

A Descriptive Survey of Why Parents Choose Hybrid Homeschools

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ABSTRACT

“Hybrid home schools” are schools in which students attend school with other students for 2 or 3 days per week in traditional classroom settings, and are homeschooled the balance of the week. This exploratory study presents self-reported reasons parents choose these schools, using an electronic survey of parents from four such schools ($n = 136$; 19% return rate). Findings indicate that families in these schools are relatively wealthier and more suburban than parents using tax credit programs, that they value school structures more than particular student achievement outcomes, and that they seek information on accreditation, curriculum, and the religious nature of schools in making their choices.

KEYWORDS

education policy;
homeschool; online learning;
school choice; surveys

Introduction

Several factors in American education policy have been converging to cause parents to seek new options for schooling. A consensus among elite policy-makers has emerged, focusing on “college and career readiness,” along with a push for more centralized, standardized practices such as the Common Core State Standards. At the same time more choice options are becoming available to parents, including online options, more charter schools, various private choice programs within states, and a growing acceptance of home-schooling. One option growing alongside full-time homeschooling is *hybrid homeschools*. Hybrid homeschools for the purposes of this study are schools in which students attend school with other students for 2 or 3 days per week in traditional classroom settings, and are homeschooled the balance of the week. A school need not necessarily be private to be a hybrid homeschool, though nearly all are. In this study, all of the schools are private. These are not online schools, but a combination of homeschooling and brick-and-mortar schooling, giving students the experiences of being homeschooled as well as that of a traditional classroom setting with teachers and other students. Often these schools are called *university model schools* (UMS). Some of the schools in this study use that term. “University Model

Schools,” however, is also a brand name; one school in this study is a formal University Model School, another uses the term informally, and the others do not use it at all. The term hybrid homeschool will be used hereafter to include all such schools which follow the organizational structure of holding school 2–3 days per week in a physical, traditional-looking classroom setting, and homeschooling the rest of the week. While work has been done on reasons parents choose private schools, or homeschooling, very little has been done to explore hybrid homeschools and their particular appeals. This study is a descriptive survey exploring the reasons parents in the metropolitan area of a city in the state of Georgia in the southeastern United States say they choose to send their children to hybrid homeschools.

To learn parents’ stated preferences, an electronic survey was sent to four schools’ respective lists of parents. We address three questions:

- (1) What are the characteristics of families who choose to send their children to hybrid homeschools?
- (2) What do these parents say they value as part of a hybrid homeschool education?
- (3) What sources of information do these parents say they seek to decide on this school option?

Literature review

Very little work has studied hybrid homeschools. These schools have grown from the homeschooling movement, from the traditional private school sector, and more recently from the public sector, due to improvements in technology. Some work has addressed university model hybrid homeschool; those and particular public school analogs are the closest comparisons in the literature. Finally, work on the reasons parents choose homeschooling or private schools can help indirectly address the central question here: why do parents choose hybrid schools for their children?

Homeschooling

The homeschooling population in the United States has been larger than other segments of the school choice movement, such as the charter school population, for some time (Bauman, 2002; Murphy, 2012). Ray (2011) estimated the homeschooling population at over 2 million students. Recent estimates suggest approximately 3% of school-aged children in America are homeschooled; in Georgia estimates range from 50,000 to 73,000 students (Coalition for Responsible Homeschooling, 2011). A fraction of these students would be attending hybrid homeschools and

registered as homeschoolers with the state, depending on the structure of their particular school.

Murphy (2012) has written the most comprehensive account of the various forms of homeschooling in the United States. Murphy describes four frameworks for parents' reasons for choosing homeschooling:

- religion,
- academic deficiencies in the assigned public school,
- social/environmental problems in the assigned public school, and
- other family-based motivations (such as a desire to be with one's children, or for special needs or other special circumstances).

All of these frameworks appear in some form in the parent responses to this survey, and will be discussed as follows.

Hybrid schools

The vast majority of hybrid homeschools are private entities, incorporated as nonprofits, with their own independent boards of directors, though some programs in public school settings are beginning to adopt hybrid characteristics, as will be described as follows. Hybrid homeschools might be considered more formal, structured versions of homeschool cooperatives ("co-ops"). Muldowney (2011, p. 35) has written about these co-ops, reporting that the existing research on them is minimal. She writes that:

According to Topp, one benefit of joining a co-op is the opportunity to work with people with similar values since co-ops are formed by parents with likeminded goals. Co-ops also allow homeschooled children to socialize with similar-aged children and to get a "taste" of group learning without being overwhelming. (as cited in Topp, 2008, p. 6)

Co-ops tend to be more ad hoc arrangements than the hybrid schools considered in this study. In co-op arrangements, students often take a select number of classes largely for social interaction; hybrid schools are generally full-day schools on the days they are in session. The hybrid schools choose curriculum, hire teachers, set day-long schedules, and generally take a more dominant role in academic instruction than co-ops. Still, hybrid homeschools resemble co-ops in many ways, as noted as follows.

