SCHOOL DISRUPTED

2022

PART 3: WHAT PARENTS KNOW (DON'T KNOW) IMPACTS SCHOOLING DECISIONS

Tyton PARTNERS

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This is Part 3 of a three-part publication on K-12 enrollment trends by **Tyton Partners** *supported by* **Stand Together Trust** and the **Walton Family Foundation**. *Our work draws on two nationally representative surveys of more than 6,000 K-12 parents conducted in May 2022.*

Part 1 of **School Disrupted 2022** estimated that district public school enrollment has dropped 9% since Fall 2020, while enrollment in charter and private schools and homeschooling has increased.

Part 2 reported on the emergence of multi-site schooling models, a more flexible school model that marries parents' preferences for traditional and alternative learning environments.

In **Part 3**, we review how awareness of and interest in alternative school models (i.e., those that are not district public schools and are perceived to be more alternative) are related, what concerns parents about these models, and how the K-12 landscape might adapt to parents' changing preferences.

AWARENESS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL MODELS HIGHLY RELATED TO INTEREST IN ENROLLMENT

In our analysis, nearly half of parents reported they are interested in alternative school models. But they also expressed concerns about the cost of these models and their (perceived) ability to prepare their children for college and/or careers; this latter factor was generally connected to parents' lack of awareness regarding the outcomes of alternative school models. The balance of parents reported they are not interested in alternative school models. However, our data shows these parents are also largely uninformed about these models, and they cited lack of awareness as the top barrier to any further interest.

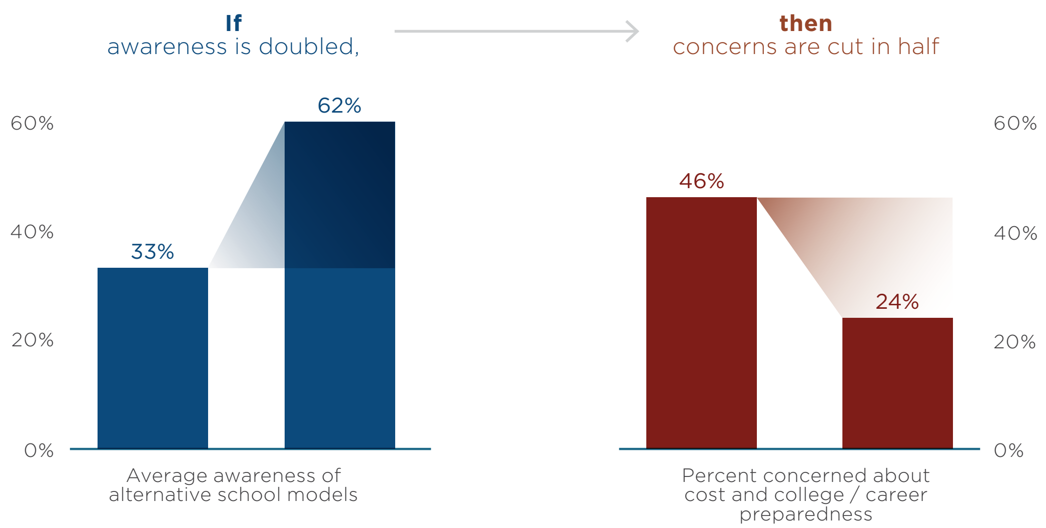
In fact, awareness of alternative school models proved to be key in understanding actual potential future enrollment as two interconnected themes emerged from parents' responses:

1. Level of awareness of alternative school models
2. Likelihood of enrolling their child in an alternative school model in the next three years

Our analysis revealed that **awareness significantly predicts parents' reported likelihood of enrolling in alternative school models in the next 3 years**. More specifically, a 10% incremental increase in overall awareness of alternative school models corresponds to a 40% increase in likelihood of enrolling. This occurs because as awareness of these models increases, concerns about affordability and college and career preparation and readiness decline considerably; in fact, a near doubling of awareness among parents reduces their primary concerns by 50%, resulting in greater willingness to pursue an alternative school model.

