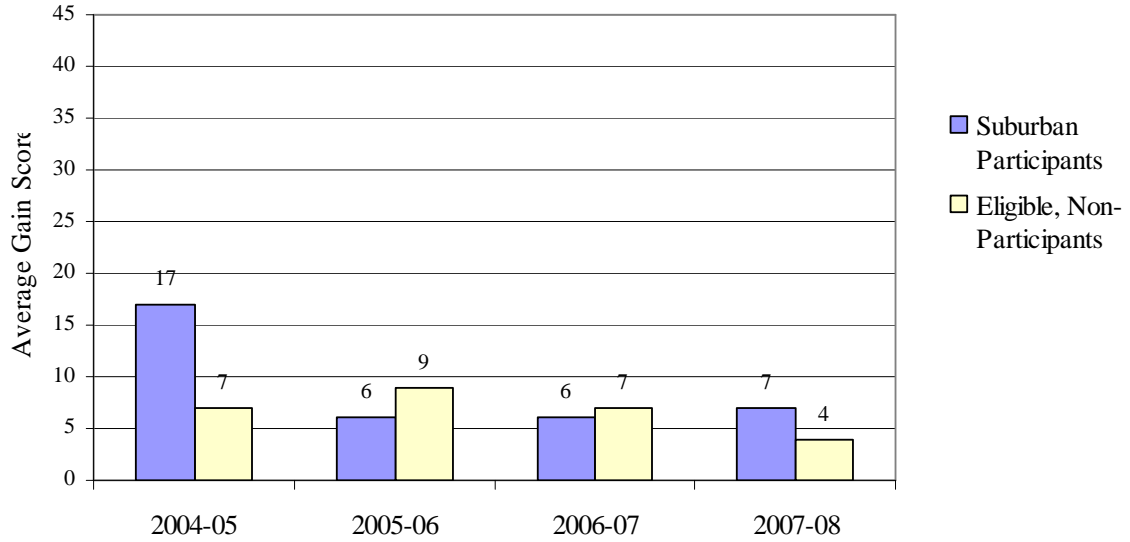
Source: NWEA Reading Scale Scores.

FIGURE 13: FOUR-YEAR TRENDS IN MATHEMATICS FOR SUBURBAN CHOICE PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBLE, NON-PARTICIPANTS, 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR.



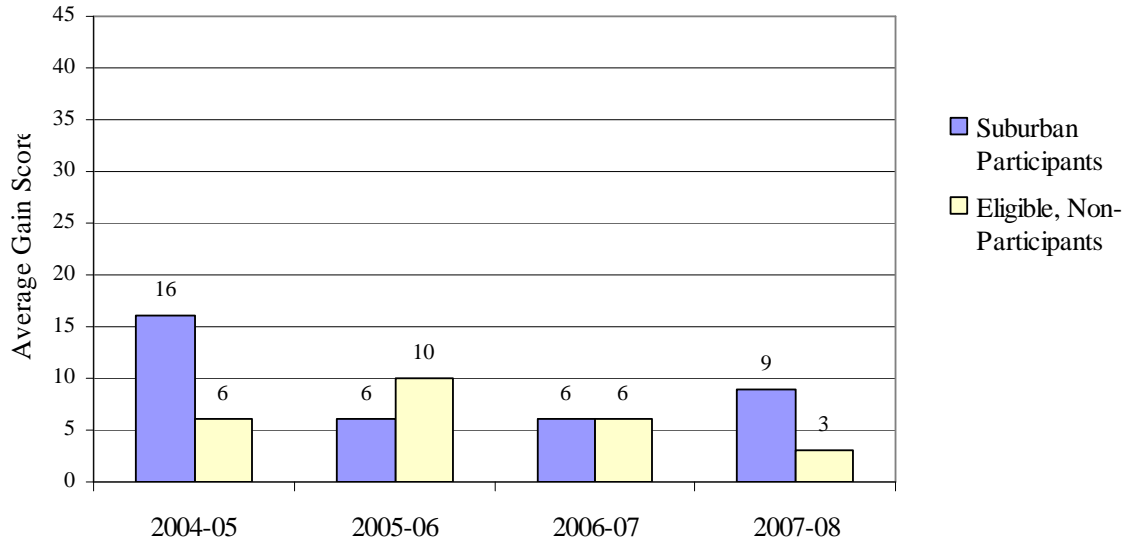
Source: NWEA Mathematics Scale Scores.

FIGURE 14: FOUR-YEAR TRENDS IN READING FOR SUBURBAN CHOICE PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBLE, NON-PARTICIPANTS WHO INITIALLY SCORED AT OR BELOW THE 50TH PERCENTILE, 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR.



Source: NWEA Reading Scale Scores.

FIGURE 15: FOUR-YEAR TRENDS IN MATHEMATICS FOR SUBURBAN CHOICE PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBLE, NON-PARTICIPANTS WHO INITIALLY SCORED AT OR BELOW THE 50TH PERCENTILE, 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR.



Source: NWEA Mathematics Scale Scores.

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Interviews were conducted with four current (in high school) and five former (in college) TCIY participants who went from Minneapolis schools to suburban schools. Current students included one tenth grader and three eleventh graders. Former students included three college freshman and two sophomores. Students' real names and names of their schools are not used. Both groups were asked the same questions, though they were altered slightly for each group to reflect the grade level of the interviewees. The questions were designed to elicit from students how the choice was made to attend the school; perceptions of their social and academic experiences at their new school, the extent to which these experiences expanded their awareness of racial, cultural and socioeconomic diversity and the world; and their perceptions of whether this opportunity enhanced their academic performance. This section begins with a summary of the responses across the eight interviews and is followed by a complete summary of the interview with each student.

SUMMARY

MAKING THE CHOICE

How did you decide to go to this school? Did you and your parents talk over your school choice before you made it? Who was the primary decision maker, you or your parents? Why did you want to go to a different school?

Even though in most cases the school choice decision was initiated by a parent or parents, in all but one case the students had a say in the process and often wanted to make the change themselves. The students cited better academics or college preparation and a nicer or safer environment as their top reasons, followed by social reasons and more diversity.

Why did your parents want you to go to a different (or this specific) school? How do your parents feel about your school now that you've been there?

Students said that their parents wanted them to go to a new school for academic and safety reasons. The parents were reported to be pleased with their children's school choice, with the students saying it was mostly the academics, and also the safety.

How do you feel about your school now that you've been there? Has your new school given you what you hoped it would?

For themselves, students reported that the schools of choice gave them what they hoped for both academically and socially. Some also reported liking things like after-school groups, a girls' group and a leadership group, and "soccer and football, things my old school didn't have."

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND AWARENESS

Does your new school have a different racial, cultural or socioeconomic makeup than your old school? How do you feel about this at your new school?

For the most part, these TCIY participants went to schools of choice that had a different racial and/or cultural makeup than they saw in Minneapolis. Though some did mention an initial uneasiness with this aspect of their school of choice, they were able to overcome it or at least become acclimated to it. Others recalled liking the cultural makeup of their new school. One student said her new school

showed her “both sides of life,” and one even said she was “a little more excited because there was more diversity.”

Was it easy to make friends in the new school? Are they (or some of them) of a different race or socioeconomic background than you? What have you learned from these new friends?

Four of the students said it was easy to make friends at their new school of choice. The others said it was difficult at first, but they were able to make friends as time went on. One reason for the initial difficulty was that the students were going to a new district where the high school students already had friends from elementary and middle school. Another reason was feeling “a little strange” or not “comfortable” with being in a school with a different racial or socioeconomic makeup than the Minneapolis school they came from.

All of the students interviewed said they made friends with students of different races. Four of these students said they learned about differences in people or cultures from their new friends. Other things learned included goal-setting for academics and life, and help in learning English.

ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Are you able to take classes at your new school that weren't offered at your old school?

They also said there were some classes offered at their new schools that weren't available at their former schools, like art, college-preparatory classes, foreign languages, and sewing and cooking.

Do you feel as though you are learning more at your new school than in your old school?

Most students said they learned more at their suburban schools than in their Minneapolis schools, though two said it was hard to make a comparison. The suburban schools offered them a more challenging curriculum, good teachers (“They really enjoyed the subjects that they taught, and they helped you a lot”), and less student misbehavior.

EXPANDING WORLD VIEW AND OPPORTUNITIES

Has being at this school made you more aware of the world outside of school?

Students said that going to their school of choice made them more aware of the world outside of school, citing the schools' academics, being exposed to diversity and its implications for now and in their future, and learning open-mindedness.