A common form of hybrid homeschool is the UMS. *University Model* is a brand name many of these schools formally adopt or informally employ. UMS schools follow a collegiate schedule with students taking some classes as a group, and working at home on other days. The schools emphasize character development, parental involvement, and a college-preparatory curriculum. The limited research on these schools suggests that graduates

resemble homeschoolers in their reasons for choosing and their academic success—a desire for parents to have more influence over their children’s academic development and slightly better than average academic scores on standardized tests (Brobst, 2013).

Recently, hybrid schools have appeared as public schools, often driven by the improved quality and accessibility of technology. State-sponsored online schools such as the Florida Virtual School (Gaither, 2009) are examples of schooling hybridization (though this school, fully online, does not typically include physical classrooms, unlike the hybrid schools considered here). Another example, closer to the hybrid homeschools surveyed here, is that of a public school system experimenting with a very structured form of hybrid schooling. Forsyth County, Georgia schools recently experimented with a small, select group of high school juniors, allowing them to study in a synchronous online environment at home twice per week, and attend school as traditional students the rest of the week (Wearne, 2013). In addition, some public schools are beginning to use technology to eliminate snow days by having students work from home, a temporary hybrid homeschool approach (Farner, 2015).

Finally, *micro-schools* have appeared in technology centers such as Austin and the San Francisco Bay Area. These are mostly private schools with different areas of curricular emphasis, but with structures resembling university-model/hybrid homeschools (Horn, 2009). Ultimately, parents, school systems, and other organizations are experimenting with various methods of personalizing instruction, with a variety of motivations and formats.

What parents value

A recent nationwide survey measured parental criteria of school options: most valued some version of academic success or “college and career readiness” (Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013). Indeed, that study classifies approximately 71% of parents (“pragmatists,” “test-score hawks,” and “strivers”) as mainly favoring some form of “college and career readiness.” Ray (2015a) and Murphy (2012) have reported on reasons parents choose homeschooling, which often differ from those reported by Zeehandelaar and Winkler. For example, the latter reported greater emphasis on academic success or “college and career readiness” rather than religious, family, or other social values suggested by Murphy.

Schneider and colleagues (2000), as well as Stewart and Wolf (2014) discuss the demand side of school choice, finding that parents mostly prioritize criteria other than academic metrics when choosing schools. Similarly, Greene, Hitt, Kraybill, and Bogulski (2015), and Greene, Kisida, and Bowen (2014) discuss schooling aspects that parents value other than typical

academics or school structures (and which seem to have a positive academic impact as well)—museum and live theater visits. Hybrid homeschools are neither homeschools nor traditional schools, and the motivations of parents to choose them have not been explored.

In a particular local context relevant to this study, Kelly and Scafidi (2013) surveyed low-income parents receiving tax credit scholarships in Georgia to attend private schools regarding their criteria for choosing and the information valued in making their choices. Georgia's Private School Tax Credit program allows individuals to receive state tax credits for donations to approved Student Scholarship Organizations (SSOs). SSOs then pay out scholarships to (typically) low-income students to pay the cost of private schools. These authors found that the parents in their survey typically valued issues such as school climate, discipline, safety, and smaller classes ahead of academic reasons such as test scores. Parents choosing schools in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, similarly, chose factors other than academics, including school location and extracurricular activities, ahead of academic performance (Harris & Larsen, 2015). Trivitt and Wolf (2011) and Cheng and colleagues (2016) examine the effects of branding on parents' private school choices, among families participating in private choice programs. The choices made by hybrid homeschool families have not yet been examined.

Funding

As private institutions, these schools do not receive state funding, instead relying on tuition, grants, and other fundraising. Some schools generally (and in this study) charge annual tuition, while others provide *a la carte* services, charging by the credit hour. The mean annual tuition at these schools (including a "full load" as defined by the schools charging by the credit hour) was just over \$3,000 at the K–8 level, just over \$3,500 at the high school level. These are substantially below tuition at full-time private schools in the area. The major costs hybrid homeschools save are personnel and benefits—most of the teachers at the schools in this study are part-time employees and/or contractors.