Figure 1

Informed parents express fewer concerns about alternative school models



Notes: Odds ratios calculated from binary logistic regression, Nagelkerke pseudo-R square = .46, mean classification rate = 81%

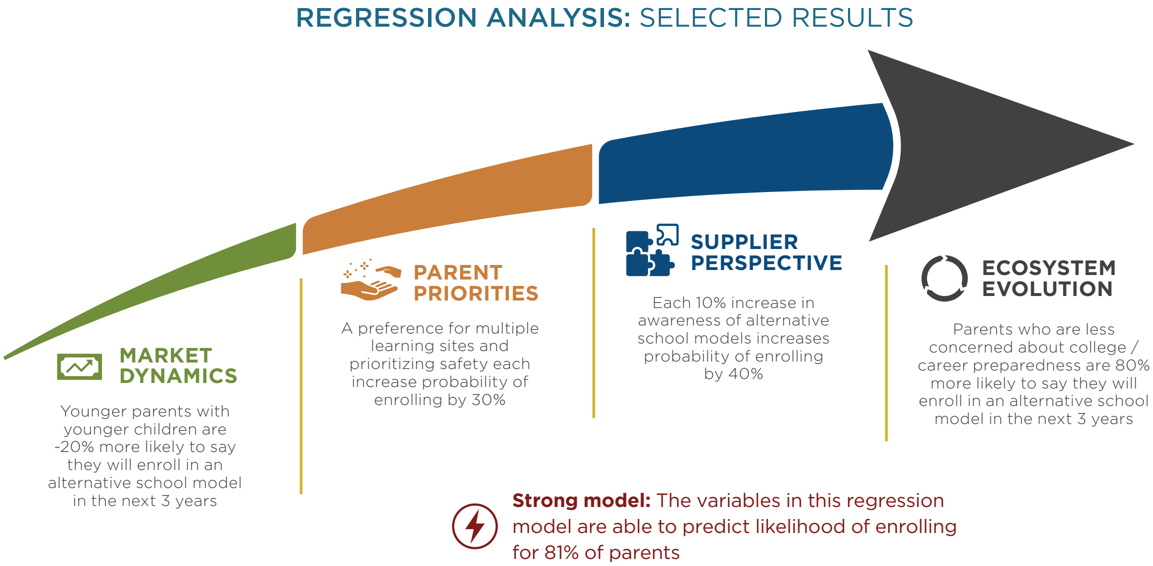
Sources: Tyton Partners 2022 K-12 School Models Survey, Tyton Partners analysis

Several other factors also indicate a greater likelihood of parents to enroll their child in an alternative school model.

- Younger parents (i.e., age 40 and below) with younger children (i.e., ages 5-10) are 20% more likely to say they will enroll in an alternative school model in the next three years.
- When making educational decisions for their children, parents who prioritize safety and prefer multiple learning sites are more likely to enroll in alternative school models.
- On the other hand, parents who prioritize college and career readiness and preparation remain less likely to enroll their child in an alternative school model.

Figure 2

Factors influencing future enrollment in alternative school models



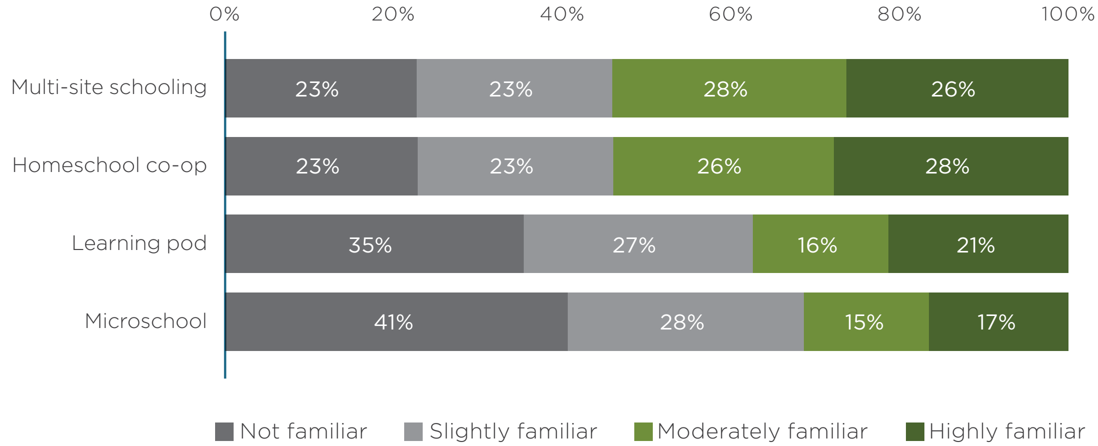
Notes: n=3,085; predictors are significant at p < 0.05; Model fit is moderate (Nagelkerke pseudo R-square = .46);
Sources: Tyton Partners 2022 K-12 School Models Survey, Tyton Partners analysis

Perhaps most surprising, factors such as race, household income, and neighborhood type (e.g., urban, suburban, rural) are not predictors of future enrollment. Rather, our data indicates that the most predictive variable determining a family's likelihood of enrolling their child in an alternative school model is awareness of the models themselves.

Currently, less than half of K-12 parents report meaningful familiarity with various alternative school models; to the extent that parents' awareness increases over time, the implication is that we may witness a continuing enrollment shift away from district public schools toward these alternative models.