Has being at your new school made you more prepared for the world outside of school? In what ways?

The classes offered at the suburban schools were also cited by some students as helping them to be more prepared for life after high school. Other ways the new schools helped prepare them were: academics and logistics for college, exposing them to different cultures, and teaching them independence.

Has going to your new school given you any more or clearer ideas about what you want to do after high school? What do you think has caused you to change your ideas or come up with new ideas?

These new classes were also responsible for helping some students decide what they wanted to do in college or beyond. Other factors that helped students decide were: interesting and supportive teachers, and meeting new students with goal-oriented mindsets.

Those students who are now in college said their high school experience in a school of choice was helpful to them. Among them they said they learned greater independence, were directed towards a field of study, or were “motivated to finish school and going further in my education.”

INTERVIEWS - CURRENT HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS

MARISSA

“Marissa” is a junior at a suburban high school. She went to two Minneapolis schools in her freshman year of high school, and has been at her new high school from her sophomore year to this one for 1 ½ years total in TCIIY.

When she went from the city schools to her suburban one, she said it was not easy to make friends. “Actually for the first month that I went there I came home every day and I cried to my mom and I’m like, ‘Please can I go to a different school?’ I didn’t like it.”

In the two Minneapolis schools it was a different story. “It was really easy to make friends,” she said, “and I had a lot of friends, most of them from middle school that I’d known my whole life. It was just so much easier. A lot of people shared my interests and we had a lot of things in common. And when I switched over to (the suburban school) I felt like a lot of people weren’t as open-minded as the people I’d known, and that caused me to withdraw myself from my classmates. About the first half of my sophomore year I really didn’t try to branch out and make new friends, and in class I’d always stay quiet and not really say much.”

Part of the problem was that the students at her new high school already had friends there from being in the district. “They already knew people since middle school....So it was hard to fit in because everybody already knew each other, everybody already had their cliques. And it’s like, here you are coming in sophomore year, nobody knows you then nobody knows where you’re coming from, and it’s really hard to start over.”

There was also another stumbling block for her at first. “I wasn’t really open to the new culture, I guess,” she said. “I wasn’t comfortable with the setting that I was in.” Part of feeling uncomfortable was rooted in the socioeconomic status of students at the new school, and also the different racial makeup of the school. She said that the new school had been “really sheltered. I would say and they really haven’t had much diversity. So it’s kind of hard on their part and kind of hard on my part to try and break that wall and try to get to know each other.”

Marissa is African American, and she said “We just had a handful of Whites, if even, at our (city) school.” Her new school, on the other hand, is “predominately White, and there’s only a handful of African American students. It’s a really huge switch.”

Though the first part of sophomore year was really difficult, after that Marissa has been able to make more friends. “I know, like, everybody,” she said with a laugh. Many of these friends are of a different race or socioeconomic status, and Marissa took some initiative to get to know different people. “I decided I need to really suck it up,” she said. “After I’d seen that my mom is not willing to change schools and she really wants me to go there and no matter how much I cry, she’s not going to change schools.”

Today she's glad she took that initiative to get to know people of different backgrounds. "I don't want to go through my high school years and...regret not branching out and learning and taking advantage of the opportunities that I have. My friends now are really different....and it's really great to learn from other people and learn new things."

"My friends now are really different....and it's really great to learn from other people and learn new things."

These new friends were part of a school environment that was new to Marissa. "In (my new school) they're really strong with their whole academics and the after-school activities and stuff, like sporting activities," she said. "Where I came from, it really wasn't like that. (The) academics were OK, but they were really strong on basketball and football. The sports came first. Where in (my new school) it's academics then sports, but they go hand in hand."

Her friends have helped her learn to balance these different aspects of her life "because they all take AP classes and they're doing really well in their classes, but at the same time they're balancing that and one or two sports, or three sports sometimes, and they're balancing their family life, their social life."

She said that the different socioeconomic makeup of her new school at first "wasn't very comfortable, kind of overwhelming. You feel like you don't fit in if you don't wear a certain type of brand or if you don't own a (certain pair of shoes) or something." Over time, though, she said that "the materialistic things don't even matter anymore. I have friends that go to (my new school) that are White that don't live in (the district) that don't have that same socioeconomic standard. Their parents aren't millionaires."

Even though it's very different than where she came from, she said "I feel good about it. Materialistic things don't bother me. If I have it or don't have it, I don't look at that like, 'Oh well, because I don't own this I'm not a cool person.' I don't let that affect me. I feel comfortable."

Being at her new school with a different makeup of students has "showed me both sides of life," she said. "Because wherever you go, let's say like in future careers or jobs or whatever, you will work with people who came from schools like (my suburban one) and people that came from schools like (my city schools). It's just great to be able to see both sides."

Marissa believes she's learning more in her new school than in her former school. "I feel like it's more challenging for me," she said. "The curriculum's great, there's nothing wrong with the curriculum, but I guess it's just more my teachers. Most of my teachers I could just sit there and listen to them lecture. The way they lecture is amazing; you learn a lot from their lectures and their stories."

"When I went to (my second city school), for example, I had a teacher that all we did in her class was worksheets. She never talked to us about anything, she just gave us worksheets and that's all we did in her class. So we really didn't learn anything because you're just sitting there reading a textbook as opposed to (my new school), where most of my teachers do lectures. They stand up there and they give you examples and they tell you stories and it's more interesting and you watch videos and clips and stuff."

She is able to take classes at the new school that weren't offered at her old schools, like "child psychology. And I want to be a pediatrician, so it works well for me and I love it. It's a great class."

Being at this new school has made her more prepared for the world outside of school. “I take advantage of all opportunities that I get,” she said. “I joined a student leadership group. I would say it’s making me more prepared as a person.”

“I feel like after high school, going into college, going into my career, I’ll know how to handle people of a different background better, know how to approach them better, because I’ve already been through it.”

Being exposed to a student body with a different cultural makeup has also made her more prepared. “I feel like after high school, going into college, going into my career, I’ll know how to handle people of a different background better, know how to approach them better, because I’ve already been through it.”

The new school didn’t give Marissa any ideas about what she wants to do after high school “Because for me, I’ve known what I wanted to do ever since I was really young, and I’ve stuck with that.” Though she already knew what she wanted to do, she thinks the opportunity to pursue her career path may be helped because of her exposure to classes like child psychology she is able to take now.

Marissa’s mother first came up with the idea of a new school, and was influenced by a relative. “I have an aunt whose son is enrolled in (my new district). All his life, he never went to a Minneapolis public school, and (my mom) is like, ‘What do you think if you went there?’ and I thought she was joking, so I’m like, ‘Yeah, OK, whatever mom. If you can get me in, I think I’ll try it.’ It was just a joke to me.”

She said because she thought it was a joke, she didn’t talk about a school choice with her mother before the choice was made. Her mother, however, did research on the new school and its academic record. “And then September rolls around,” Marissa said, “and I’m in (my new school).”

Though she wasn’t active in the decision-making process, Marissa did want to go to a different school. Coming from her second city school, she said “I felt like I wasted half a year going there not learning anything or not really doing anything there. So I really did want to go to a different school.”

Her mother wanted her to go to a different school “Because she saw that that I wasn’t really learning anything or doing anything at school,” Marissa said. “I would just go to school and skip class...and be with my peers all the time and not really take advantage of the whole school aspect of it.”

Now that she’s been at the new school for a while, her mother feels good her being there. “I get A’s and B’s and take really hard classes, and she likes it,” Marissa said. “She likes that I’m being challenged and that this will prepare me for college and for after college, even.”

Marissa said that, for her own part, “Now that I’ve been (in the new school) I like it. I’m glad that I go there now, and that this opportunity was given to me and that I’ve been able to take advantage of it.”

She added that her new school has given her everything she hoped it would “and then some.” She’s certainly pleased with it academically and socially, “then there’s after-school things or leadership things that I do. That is the ‘and then some’ part.”

SERENA

“Serena” is a junior in a suburban high school. Previously she was in a Minneapolis school through grade 8, and also spent half of her sophomore year at a Minneapolis high school, so she has been in TCY for 2 years.

She said that making friends at her new school “probably would have been (easy) if I wasn’t so quiet, but by half way through the year I was pretty outgoing and it was pretty easy. But starting off, no.”