Methods

The respondents to this survey were drawn from a convenience sample of parents of students in hybrid homeschools in the metropolitan area of a large southeastern city. Eight formal hybrid homeschools were identified. All were invited to participate in this survey; four agreed. The participating schools served a mean of 183 families, with a high of 353 and a low of 45. Two of the schools declining to participate had enrollments larger than

this mean, two smaller. Three of the participating schools are nondenominational Christian schools; the fourth is Catholic (though not affiliated with the Archdiocese). Three of the nonparticipating schools are nondenominational Christian as well, and the fourth is Catholic (also not affiliated with the Archdiocese).

A link to a survey within an invitation to participate was sent to the school leaders at the four schools, who then sent the invitation and link on to their parents. Approximately 700 families were contacted, and 136 surveys were completed, for a 19% response rate. School leaders were asked to send a reminder approximately 1 week after the original survey link. Response rates for external online surveys are generally low: this rate falls within Nulty's (2008) guidelines for adequacy. While existing research on hybrid homeschools is very thin and these results may not warrant wide generalization, the participating schools generally mirror the nonparticipating schools in size and religious affiliation.

The survey included 18 questions modeled after Kelly and Scafidi's (2013) survey, which asked parents of students receiving state tax credit scholarships in Georgia why they chose their private schools. The two surveys were likely given to very different sets of parents, as described as follows. Parents in these hybrid homeschools likely considered the questions in very personalized contexts—their children entered hybrid homeschools from full home-school environments and from traditional public and private schools, though some have always attended hybrid schools. When asked to compare their hybrid schools to other options, then, respondents likely had varying alternatives in mind. Both this survey and the Kelly and Scafidi survey asked questions concerning income range, educational attainment, and other demographics. They also asked parents to choose and rank reasons regarding their choice of schooling options (or to add their own reasons), and what information parents sought in making their choices.

Results

Demographic characteristics

Table 1 reports summary demographic data for respondents.

A plurality of respondents reported family income in the \$100,000–\$124,999 range; 84.4% have at least an undergraduate degree. Respondents tended to be White (92.6%), married (96.7%), and live in a suburb (91.8%). Kelly and Scafidi's respondents, by comparison, had lower incomes (57.3% earned \$60,000 or less), 68.4% had at least an undergraduate degree, 72.8% were "White or Asian" (racial/ethnic categories were slightly different between the two surveys), 73.1% were married, and 61.0% lived in a suburban area.

Table 1. Summary data for respondents.

	Percent
Income	
\$0–\$24,999	0.0
\$25,000–\$49,999	2.6
\$50,000–\$74,999	9.5
\$75,000–\$99,999	19.8
\$100,000–\$124,999	29.3
\$125,000–\$149,999	9.5
\$150,000–\$174,999	9.5
\$175,000–\$199,999	5.2
\$200,000 and up	14.7
Educational attainment	
Did not graduate high school	0.0
Graduated from high school	1.6
Some college	13.9
Undergraduate degree	50.8
Graduate or professional degree	33.6
Marital status	
Married	96.7
Not married	3.3
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0
Black or African American	3.3
Hispanic American	2.5
White/Caucasian	92.6
Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify)	0.8
Urbanicity	
Urban	0.0
Suburban	91.8
Rural	8.2

Reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool

Why do parents choose hybrid homeschools? To address this, respondents were first asked: “There are many possible reasons why families send their children to a hybrid school, rather than to some other kind of school. Please select each of the following reasons you had for sending your child to a hybrid school (you may mark as many or as few reasons as applied to your situation).” [Table 2](#) reports parents’ responses.

“Religious education” was listed by the largest percentage, perhaps to be expected as all four schools are religious. This resembles results from Ray’s (2015a) survey of African-American homeschooling families. “Better learning environment” and “smaller class sizes,” the second- and third-most common choices for these respondents, were the also among the three most-common choices for respondents to Kelly and Scafidi. Respondents’ higher-ranked answers resemble those given by homeschooling parents in general (Ray, 2015b). It should be noted, however, that while nearly all of the respondents to Kelly and Scafidi have had some experience with traditional public schools (a requirement of the state tax credit scholarship program), students

Table 2. All reasons parents reported for choosing a hybrid homeschool.

