

Parent Evaluations in K-12 Schools

College Station, TX- A recent study conducted by researchers at Texas A&M University yields important insights into how parents evaluate the quality of a school. Studying New York City public schools, the researchers found evidence that parents collectively drew on several different sources of information when forming opinions about the general quality of their children's schools. Parents generally provided more favorable evaluations of schools that had high standardized test scores and low violence rates. Parents also appeared to take into account other factors that are not measured by test scores or other traditional metrics of school quality. Overall, parents tended to be happier with schools that received positive evaluations from teachers and professional auditors.

The study's results suggest that survey evaluations conducted by citizens and employees can provide valuable information about how well a public program is performing. In the case of schools, such evaluations can supplement standardized test scores by giving voice to educational concerns that go beyond the narrow set of skills evaluated on state exams. Nathan Favero, who directed the study, says, "Parent evaluations provide another means of systematically evaluating schools. Parents can comment on aspects of a school that are hard to objectively measure, such as inclusiveness, communication, counseling, and extracurricular programming."

The results also have implications for the school choice debate. While many opponents of school choice systems fear that parents will not make intelligent choices about where to send their children, this study suggests that many parents are capable of discerning something meaningful about school quality. This finding is particularly important since most families in the New York City public school system have relatively low incomes. The level of knowledge demonstrated by New York City parents may be a product of the city's strong efforts to engage parents and of its school choice programs. The study is forthcoming in the journal *Public Administration Review*.

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