Acclimating to high school can take time for many students, but Serena felt a particular wariness at her new school. “I guess some of the students, they looked at you differently, but that’s about it,” she said. “But that’s just the natural thing to do, because when you don’t know somebody, you just go off of their looks. It felt like that’s how it started, but definitely not anymore.”

She believes this wariness existed on a couple of levels: “Partially because I didn’t go to (elementary school or junior high in the district) so I didn’t actually grow up with anybody (in the new district). But at first it probably started out them thinking...I was going to do something, or I was rowdy, as they would say, because I’m Black. But I don’t think that that was that big of an issue.” She said this waned once other students got to know her. “That definitely stopped after, I would say about a month, because I started talking then. But I was a really quiet person anyways, and I kind of like to observe before I talk. So they might have been like, ‘Why is she so quiet?’ and you can make assumptions off of anything.”

Coming from a school that is predominately Black to one that is predominately White (with other cultural groups as well), Serena has had the chance to make friends with students from different backgrounds. “I talk to everybody,” she said. “I don’t judge off of people’s cultures.”

Serena has seen that there are socioeconomic differences between the schools as well, saying that her former school “didn’t have a lot of money at all; little to no money.” She has learned from the friends she has made at her new school. “I’ve learned that not everybody is the same, that you can’t judge off of appearance. Because I did do that for a while; just like they did to me, I was doing it to them...because I’m like, ‘You don’t look like me.’ And coming from (my former school) where everybody is my color, it was kind of awkward at first to see predominately White people here. But it was OK.”

Seeing these differences between the schools has given Serena some perspective. “I am a learner, so good to have books that I can take home and have on own,” she said. “But at the same time, I kind of would feel bad for (my former school) because they never got to experience what I experienced, having good books, good lunches, nice sweet people, good teachers, all that type of stuff. It was definitely better over here.”

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Being at this new school made her “somewhat” more aware of the world outside of school. “First, culturally I didn’t know a lot of different things about people, and I kind of had a lot of people mistaken. And I’ve been learning about that stuff last year and this year, and it kind of makes me feel sorry that I even felt that way toward those people. And I think that’s the same stereotype that everybody else pulled.”

Serena is also getting involved in PSEO (postsecondary enrollment options, college courses in high school) at her new school.

After going to a city high school for part of a year, she decided to go back to her suburban school because she was unhappy with the city school. The city school, she said, was “laid out really (well)

and it looked really nice in the brochures and when I visited, but it was very unorganized and there was no learning going on. And that's not why I go to school. So I figured I'd come back to (the new school) that was benefitting me. It's definitely working out over here."

While she does like the learning at her new school, it's hard for her to say how it compares to the education she might have had in a city school because "It depends on what school. (My former city schools) are the only Minneapolis schools I've ever been to. So when I came over here it was a totally different experience from (those schools). But I think that a lot of the high schools over there do offer nice and good courses. I guess I'll just say they're not letting Blacks fall behind. They're focused on having everybody be a good student, having good grades, because everybody can do it, they just take the time out to do it that way."

She said that her current suburban high school and the city high school she tried have pretty much the same classes, but "They have totally different topics in the classes. Like history was completely different from the way it is over here. But I believe that if I had stayed until junior year we would have (gone) through the same courses. I just don't know if it would have been as thorough as (the new school) has done it."

Being at her new school has helped prepare her for the world outside because of meeting people from different cultures. "I guess I realize now that just because you're not seeing somebody else (of a different culture) doesn't mean that you're not supposed to be able to get along, or even if you don't get along, just respect each other's cultures.

"And I have to realize that not everybody is the same and that has helped me because now I won't go to a job...(and) if I'm working with (people of a particular race) I won't be scared of them or offended by them or any other races. I think that's a good thing, because they definitely exposed us to other cultures and other races, which is positive."

Her new school hasn't changed her idea of what she wants to do after high school because she said she "already knew what I was going to do before I started high school."

"...my mom knows how much I love learning and like to be in a good environment, so she decided to check it out. She liked it, I liked it, and we decided to come over here."

Serena first got the idea to go to a school of choice through talking to others. "One of my pastor's friends said his children went here, and they were talking about how great of a school it was, and how there was a lot of structure here," she said. "And then my mom knows how much I love learning and like to be in a good environment, so she decided to check it out. She liked it, I liked it, and we decided to come over here."

She and her mother talked about the choice before it was made, though she said "We didn't discuss it for an hour or anything, but we did definitely speak about (the new school), and she would rather me come over here than to be in a Minneapolis school." The main decision making, she added, "started with my mom, and it ended up being me."

Serena said she wanted to go to a school in the suburbs "Because in all truth I was afraid to go to high school over (in Minneapolis) because I heard what happens, the fighting and all of that stuff. Then I realized that was just common and natural in any school, because when I came over here that year there was a whole bunch of mess and drama going on too. So really I think it was just the education. Like I said, I was scared to go to a Minneapolis school. But then when I came over here it was the same exact stuff. My education just was better."

Her mother wanted her to go to a different school because “she was also afraid. She didn’t want me to get hurt.” Now that Serena has been at the new school for a while, she said her mother “likes it a lot. She’s just really disappointed in the number of Black students failing, and she feels like more can be done. Or any other races if there are any other races who are failing. I just specifically know that a lot of Blacks are not doing so (well) in school right now.”

She said that her mother thinks the new school is a “positive influence on us and that the teachers are really supportive. I think that was my main thing. Teachers are really supportive of you and your schoolwork, but they also understand you have a personal life too. Which is cool.” She added, however, that these teachers are not necessarily more supportive than those she knew elsewhere.

Though her mother thinks Serena is safer in her new school, Serena said “when I started off she was kind of really afraid too because the first couple of days I was here there was some fighting going on. A lot of it actually. My freshman year there were a lot of fights. It’s not that I was mad, but it was like, ‘OK, I could have (gone) to Minneapolis for all this, all these crazy things that are going on.’ But once I got here and got settled, I guess all the kids who were starting all the drama kind of got kicked out, then it was much calmer. And then I noticed that the freshmen coming in are less violent now. So it’s been much better, and there’s a lot of leadership in this school, which is cool.”

Now that she’s been there for a while, Serena said of her new school that “I think academically it’s really good....As far as teacher support it’s pretty good. As far as the students here I like it too. I think the students are really welcoming. But at first you just don’t know each other...but once you get to know each other it’s like one big family.”

Her new school has given her everything she hoped it would in one regard: “It definitely gave me everything academically.” Though socially she has liked it as well, she said “There’s not racism, but there’s still a little segregation. You can see it. I wish that wouldn’t happen that way. I was looking around earlier, and it’s just like there’s a group of Black kids, there’s a group of White kids, and then there’s a group of a couple of kids of a couple of different races, then there’s the Chinese kids. That’s the only thing that I have noticed.”

JEREMY

“Jeremy” is a junior at a suburban high school who came from a Minneapolis school. He has been in TCIY for 2 ½ years.

He said that even though he’s “not really a social person,” it was easy for him to make friends at his new school of choice. He is African American, and he said that he has friends of “all different races” and has learned about their culture from them.

Though he said that the cultural makeup of his new and former schools are “almost the same,” his new school has made him more aware of the world outside of school. “We talk about politics sometimes and environmental issues; we talk about all that different type of stuff.” He also feels as though he’s learning more at the new school than in the old school: “The teachers and the students help me with stuff, and I feel like I’m learning a lot.”

This is different from his experience at his old school, and as an instance of this, he said “I have a project coming up in English. I can interact with senior students that went through the English course before. I can interact with students more to help me out with things and give me examples.”

Jeremy also has some classes available at his new school which he took advantage of. There is IB English, and one on the “theory of cognition, which prepares you for advanced classes and stuff like that and helps you think better and helps you with reading skills and all that.” He knew of a Minneapolis high school that offers IB English, for example, but said he chose to go to the suburban school.

Being at his new school has made him more prepared for the world outside of school by teaching him independence, and how to prepare and apply for college. At his new school he has also gained ideas about what he wants to do in later life. He said this was mainly because of the courses he took.

The decision to go to a suburban school came about, Jeremy said, because that school has “more to offer” academically. He also pointed out that “The students are much nicer.” He discovered this by visiting the school before attending.

His parents were the first to have the idea to go to a new school, though they all talked about the choice before making it and the choice was made together.

Jeremy said that the main reasons he wanted to go to the new school were academics and that the students were nicer, but he said he also liked “the environment. It’s surrounded by more nature. It’s much more calm.”