Answer options	Response percent
Religious education	81.7
Better learning environment	79.4
Smaller class sizes	79.4
Less time wasted during the school day	76.2
More individual attention for my child	64.3
Better education	59.5
Better preparation for college	54.8
More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement	54.8
More responsive teachers and administrators	53.2
Greater respect for my rights as a parent	53.2
Other students would be a better influence on my child	51.6
Better student discipline	46.8
Greater sense of community	46.8
More attention to the unique needs of my child	42.9
Improved student safety	38.9
Other parents would be more concerned about their children's education	38.1
Less gang activity	23.0
Other (please specify)	23.0
Higher standardized test scores	19.0
Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable	14.3
More extracurricular opportunities	13.5
More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school	9.5

attending these hybrid schools come from various environments: public schools, private schools, and full-time homeschools. For the purposes of these surveys, “Better learning environment,” for example, means better, in the responder’s opinion, than their other available school options or experiences.

The least-common reasons for choosing a hybrid school were “More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school” (9.5%) and “More extracurricular opportunities” (13.5%). Additionally, 14.3% of respondents reported that they “Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable.” While Kelly and Scafidi found more than a third of parents prioritizing test scores, here only 19.0% did so.

“Other” reasons respondents provided involved items such as increased time with family, or influence by family (e.g., “Family as primary sphere of influence,” and “We chose a hybrid school so that we would remain the main influence in our children’s lives, they would have more time with siblings learning together, we would be able to partner with teachers in their education and have time to developed specific interests.”)—“family” reasons were the most common “other” response. Additional “Other” reasons included religion more specifically (e.g., “Biblical world view,” as stated by two respondents); specifics about homeschooling (e.g., “homeschooling support,” and “No after school homework, as all is completed in school day”); and finally, general flexibility for nonacademic pursuits (e.g., “Flexibility for travel and lifestyle,” and “schedule, my daughter is an elite gymnast”).

Table 3. “Most important reason” parents reported for choosing a hybrid homeschool.

Answer options	Response percent
Other (please specify)	16.7
Better learning environment	13.0
Better education	13.0
Religious education	13.0
More individual attention for my child	8.7
More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement	5.8
Better preparation for college	5.1
Greater respect for my rights as a parent	5.1
Smaller class sizes	4.3
More attention to the unique needs of my child	3.6
Other students would be a better influence on my child	2.9
Less time wasted during the school day	2.9
Better student discipline	1.4
Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable	1.4
Improved student safety	0.7
Greater sense of community	0.7
Other parents would be more concerned about their children’s education	0.7
More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school	0.7
More responsive teachers and administrators	0.0
Better teachers	0.0
Higher standardized test scores	0.0
Less gang activity	0.0
More extracurricular opportunities	0.0

The following tables reflect additional questions about what parents valued in their hybrid homeschools. [Table 3](#) reports responses to: “What is the MOST important reason for choosing a hybrid school for your child(ren)?”

Here, the highest response was for “Other” reasons. As above, the most common “other” reasons were “family” related (e.g., “Spend more time with my children,” or “More time to build relationship with my child”), followed by homeschooling support or other education-specific reasons (e.g., “Balance of school and homeschool,” and “Looking for education model that promotes joy in learning vs. learning to pass a test”), and finally, general flexibility (e.g., “More opportunities for real life learning, for example, via field trips”). Several respondents also named specific religious or political reasons. A sample of “Other” responses are categorized in [Table 4](#). Versions of some responses (particularly the religious and political answers) were given by multiple respondents.

Of the given response options, parents also said they valued a “better learning environment,” “better education,” and “religious education” as their next-most common choices. Those three answers (“better learning environment,” “better education,” and “religious education”) account for 39.0% of the most important reasons these respondents choose hybrid homeschools. No respondent chose “More responsive teachers and administrators,” “Better teachers,” “Higher standardized test scores,” “Less gang activity,” or “More extracurricular opportunities” as their Most Important reason.

Respondents were also asked to name their top five reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool. Those results are reported in [Table 5](#).

Table 4. “Other” responses.