Figure 3

Awareness of alternative school models



Notes: Survey question "How familiar are you with the following types of schools?"; n= 3,029

Multi-site schooling is defined as regularly attending a secondary learning site in addition to the primary school site; Learning Pod is defined as a paid educator educating a small group of non-sibling children; Microschool is defined as a school that is intentionally small, limiting overall enrollment to less than 150

Sources: Tyton Partners 2022 K-12 School Models Survey, Tyton Partners analysis

Together, these findings indicate that **as parents' awareness of alternative school models increases, we may see increasing enrollment in these models across all types of families**. If we recall the parents above who had low awareness and interest in alternative school models, our analysis suggests that the low interest is a result of the low awareness.

K-12 SCHOOLS COULD EVOLVE TO OFFER FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPTIONS

Post-pandemic, we find that parents have continued to shift their children into charter and private schools and homeschooling and away from district public schools. This shift is partly due to the preference for more alternative learning experiences. We also detailed the rise of multi-site schooling, a school model that bridges traditional and alternative learning environments and provides flexibility for different kinds of learners. **These findings suggest that more parents are seeking flexible, adaptive, and personalized learning experiences for their children.**

However, it is important to note that most parents still prefer the convenience of and lack of perceived cost for their child's public school. In our data, 92% of parents rate their child's district public school as highly convenient, and 74% of parents indicate they are unlikely to switch their child out of the district public school in the next three years because they don't need to pay tuition. Therefore, **district public schools have an opportunity, in the wake of the pandemic, to be more responsive to parents' shifting preferences and stem potential disenrollment of students**. This likely requires a reimagining of the learning options provided to students to foster more alternative experiences. Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) is simply one example[1], of many, demonstrating this foresight; during the pandemic CMSD partnered with community organizations to develop learning pods for low-income students struggling with remote learning. CMSD refers to this type of collaboration as part of their "wraparound strategy" to build a civic network that can support their students in flexible ways.

1. *https://crpe.org/wp-content/uploads/final-Cleveland-Metro-School-District-case-study.pdf*

Through the lens of parents across the country, School Disrupted 2022 has highlighted a significant shift in their expectations and aspirations regarding their children's school experience. More student-centric learning environments are paramount for many families, and multi-site schooling scenarios are one approach addressing this desire. Moreover, parent preferences detailed across this publication highlight the urgency facing many district public schools grappling with high rates of student attrition to alternative school models.

These dynamics have the potential to reshape the contours of the K-12 school landscape. We would encourage K-12 stakeholders across the spectrum to continue to listen to parents' voices as we emerge from the pandemic and reimagine the K-12 experience our children want, need and deserve.

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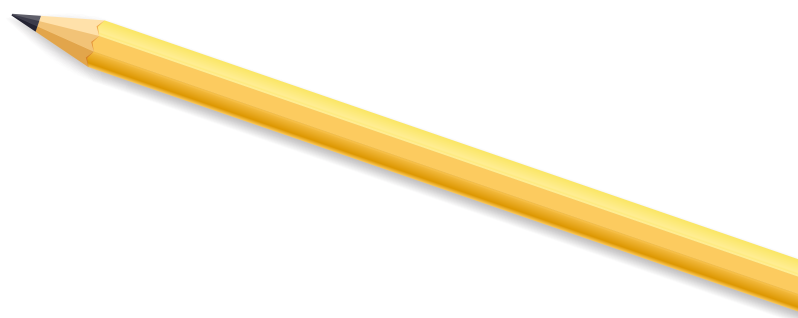
Building on these themes and parent voice, Tyton Partners continues its investigation of how the K-12 landscape is evolving in the wake of the pandemic's disruption. Our next report, **Choose to Learn**, further details parents' broader aspirations and values related to their children's education, and how the K-12 ecosystem can leverage both core and supplemental actives to address their evolving needs. Choose to Learn is slated to be released in **October 2022** so stay tuned for more.



In 2021, with support from the ***Walton Family Foundation****, Tyton Partners set out to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 students and families. This effort culminated in* ***School Disrupted 2021****, a three-part publication detailing how families adapted and what new school models emerged in the wake of such disruption. This year, in collaboration with* ***Stand Together Trust*** *and the Walton Family Foundation, Tyton extended the work from 2021 to look specifically at how families continue to navigate various traditional and alternative school models in School Disrupted 2022.*

The intent of our research is to use the parent perspective as a point of triangulation for measuring the impact of the pandemic on the distribution of school enrollment. This report draws on responses from two surveys of more than 6,000 K-12 parents that were conducted in May 2022. Respondent demographics were nationally representative of parent and student age, race, U.S. geographical region, and household income.

If you have questions or additional thoughts, we would value the opportunity to ***continue the conversation.***

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