His parents wanted him to go to the new school because they thought it was a better academic choice. Now that he’s attending there, he said his parents like that he can get help with his schoolwork, and also have access to “advanced and college-prep classes, and technology classes.”

Having been at his new school for a while, Jeremy said “I feel very good about it. I’m very happy here.” It has given him everything he hoped it would, academically and socially.

TANYA

“Tanya” is a 10th grader who first went to a suburban school, then when her family moved to Minneapolis she spent a year in middle school there. After that she spent one year in a different suburban school, then went to a different Minneapolis school for part of a year, until finally returning to her second suburban district. She has participated in TCIY for 2 years all together.

It was easy for her to make friends when she went to a suburban school. In her first Minneapolis school, she said “there was a lot of drama up there. I just didn’t find myself fitting (in) at all.” She felt like she fit in a bit better in her new suburban district, especially since she had previously attended a suburban school.

Tanya is African American, and first made friends in her new school through her sister. “My sister wound up having some friends that were a group of African American friends...I wound up becoming friends with her friends.” As time went on, she made friends with students of different races.

With these friends of different races, she said “I notice how different they are....My Black friends — and some of my White friends too — they seem to have more drama. And I don’t really hang around them that much anymore just because of that.”

The suburban high school Tanya attends is diverse, though mostly White, and the two Minneapolis schools she attended were mostly African American. She said that her former suburban elementary school “was a majority White school, so I was used to it when I came here.”

The Minneapolis schools, however, were “really different.” She pointed mainly to “the standards for learning. At (the first school) the majority of everybody, they don’t listen to teachers, they’re always screaming and they talk almost the whole time...and you don’t really learn anything. So their standard for learning is low because of that.” The second city school was not as bad, and she said that “Their learning standards are still high.... It’s better than (the first city school), but still isn’t the same as here (in the suburban school).”

Tanya’s experience with different schools, and different neighborhoods, made her aware of the world beyond school. “Since I do live in Minneapolis...I hear gunshots all the time or stuff like that. The environment is different.” She said she feels “kind of”

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safer in her new school “because there were always fights at (my first city school), and even (at my second city school) there was a few fights and there were some people

from gangs.”

She does feel as though she is learning more in her suburban school than in her first Minneapolis school, though she said it’s hard to compare her current learning situation to her second Minneapolis school since that one was a new school when she attended it.

Tanya is able to take some particular classes in her suburban school that she really enjoys. “At (the new school) they have a photography class, they have a pottery class. I (take) both of those, I like both of those. And they didn’t have those classes at the other schools.”

While Tanya thinks that her suburban school is helping her to be more prepared for the world outside of school, she was and is learning from being in Minneapolis. She said that “in Minneapolis I think I have learned some things just because of the fact that everybody’s not the same....So I’m prepared

for how they are in Minneapolis — not all of them, but how it is, I understand it.” Now that she is in a suburban school, she is getting another perspective on the world.

She said her new school is preparing her for the world outside of school in two main ways. “For one, we have a multicultural group (of students generally), and I kind of understand the different races.” The other area where she is being prepared is in the classes she’s taking. She wants to be a fashion designer, and her art classes are helpful to her there. “In pottery I can make whatever I want, and I get ideas for clothes. It’s kind of weird, but I get ideas for different stuff when I’m doing it....When I’m taking pictures I find myself, when I get the pictures developed, I have to point out whatever it is that has something to do with fashion. It just happens like that.”

She has wanted to be involved in fashion and/or modeling for some time, but the art classes in her new school have influenced her thinking more towards being a fashion designer: “Yes, of course,” she said with enthusiasm.

Tanya said that when she first heard she was moving to Minneapolis she “was really scared because...of all I had heard about it. We got out here and it wasn’t as bad as I pictured it, but it was still bad.”

She first heard about her suburban school through a friend who attended there. When she and her parents discussed going to another school, Tanya mentioned the friend who was going to the suburban district Tanya now attends. Once the school choice process was in motion, she said that she didn’t “really get to decide” about the school she went to, but her parents listened to her wishes: “I get to tell them about it, tell them how much I want to go there.”

Her desire to go to the suburban school “At the beginning it was for social reasons, just because I didn’t want to go to a school where I didn’t know anybody.” After she took time off from the suburban school to attend her second city school, she realized there was another reason for her to return to the suburban school. “When I came back...I realized how much better this (new) school would be for me.” This was based on her plans for the future and how much she liked the art classes at her new school. Another reason was the college preparation available at the new school. “They actually have programs where they help you find colleges and stuff. It’s just easier here.”

“I realized how much better this (new) school would be for me....They actually have programs where they help you find colleges and stuff. It’s just easier here.”

Tanya said her parents wanted her to go to the suburban school because “they actually felt like it was safer, I think. I’d have to ask them again, but I think that was why.” Now that she has been there for a little while, she said “They like it. My grades got better compared to the schools I was going to. But that was probably me because I just have to push myself.”

She now feels good about going to her new school, and it has given her what she wanted academically and socially. “They even have a girls group,” she added. “They have two girls’ groups, they have one for 10th graders which is all girls, and then they have another one for all grades but it’s African American girls. And they have one for guys too.”

INTERVIEWS - FORMER PARTICIPANTS

ALISON

“Alison” went from a Minneapolis public school to a suburban high school for 4 years. She’s now a college sophomore.

She said that it was fairly easy for her to adjust socially in her school of choice. “A lot of people that went to (this school) went to (a middle school in that district), so a lot of people were already friends. But it wasn’t hard for me to make friends.

“Probably the first friends I made were the same race as me (African American), but over time I made more friends in different races because in (that school) there’s a lot of White students there so I met a lot of White people, then I met a lot of Hispanic people and East African people.

“You learn different things from each culture, things you probably wouldn’t know if you didn’t have friends (in those cultures) like religious holidays that they celebrate or their ideas on certain things that happened in their country that differ from yours and affects them differently. So it was interesting.”

Her former school and her new school both had diverse student populations, though Alison said of her former school “I don’t remember there being an Hispanic influence. There’s White and Black, a little Asian and maybe some East African. It was a good mix, but there wasn’t any Hispanics for the most part.”

She found her new school to be a cultural microcosm of America overall, and she said she liked this about the school: “I didn’t have any complaints; I didn’t ever want to go to another school.”

The new school helped make her more aware of the world outside of school because “we had people from other countries come, some international students. And I remember there was this girl from my math class and she was from a different country, and she would tell us the different things that she can and can’t do in America that’s different from her country.

“And (the school) had this program (for when) a new student came in and somebody would take them around, so I met a lot of new people like that. I gave tours.” This chance to meet international students was something she had at her new school that she didn’t get a chance to do at her former school.

Alison was also happy with the academics at her school of choice. “I felt like I got a good knowledge of the world in my education, I felt confident in my education. I didn’t feel like I was behind the other schools or anything.”

“I felt like I was actually learning, and most of the stuff I learned in my classes in high school I can still remember, and I think that’s important because some classes you just kind of learn it for the moment and then you forget.”

She said that among the things which helped her feel confident about her education were “a couple of teachers that I really did like. They really enjoyed the subjects that they taught, and they helped you a lot. The

curriculum I loved. It seemed like whatever class you were in it seemed like you were doing a lot of learning. You know in some schools it kind of feels like you’re skimming by. I felt like I was actually learning, and most of the stuff I learned in my classes in high school I can still remember, and I think

that's important because some classes you just kind of learn it for the moment and then you forget. Especially with econ and chemistry and physics I really held on to a lot of that stuff which is helpful in college."

Her new school also allowed her to take classes that she might not have been able to take elsewhere "Like the college-preparatory classes, I don't know if other inner-city schools offered some of those. I'm not sure." These classes were important to her.

The time she spent at this new school also helped her prepare for life beyond high school. "I felt prepared for college," she said. "I wasn't really worried about further schooling. I felt prepared for the world. I think a lot of the stuff I learned in (my new school) did come into play in college. And there are things that you learn, like how to study or how to write papers, (that are) very helpful when you're taking college classes. It's very independent, so you have to know how to do these things on your own."

She believes that this kind of preparation is something that her new school offered her that staying in an inner-city school might not have. "I think it was probably a good decision for me to go to (my new school); I never really regretted it. I especially liked the counselor that I had. I felt she was very helpful in helping me with college stuff and helping advise me on what courses to take and what will be good for me. I appreciated a lot of the help that I got in (my new school)."