Type of reason	Respondents’ stated reasons
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend more time with my children • More family time • More time to build relationship with my child • More time at home with family • Retaining parental influence is our primary reason • Being the primary influence on our child during formative years • Family as primary sphere of influence
Homeschool support/ Education-specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nontraditional environment classical, Catholic—creative, outside the box thinking • Homeschooling support • Balance of school and homeschool • Avoiding peer pressure at traditional school • The children as well as mom benefit from the rhythm of 2 days at school, 3 days at home. By being with other students those 2 days and being accountable to an outside teacher in addition to mom, my children get a better grasp of what personal responsibility is and apply it • Looking for education model that promotes joy in learning vs. learning to pass a test • Next best thing to homeschooling
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule flexibility • More flexible schedule • More opportunities for real life learning, for example, via field trips • Flexibility for travel and lifestyle • Schedule, my daughter is an elite gymnast
Religious/Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical world view (multiple respondents) • No Common Core (multiple respondents)

“Better learning environment” (60.0%), “Religious education” (55.2%), “Smaller class sizes” (48.8%), “Better education” (44.8%), and “Better preparation for college” (31.2%) were the next five reasons listed by respondents. The fewest respondents listed “Better teachers” (6.4%), “More extracurricular opportunities” (4.8%), “Less gang activity” (1.6%), “More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school (1.6%), or “Higher standardized test scores” (0.8%) as one of the top five reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool.

Information and decision making

The survey asked respondents about the information they would value and seek out in deciding to choose a hybrid homeschool, much as did Kelly and Scafidi (2013). Table 6 reported responses to “What information about hybrid schools is most important in helping select the best private school for your child? (you may mark as many or as few reasons as applied to your situation).”

Table 5. “Top 5 reasons” parents reported for choosing a hybrid homeschool.

Answer options	Response percent
Better learning environment	60.0
Religious education	55.2
Smaller class sizes	48.8
Better education	44.8
Better preparation for college	31.2
More individual attention for my child	29.6
Greater respect for my rights as a parent	29.6
More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement	29.6
Less time wasted during the school day	24.0
Other (please specify)	24.0
More attention to the unique needs of my child	20.8
Other students would be a better influence on my child	19.2
More responsive teachers and administrators	16.0
Better student discipline	14.4
Greater sense of community	11.2
Improved student safety	8.0
Other parents would be more concerned about their children’s education	8.0
Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable	8.0
Better teachers	6.4
More extracurricular opportunities	4.8
Less gang activity	1.6
More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school	1.6
Higher standardized test scores	0.8

Table 6. Types of information sought by parents.

Answer options	Response percent
The curriculum (i.e., content of instructional areas) and course descriptions	80.8
The ratio of students per teacher and the average class size	72.8
Evidence that the school is accredited by a recognized school accrediting agency	71.2
Whether the private school teaches your religion or any religion with which you are comfortable	67.2
The percentage of students who are accepted and attend college	53.6
The duration of the school year and the hours spent by the students in class	44.0
Evidence that the private school teaches character education	43.2
Whether parents have access to the head of school to express any concerns	35.2
The years of teaching experience and credentials of the teachers at the school	33.6
The disciplinary policy of the school	31.2
The financial condition of the school	25.6
The graduation rate for students attending the school	24.8
The quality and availability of extracurricular activities	24.8
The average performance on standardized tests by students in different grades	24.0
The colleges attended by graduates of the school	24.0
The percent of teachers and administrators who leave from year to year	24.0
The frequency and nature of disciplinary actions	16.8
The governance of the school, including the members of the board of trustees	16.0
Whether computers are used effectively in classroom instruction	8.0
Whether students have access to tablet, laptop, and classroom computers	7.2
Other (please specify)	7.2
The racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic makeup of the student population	4.8

Most respondents desired information about a hybrid homeschool’s curriculum, class size, and accreditation status, and its religious nature and success in sending graduates on to college. The five most-named responses

Table 7. “Most important” type of information sought by parents.

Answer options	Response percent
Evidence that the school is accredited by a recognized school accrediting agency	26.1
The curriculum (i.e., content of instructional areas) and course descriptions	25.2
Whether the private school teaches your religion or any religion with which you are comfortable	25.2
The ratio of students per teacher and the average class size	13.0
The percentage of students who are accepted and attend college	5.2
Other (please specify)	5.2
The graduation rate for students attending the school	1.7
The average performance on standardized tests by students in different grades	0.9
The years of teaching experience and credentials of the teachers at the school	0.9
Whether parents have access to the head of school to express any concerns	0.9
The frequency and nature of disciplinary actions	0.9
The disciplinary policy of the school	0.0
Evidence that the private school teaches character education	0.0
The quality and availability of extracurricular activities	0.0
The colleges attended by graduates of the school	0.0
The financial condition of the school	0.0
Whether students have access to tablet, laptop, and classroom computers	0.0
The percent of teachers and administrators who leave from year to year	0.0
Whether computers are used effectively in classroom instruction	0.0
The racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic makeup of the student population	0.0
The governance of the school, including the members of the board of trustees	0.0
The duration of the school year and the hours spent by the students in class	0.0

Table 8. Steps to gain information about hybrid homeschools.