While Alison knew she wanted to go to college before she ever thought about a high school of choice, she said that her "success in high school also helped back my decision that high school and college would be a good idea for me. If I wasn't so successful in high school it probably would have been harder to decide if I wanted to go on to further education. But I was very successful in high school, so that only furthered my desire to go to college."

Her plans for life beyond college were also formed some time ago, but again her new high school was helpful there. "You could take really hard science or math classes, and at the same time take art and stuff like that. I felt like you kind of got to see what your interests are, then (see) what you're good at. It helps you take less time deciding what you want to do."

"I felt like you kind of got to see what your interests are, and then (see) what you're good at. It helps you take less time deciding what you want to do."

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The decision to go to a school of choice was difficult at first, since she had been planning to attend a Minneapolis high school where her older sister had attended. "But, my mom was thinking that it would probably be best for me not to go to the same high school my older sister went to," Alison said, "because she did really well at that school and she had her own little legacy going on, and my mom was like, 'You can go to another school and do your own thing.' So we started looking at other schools."

She said she and her mother looked at different schools, and only heard about the one she wound up attending through a friend. "Before that I had never heard of the school, so we went up to the school and we did tours and we talked to the principal and we looked at the grounds and all that stuff. After I saw the school and talked to the principal about the school, then I was really interested in going. I thought it would be a place I would do well at, and that's how I decided."

Though her mother put the idea in Alison's head about going to a school of choice, Alison said "it ended up being my decision...I liked the school itself, what it looked like, and when I talked to the principal it just seemed like a nice place to go to school...The principal did mention that it was a

very diverse school and that lots of different people go there, and that was appealing too, the diversity factor.”

Her mother liked the new school after Alison went there. “The academic factor was never a problem,” she said. “Me and my sisters were always very good students, and we felt like we’re getting a pretty good education there.”

Her school of choice gave her everything she hoped it would. “I don’t feel like I missed out on anything. We had things that other schools had, things that other schools didn’t have. If I had to choose again I’d probably go the same school.”

ANITA

“Anita” is a college freshman who went to a Minneapolis school in seventh grade (her first year in Minnesota), then to the suburbs for eighth grade and high school, for a total of 5 years in TCIY.

She said she had a little difficulty making friends at first when she went to her new school: “I only had one friend because I was always quiet and alone. I didn’t talk to people.” After she got to high school, though, she was able to make more friends.

Anita knew a number of students from Minneapolis on her bus to the new school. “The ones that came from Minneapolis we all talked to each other,” she said. “Mostly (they) were Hispanic but also African Americans.” She herself is Hispanic, and when she first came to Minnesota she was still learning English. Some of the friends who were of a different race from her, she said, “helped me with my English a lot. When I’d say something they’d say, ‘You don’t say it like that, you say it like this.’ That’s what I liked about my friends; they were nice to me.”

The suburban school she attended had a different cultural makeup than her former Minneapolis school. She said of her new school “I like it more, I think. In (the Minneapolis school) there was always fighting every single day.” In her new school “the students were nice, the teachers, everyone.”

Going to the new school also made her more aware of the world outside of school by allowing her to learn “How people of different races behave.” She does point out, however, that “It depends also on how they were raised, I think. Not everyone (is the same).” She also learned from the absence of fighting in her new school that not all neighborhoods are the same.

Anita said she learned “a lot” more in her new school, and found the difference in student behavior between the schools to be a big factor. She said that in her old school the “teachers they do what they have to do, but sometimes students don’t listen to them...and because of one student no one else can learn anything.” In the new school this was not as big of a problem.

The new school offered classes she wouldn’t have been able to take at her old school, like pottery, sewing and cooking. She said this school also made her more prepared for the world outside of school because of its academics. “I would say that they really helped me a lot because now that I’m in college...I think if I went to high school in Minneapolis I don’t think I was going to be able to go to college.”

Going to the new school gave her ideas about what she might do after high school because of “the teacher support.” They brought up new ideas for her, and supported her through the college-search and -application processes. “I got to meet nice teachers and they cared about me. I even went to my counselor, and then the social worker for the program, she really helped a lot too.

High school “helped me a lot, because (now) I’m independent. I do everything by myself.”

“I didn’t always want to go to college. Well, I wanted to but didn’t know how. I’m the first one in my family, so I didn’t know. I didn’t know the difference between a community college and a 4-year college.” Now that she’s in college, she

looks back on her high school experience and says “It helped me a lot, because (now) I’m independent. I do everything by myself.”

Anita’s father took some initiative in getting her into a school of choice, but she herself could sense that a change needed to be made: “I wasn’t learning anything in (my Minneapolis school)....If someone skipped school, we’ll skip school. We didn’t care about classes. And going to (the new school) it was like, ‘Oh I want to do this and I can do it,’ and you want to learn more.”

Her father was the one who finally made the decision for her to change schools, but Anita wanted to make the change “Because of the academics. I could learn more and be prepared.” Her father wanted her to change because of the academics also. “He knew about (the new school) from my auntie,” Anita said. “She has a...daughter and she goes there. And she said that was a really good school and then my dad was thinking about it then he finally decided.” She said he’s happy with the decision now and proud of her academic accomplishments.

After graduating from her suburban school, she likes that “They prepare you for college.” She believes it gave her everything she hoped it would academically, and in another way as well. “There is this class there...on how to do internships and networking. So I think that was really helpful. It prepared us to go to college and what are we going to do after college because we have to make the appointments and do interviews. So I really liked that class.”

JUAN

“Juan” went from a Minneapolis elementary school to attend a suburban middle school and high school. He attended these schools of choice for 6 years, and is currently a college sophomore.

He said that being at a new school is “always hard,” but he was able to make friends as time went on. His new friends were mostly of a different ethnicity: “I’m Hispanic, and almost all of my friends are Caucasian.” From these new friends, he said he “learned respect. They were very respectful of where I came from.”

His new schools had mostly Caucasian students, which was different from the school he came from. said this made him feel “a little strange because I used to being (with) people of my same race. But I used to it.”

“(I felt) a little strange because I was used to being (with) people of my same race. But I got used to it.”

He was got

Being at this new and somewhat different school made him more aware of the world outside of school. Instead of saying that he learned about others, however, Juan said that attending the new school helped him understand “more of my race (and) where I came from. I was more aware of my background and the world.” Much like the old adage about traveling to a foreign land helps people understand their homeland, Juan learned something about himself by going to a different school.

Juan believes that he learned more at his new school than he did at his previous school in Minneapolis. He said that “The education was really good,” and it better prepared him for college. “The teachers really (were) a big factor for me to learn more. The curriculum was very different from

the previous school. It was very challenging for me. I remember the first year was tough...but it was great.”

The new school also offered some classes that weren't offered at the old school. Juan cited language classes (he did study a foreign language there), and he said that in the new school there was also “a choice in the level of math.”

He thinks that being at this new school made him more prepared for the world outside of school because “The curriculum was different.” He said that it was more directed towards getting students to learn, which he has found to be helpful.

Juan said another aspect of his new school that was helpful was being exposed to students who were of a different cultural background than he is. This helped him be more prepared for the world outside of school because he “had more knowledge of the outside world.”

Going to the suburban schools gave him more ideas about what he wanted to do after high school by exposing him to students with a different mindset. He said that the students at the new schools had goals for higher education and for later life in the workforce. Seeing this in other students, Juan said “I started to think to myself I wanted...an idea of what might be helpful for me and something that I enjoyed. So I would say the difference in the students and their goals led me (to) have my own and not stop in high school but go on to college.” This is something he doesn't think he was really exposed to in his previous school.

Now that he's a sophomore in college, he thinks those ideas are really paying off: “I'm motivated to finish school and going further in my education.”

The decision to go to a new school began with Juan's mother. “As far as I remember my mom was not too happy with the (former) school,” he said. “There were some problems. Some kids had relatives in gangs and stuff. My mom did not want us in that environment. I had no idea how she found out about the TCIY program, but she did, and the closest suburban school was in (this particular suburb), so we applied and we got in.”

Though his parents may have put the school choice in motion, the decision to actually change schools was made by the family together. “My parents (took) the initiative, seeing the environment in the other school, and I was OK with it,” Juan said. “I really wanted to change schools.”

His parents were looking at Juan's well-being when they started looking at a school of choice, and so was he: “We got (hassled) by some kids in the school. They were not even students there, but they had relatives there. I didn't want to go there any more.”

Juan said his parents “were pleased” with the decision for him to go to a new school. This was not just because of the safety concern, but also because “it was a better education.”

Juan's said his own feelings about his new school are that “It opened my opportunities better. It was harder in the beginning, but I stuck with it.” It was harder not just because it was a new school, but it was also harder academically.

In addition to providing safety and better academic opportunities, he hoped for one other thing that his new school also provided him: “They helped us out with getting us into soccer and football,” Juan said, “things that my old school didn't have.”

BRIANA

“Briana” is a college freshman who went to a Minneapolis high school for 1 ½ years, then was in a suburban high school through TCY for 2 ½ years. She said it was easy to make friends at her new school, and while some of them were of a different cultural background from her, she can’t say as she learned anything in particular from those friends.

Briana is African American, and she said her Minneapolis school was mainly comprised of African American and Asian students. Her new school, she said, “was a little more diverse.” Though this was different from her old school, she “didn’t really feel anything about it because I like being around diverse groups. I was a little more excited because there was more diversity.”

Her older sister went to the same school of choice before Briana did, and Briana said “Sometimes I would hear stories from my older sister (who) went there when certain races would clash with each other. I didn’t (see that)...when I started going there, but I guess it happened in her years. But I guess because (my suburban school) had become more diverse from a while ago, so I guess certain races didn’t like that. There was trouble between some races. But it has gotten better over the years.”

Because of the curriculum at her new school, Brianna said she learned more there: “I feel there was more of a challenge at (the new school) academically.” There were some college-prep classes which were not available at the former school. “(The new school) gave a lot of honors classes in chemistry and physics and stuff. That was where the challenge came in, because I didn’t think I could do it, but I ended up doing really well.”

Her new school made her prepared for the world outside of school, more because of the curriculum than the diversity. “It was the academic opportunities,” Briana said. “The student backgrounds didn’t really make me prepared because I’m around different races all the time, even outside of school. It was more the academic area that made me more prepared.”

The academic opportunities at her new school gave her more ideas about life after high school, but the curriculum was just one component of the opportunities. “At first I wasn’t really interested in the whole science area, but I would say it was more of the teachers that made me want to do more with science than the class (itself)...I think the teachers kind of make it more interesting in a subject that you’d never think you’d be interested in.”

She gave an example of one teacher who was supportive and encouraging: “Since it was a hard class, if you had questions he would answer them with no problem. Some of the teachers that taught the same classes...you wouldn’t do as (well) in that class because of the way teachers did things, but this teacher he answered questions and your questions were welcomed.”

Now that she’s out of high school and into college, Briana can see how helpful her high school experience was. “I was choosing between going into business or veterinary medicine, so with the science classes that I had and how the teacher was so helpful it made me move towards the veterinarian side because now I know I can do that, the science classes and all that. That helped me in college, make my final decision” about what to study in college.

Briana decided to go to a school of choice because it “was closer than (the Minneapolis school) was and it was an easier commute. My sister went to (the same school of choice), so if either one of us missed the bus it would be easier for (my mom) to take us to the same school. And then my sister said it was a good school, so I just went there.”

She didn't talk about her school choice decision with her mother much before it was made: "I guess she just took my decision."

Briana said she wanted to go to the new school because when she "heard about (it), it seemed like an easier environment, kind of more of a comfortable environment. And then my sister was there, so that made another plus....It was a better learning environment, and I knew people...that went there, like family members and old friends, so that made it more comfortable."

Her mother didn't necessarily want Briana to go to a new school, but rather she just let Briana make the decision and was supportive of it. After she had been at the new school, her mother did like it. "She thinks that their curriculum is a lot better too," Briana said. "It's more challenging; they like to give you a challenge so you can learn more."

"I like (the suburban school). The staff were very welcoming. They just made everything more comfortable."

Now that she has been there and graduated, Briana said "I like (the suburban school). The staff were very welcoming. They just made everything more comfortable. It wasn't authority and you're the students, it was more like (an) authority kind of friendship." The

new school gave her what she hoped it would "Because I was looking for more hard classes, because at (the old school) they weren't that hard to me and I didn't feel like I was learning. That's all I was looking for was more of an academic challenge."

DANIELLE

"Danielle" is a college freshman who spent the end of elementary school, then junior and senior high in suburban schools. When she first went to her suburban school there was some trepidation, but she overcame it and made friends easily. This was true even though she said "I was the minority (as an African American), clearly, but it didn't seem like it was an issue because I was so young. In the fifth grade you're not worried about whether your friend's Black or White."

As time went on, it became quite easy for her. She said that "when I hit high school it was a breeze. It was nothing to make friends. And I think it was because I started off in the elementary school and then transitioned to the middle school and then transitioned to the high school that are all connected pretty much."

In her suburban schools she was making friends with students of different races, though she said that what she learned from them wasn't related to their race or culture; it was more about their outlook on learning. "It was a different environment so you would kind of adapt to it. You see that your friends aren't goofing off, so you don't. If anything I learned how to focus from my friends."

Danielle said that, to her, the different racial and socioeconomic makeup of her suburban schools "didn't make much of a difference. But the people were very helpful. The resources were more available, like if you needed to learn after school. For a while when I went to (my first suburban school), my teacher would stay after with me and help me with my work."

Though the different school makeup made no difference to her, by the time she got to high school she did see some friction between TCY students and resident students. "In high school I saw it a lot," she said. "Over the 4 years our school had experienced, like, 10 times the number of fights, I guess, than there usually was. It was...the inner-city kids...The majority of the Choice kids were the ones who were involved in the fights that were breaking out." She cannot say, however, what the fighting was about.

Even though she didn't know the exact cause of the fights, she did say that some students "felt like the Choice kids brought down the value of (the suburban high school) for some reason. A lot of the kids who came in from the inner city did cause trouble, did not seem like they were there solely for the education, and it made pretty much everyone look bad."

Danielle said that her suburban schools made her more aware of the world outside of school, and illustrated this with her impressions of one especially significant day. "I was in the sixth grade when 9/11 happened, and the majority of my friends who lived in (Minneapolis) had no idea.

"I was in the sixth grade when 9/11 happened, and the majority of my friends who lived in (Minneapolis) had no idea."

"When we went home that day after school, the majority of the kids who lived in my neighborhood didn't know about 9/11. And our (suburban) school had actually stopped class and watched the mood, and we were more informed about what was going on. And I thought it was odd that the people who lived in my (Minneapolis) neighborhood who went to school (there) didn't know."

Though Danielle learned more in her suburban schools than in her Minneapolis school, she had to overcome a curriculum gap at first. She said her initial feeling was "OK, I've never even heard of this in my life, how am I supposed to continue?" Fortunately, some dedicated educators helped her to fill in the gap. "The teachers were really helpful. And I will never forget my fifth-grade teacher, Ms. _____, stayed after school for at least 3 hours out of the week and we would work on my multiplication tables every week until I got it."

Though she had some catching up to do, she said "It makes a difference in how you feel about learning when you're comfortable with being able to ask questions without being embarrassed because you don't know, because your teachers make you comfortable."

Danielle said that her experience with the curriculum gap is felt by other TCIY students. "To be honest, a lot of them...can't keep up with the curriculum, even though the teachers are helpful and they have after-school programs that tutor a lot of the kids so they can keep up, so they can keep their grades up. Even the ones that weren't in trouble, the curriculum was so different and more advanced than it was in Minneapolis (in) that it was hard."

In addition to direct instruction, she got help in another way. "Most of the kids who live in (this suburb), they're pretty well off and they live comfortably," Danielle said, "and my teacher had gotten me the class T-shirt because we couldn't afford it. It was like \$30 for a class T-shirt that all the kids sign, and my teacher actually got me one towards the end of the year because she knew that I couldn't afford it."

Since Danielle switched schools fairly early on in her schooling, she wasn't in a position to see much difference in the classes offered between her suburban schools and her city school, but does recall one: "They did give us an option, either we learned Spanish or we learned German. In Minneapolis it was just Spanish."

The suburban school made her more prepared for the world outside of school, in part because of a home-economics class which she said "wasn't just for cooking and sewing, it was more how do you budget, balance stuff." She uses that knowledge now "because if I didn't budget I don't know what I would do."

Her new school also gave her more ideas about what she wanted to do after high school. “In high school they had a lot of career-based classes,” she said. “They gave you an option to have more advanced classes, like the harder classes that were based off of college level.

“It was really helpful that they had career-based classes. They still had the general classes, but your electives were mostly (for) what you wanted to be, what you were going to go to college for....Like people who wanted to do business management took accounting classes and business classes for their electives. So that helped out a lot for me to find out what I wanted to do and what I wanted to continue going to school for. There was a lot of variety. It was very helpful that they had a lot of options. And the counselors were helpful too in trying to figure out what classes you should take to make sure you’re on track for your credits for graduation.”

”My mom was really big on education, and she had also instilled the value that education is key. You’re not going to get anywhere without having one.”

Since Danielle was fairly young when she first went to a suburban school, her mother made the decision to go and it wasn’t discussed beforehand. She does recall, however, that her mother said “ ‘The education is better so you’ll learn more.’ My mom was really big on education, and she had also instilled the value that education is key. You’re not going to get anywhere without having one.”

For her own part, Danielle didn’t want to go to a new school at first. “It was scary to leave and have to go to a whole other school and be at the bottom of the chain and have to make friends with everyone. But once I got there it wasn’t too bad. It took maybe a day or two.”

Though she made friends quickly at her new suburban school, she said she felt “left out” because she lived in Minneapolis and went to school in a suburb. For a while, she said “my parents weren’t able to take me back to (the suburb) on the weekends to socialize with my friends and have fun.” Things did improve for her in time: “Once my mom was able to bring me to (the suburb) on the weekends, it gave me something to do, to get away. They have a lot of recreational places. That was fun.”

Now that she has gone through those suburban schools, she said her mother is “very pleased with my education and that I continued on to go to college.” Danielle said for her own part, “I think highly of (the schools) just because I went, but I couldn’t see myself at another school, or even still being in Minneapolis I don’t think that I would have learned the things that I did going to a suburban school.”

**APPENDIX:
FIGURES AND TABLES**

The Choice is Yours Program
Percent of Students Who Return to Suburban Choice Schools by Year
2001-02 through 2007-08

District	2001/02 Yr End	2002/03 Percent Return	2003/04 Percent Return	2004/05 Percent Return	2005/06 Percent Return	2006/07 Percent Return	2007/08 Percent Return	7 year Yr End Total	7 Year Return Total	7 Year Return Avg
Richfield	38	61%	62%	55%	51%	55%	57%	957	427	45%
Edina	52	94%	72%	78%	66%	81%	67%	908	549	60%
St. Louis Park	31	77%	67%	59%	71%	57%	57%	738	365	50%
Hopkins	27	81%	74%	68%	68%	66%	58%	1125	574	51%
Robbinsdale	190	55%	68%	65%	62%	68%	62%	2611	1334	51%
Wayzata	32	97%	64%	63%	72%	70%	70%	999	542	54%
Columbia Hts	77	42%	74%	48%	42%	53%	51%	1118	436	39%
St. Anthony	25	64%	60%	85%	87%	88%	75%	503	224	45%
Eden Prairie	--	--	--	--	--	29%	51%	129	37	29%
Year End Total	472	720	1030	1435	1567	1867	1997	9088	4488	
Percent		64%	68%	65%	62%	65%	61%			47%

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, Student Accounting Office, May 2008. Based on official year-end enrollments

The Choice Is Yours Program
 Percentage of Open-Enrollment Transfers Out of Minneapolis by Ethnicity,
 Prior to and Since the Program Began

	2007-08 Minneapolis Public Schools Enrollment	Open Enrollment Applications					
		3 Years Prior to TCIY ¹		TCIY's First 7 Years			
				Including TCIY		TCIY Only	
Native American	4 %	65	3 %	194	2 %	123	2 %
African American	40 %	629	29 %	5,339	52 %	3,916	66 %
Asian American	9%	152	7 %	709	7 %	408	7 %
Hispanic American	17%	108	5 %	884	8 %	561	9 %
White American	30 %	1,215	56 %	3,117	31 %	934	16 %
Total	100 %	2,169	100 %	10,203	100%	5,942	100 %

Notes: ¹ 1998-99, 1999-2000, and 2000-01.

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, Student Accounting Office, June 2008.

Figure A2

The Choice Is Yours Program
Percent of Students Enrolling in Suburban Choice Schools
by Ethnicity and District
2001–02 through 2007–08

06/20/08 REG

DISTRICT	Am. Indian		African Am.		Asian Am.		Hispanic Am.		White Am.		Total
Richfield	18	2.3%	529	67.5%	15	1.9%	126	16.1%	96	12.2%	784
Edina	10	2.3%	285	64.5%	16	3.6%	38	8.6%	93	21.0%	442
St Louis Park	15	2.9%	371	72.0%	9	1.7%	62	12.0%	58	11.3%	515
Hopkins	4	0.6%	468	76.0%	61	9.9%	25	4.1%	58	9.4%	616
Robbinsdale	33	1.9%	1174	68.0%	200	11.6%	67	3.9%	252	14.6%	1726
Wayzata	7	1.2%	444	73.0%	59	9.7%	40	6.6%	58	9.5%	608
Columbia Hts	29	3.1%	521	55.5%	41	4.4%	159	17.0%	188	20.0%	938
St Anthony	3	1.5%	38	19.5%	7	3.6%	26	13.3%	121	62.1%	195
Eden Prairie	4	3.4%	86	72.9%	0	0.0%	18	15.3%	10	8.5%	118
Total	123	2.1%	3916	65.9%	408	6.9%	561	9.4%	934	15.7%	5942

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, Student Accounting Office, May 2008.

The Choice is Yours Program
 Student Transfers Out of Minneapolis
 2001–02 through 2007–08

Figure A4

<u>Students Participating</u>	<u>Students' Ethnicity</u>	<u>Students Withdrawing</u>
01/02 – 558	Native Am. 123 – 2%	Native Am. 118 – 3%
02/03 – 567	African Am. 3916 – 66%	African Am. 2564 – 65%
03/04 – 759	Asian Am. 408 – 7%	Asian Am. 276 – 7%
04/05 – 1037	Hispanic Am. 561 – 9%	Hispanic Am. 316 – 8%
05/06 – 908	<u>White Am. 934 – 16%</u>	<u>White Am. 671 – 17%</u>
06/07 – 1098		
<u>07/08 – 1015</u>	Total 5942 – 100%	Total 3945 – 100%
7 Yr Total – 5942		
<u>Withdrew – 3945 (or graduated)</u>		
Enrolled – 1997		

3120 of 3945 (79%) of students who withdrew from the program never re-enrolled.

An estimated 670 of 3945 (17%) students who withdrew from the program returned to a MPS

<u>Previous School</u>		<u>Previous MPS Grade</u>								<u>Previous MPS School</u>		
MPS	- 2397	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Total	Lincoln	- 112	
MN Public	- 2460	K-	2	6	4	10	2	13	9	46	Edison High	- 98
Charter	- 300	1-	16	13	19	17	10	22	13	110	Jordan Park	- 94
Non-Public	- 178	2-	11	11	10	21	10	14	12	89	North High	- 89
Out of State	- 122	3-	18	14	16	10	8	27	11	104	Sheridan	- 89
Out of Country	- 63	4-	13	13	15	18	9	16	18	102	Olson	- 84
Home School	- 21	5-	16	14	10	16	18	13	16	103	Henry High	- 82
IDDS/FAIR	- 68	6-	37	40	49	46	47	36	40	295	Cityview	- 80
None (Kndg)	- 333	7-	22	28	39	36	29	40	39	233	Washburn High	- 78
		8-	17	23	36	47	37	38	38	236	Anwatin	- 72
Total	5942	9-	40	53	91	105	99	92	103	583	Northeast	- 71
		10-	21	27	28	52	44	52	49	273	Roosevelt High	- 66
		11-	13	13	17	33	28	40	35	179	Lucy Laney	- 64
		12-	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>44</u>	Franklin	- 50
		228	260	338	421	350	409	391	2397	Anthony	- 43	
										Loring	- 42	
										Parkview	- 42	
										Folwell	- 38	
Male	2942 49.5%									Pillsbury	- 37	
Female	3000 50.5%									Jenny Lind	- 37	
Sp. Ed.	830* 14.0%									South High	- 35	

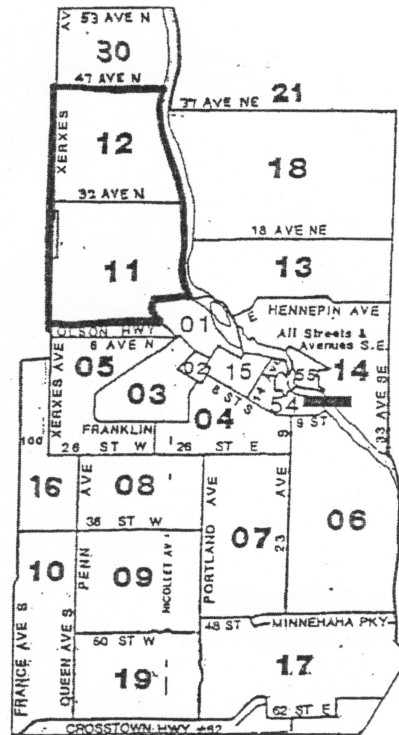
*Could be higher because of reporting limitations.
 Source: Minneapolis Student Accounting Office, June 2008.

Figure A5

The Choice is Yours Program
 Student Transfers Out of Minneapolis by Zip Code,
 2001-02 through 2006-07

Zip Code		
55411	N	1825
55412	N	1172
55418	NE	551
55407	SE	419
55408	SW	293
55430	N	282
55405	SW	219
55404	SE	201
55413	NE	181
55417	SE	179
55419	SW	151
55406	SE	149
55409	SW	127
55414	SE	46
55421	NE	43
55410	SW	41
55454	SE	15
55403	SW	13
55415	SE	12
55423	SE	9
55416	SW	6
55401	SW	6
55402	SW	2
Total		5942
N		3279 55%
SE		1030 17%
SW		858 15%
NE		775 13%
Total		5942 100%

554 ___



(Highlighted area illustrates that 50% of all transfers out of Minneapolis originate from the 55411 and 55412 zip codes.)

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, Student Accounting Office, June, 2008

Table A1: Comparison of annual growth in reading and mathematics, all suburban choice participants and eligible, non-participants, 2007-2008.

	Reading				Mathematics			
	N	Average Gain Score (S.D.)	Average Gain Lower Bound (95%)	Average Gain Upper Bound (95%)	N	Average Gain Score (S.D.)	Average Gain Lower Bound (95%)	Average Gain Upper Bound (95%)
Suburban Choice Participants								
Third Graders	n = 74	10.2 (9.6)	8.0	12.4	n = 74	11.8 (7.3)	10.1	13.5
Fourth Graders	n = 84	7.7 (10.7)	5.4	10.0	n = 87	9.0 (10.5)	6.7	11.1
Fifth Graders	n = 90	6.1 (8.4)	4.3	7.8	n = 93	9.3 (8.4)	7.5	11.0
Sixth Graders	n = 105	5.1 (10.0)	3.1	7.0	n = 108	4.8 (9.0)	3.1	6.5
Seventh Graders	n = 133	2.6 (8.9)	1.1	4.1	n = 137	6.5 (12.4)	4.4	8.6
All grades	n = 486	5.8 (9.8)	4.7	6.4	n = 499	7.9 (10.2)	7.0	8.8
Returning	n = 349	5.5 (9.9)	4.5	6.6	n = 329	7.9 (11.0)	6.7	9.1
New	n = 183	5.6 (9.8)	4.1	7.0	n = 170	7.8 (8.6)	6.5	9.1
Eligible, Non-Participants								
Third Graders	n = 74	8.9 (11.3)	6.3	11.5	n = 74	8.0 (8.0)	6.2	9.9
Fourth Graders	n = 85	4.6 (8.6)	2.7	6.4	n = 86	6.3 (6.5)	4.9	7.7
Fifth Graders	n = 92	4.1 (9.1)	2.2	6.0	n = 90	5.7 (8.2)	3.9	7.4
Sixth Graders	n = 109	2.7 (7.3)	1.3	4.1	n = 104	-0.6 (7.6)	-2.1	0.9
Seventh Graders	n = 153	0.6 (7.7)	-1.8	0.7	n = 131	-0.7 (6.7)	-1.9	0.5
All grades	n = 513	3.2 (9.1)	2.4	4.0	n = 485	3.1 (8.2)	2.3	3.8

Source: NWEA Mathematics Scale Scores from TCY Suburban Districts and Minneapolis Public Schools.

Table A2: Comparison of annual growth in reading and mathematics, suburban choice participants and eligible, non-participants initially scoring at or below 50th percentile, 2007-2008.

	Reading				Mathematics			
	N	Average Gain Score (S.D.)	Average Gain Lower Bound (95%)	Average Gain Upper Bound (95%)	N	Average Gain Score (S.D.)	Average Gain Lower Bound (95%)	Average Gain Upper Bound (95%)
Suburban Choice Participants								
Third Graders	n = 52	12.5 (10.1)	9.7	15.3	n = 51	13.4 (6.9)	11.4	15.3
Fourth Graders	n = 63	9.1 (11.5)	6.2	12.0	n = 64	9.7 (11.7)	6.8	12.6
Fifth Graders	n = 69	7.1 (8.9)	4.9	9.2	n = 59	9.0 (9.0)	6.6	11.3
Sixth Graders	n = 85	5.7 (10.2)	3.5	8.0	n = 76	4.8 (9.9)	2.5	7.0
Seventh Graders	n = 105	4.0 (9.1)	2.3	5.8	n = 101	7.8 (13.8)	5.0	10.5
All grades	n = 374	7.0 (10.2)	6.0	8.1	n = 351	8.5 (11.3)	7.3	9.7
Returning	n = 245	7.2 (10.4)	5.9	8.5	n = 229	8.3 (12.4)	6.7	9.9
New	n = 129	6.7 (10.0)	5.0	8.5	n = 122	8.8 (8.9)	7.2	10.4
Eligible, Non-Participants								
Third Graders	n = 51	10.6 (12.8)	7.0	14.2	n = 51	8.1 (8.9)	5.7	10.7
Fourth Graders	n = 64	4.5 (8.9)	2.3	6.8	n = 63	6.6 (6.6)	5.0	8.3
Fifth Graders	n = 71	4.4 (9.8)	2.1	6.8	n = 57	4.7 (8.5)	2.4	7.0
Sixth Graders	n = 89	3.2 (7.7)	1.5	4.8	n = 74	-1.3 (7.1)	-3.0	0.3
Seventh Graders	n = 119	0.0 (8.0)	-1.5	1.5	n = 100	-1.2 (6.4)	-2.4	0.1
All grades	n = 394	3.6 (9.7)	2.7	4.6	n = 345	2.6 (8.3)	1.7	3.5

Source: NWEA Mathematics Scale Scores from TCIY Suburban Districts and Minneapolis Public Schools.

Table A3: Comparison of average gain score differences in reading and math, suburban choice participants and eligible, non-participants expressed as effect sizes and corresponding percentile differences, 2007-2008.

	Reading		Math	
	Effect Size of Average Gain Score Difference ¹	Corresponding Percentile Difference	Effect Size of Average Gain Score Difference ¹	Corresponding Percentile Difference
Third Graders	+0.12	+4	+0.50*	+19
Fourth Graders	+0.32	+12	+0.32	+12
Fifth Graders	+0.23	+9	+0.43*	+16
Sixth Graders	+0.28	+11	+0.65*	+24
Seventh Graders	+0.24*	+9	+0.75*	+27
All Grades	+0.28*	+11	+0.52*	+20
Returning	-0.01	0	+0.01	0
New				

Notes: ¹ Effect sizes of 0.20 to 0.49 are small; 0.50 to 0.79 are moderate; and 0.80+ are large.

* = Statistically significant difference at minimum $p < .05$.

Source: NWEA reading scale scores from TCIY suburban districts and Minneapolis Public Schools.

Table A4: Comparison of effect sizes of average gain score differences in reading and math, suburban choice participants and eligible, non-participants with baseline scores at or below the 50th percentile expressed as effect sizes and corresponding percentile differences, 2007-2008.

	Reading		Math	
	Effect Size of Average Gain Score Difference ¹	Corresponding Percentile Difference	Effect Size of Average Gain Score Difference ¹	Corresponding Percentile Difference
Third Graders	+0.17	+6	+0.67*	+25
Fourth Graders	+0.45	+17	+0.34	+13
Fifth Graders	+0.29	+11	+0.49	+18
Sixth Graders	+0.28	+11	+0.72*	+26
Seventh Graders	+0.47*	+18	+0.89*	+31
All Grades	+0.34*	+13	+0.60*	+22
Returning	+0.05	+2	-0.06	-2
New				

Notes: ¹ Effect sizes of 0.20 to 0.49 are small; 0.50 to 0.79 are moderate; and 0.80+ are large. *=Statistically significant difference at minimum $p < .05$.

Source: NWEA reading scale scores from TCIY suburban districts and Minneapolis Public Schools.