Answer options	Response percent
Attend an information meeting for potential families sponsored by the school	95.1
Ask to tour the school	94.3
Review the school Web site in detail	94.3
Ask neighbors, friends, relatives, or other parents for their views	81.3
Review information available on the internet	74.0
Determine how convenient the private school is to where I live	67.5
Ask to observe a class being taught	45.5
Ask to meet privately with the head of school	42.3
Other (please specify)	4.9

Table 9. Parental confidence about obtaining information.

Answer options	Response percent
I believe I could typically get enough information to make an informed decision	91.9
Unless the hybrid school provided me additional information, I would be unable to make an informed decision	8.1

in this survey are the same as the top five in Kelly and Scafidi’s survey (though in a different order). Six respondents found value in every type of information suggested, and nine added others, most often a desire to have a strong parental influence within the context of the school and classroom environments (i.e., “The systems in place to make the partnership between parent and teacher work well,” and “The ability to have a say/influence in

education. To be true partners with teachers at school”). One respondent also gave a more extensive answer to this question:

While the checkboxes above are important, many other factors are equally important: non-traditional/living books/original source documents, creativity in teaching (sometimes best teachers not those with teaching degrees/less lecture, more student initiative), fewer worksheets, less time on assessments, more “real” learning, Socratic discussion, teaching students to think critically, not check boxes or just learn material for tests, opportunities for students to take courses of interest/use to them personally.

Respondents were then asked: “What information about hybrid schools is MOST important in helping select the best hybrid school for your child?” (Table 7).

When asked to name the most important information, only three answers were given by a quarter or more of respondents: accreditation, the content of the curriculum, and religious instruction. Eleven of the given responses were chosen by no respondents as the most important piece of information; in Kelly and Scafidi, all but two response options were selected at least once. Additional “other” responses focused on curriculum or the school environment, such as, “School’s philosophy on education,” “the feeling of family—all the teachers care about my children,” “Their ability to support our Biblical world view,” or “the authentic teaching of the Catholic faith.”

Respondents were then asked about how they would obtain information about hybrid homeschools, how confident they felt about their ability to obtain it, and how a lack of information might affect their school choice: “What steps would you take to get desired information about hybrid schools? (you may select as many or as few steps as you choose).” (Table 8).

Over 90% of respondents said they would attend an information meeting, ask to tour the school, and/or review the hybrid school’s Web site in detail. In Kelly and Scafidi, only asking to tour the school drew over 90% of respondents. Six respondents to this survey also said they would, for example, “review curriculum that is taught,” “talk to existing families that attend the school,” or “pray about it.”

Finally, respondents were asked whether they felt they could obtain the information needed for an informed decision: “In your experience, how confident are you that you could obtain the desired information about possible hybrid schools to which you might send your children?” (Table 9).

Nearly all respondents (91.9%) believed they could get enough information for an informed decision, comparable to the 83.3% reported by Kelly and Scafidi.

Discussion

Family characteristics

Regarding characteristics of hybrid homeschool families, respondents are wealthier and more educated than those in Kelly and Scafidi, and the metropolitan area. They are typically married, White, and suburban, college educated, and earn over \$100,000. Perhaps this is because hybrid school parents bear the financial burdens of both homeschool parents and private school parents: they must be available to homeschool their children and so have the means to support one homemaker (or have workplace flexibility), and pay tuition to the hybrid school.

These factors and school locations suggest that most of these students come from public school zones considered academically successful. In fact, financial factors may explain school locations in affluent settings. Many of the families in this survey come from full-time homeschooling environments. Although these parents are wealthier on average than the Kelly and Scafidi respondents, many lack the discretionary income for full-time private schools, especially if they have multiple children (as some parents noted). One school explicitly considers these middle-income families its target market, suggesting a growth area for such schools. Homeschool enrollment is rising, as is charter school enrollment, though charter school enrollment is not growing rapidly in suburban areas. Hybrid homeschools may be emerging to fill this demand for reasonably priced school choice in the suburbs.

The value of hybrid homeschool

Regarding what parents say they value in hybrid homeschooling, all four of Murphy's (2012) motivational frameworks seemingly appear. Parents of hybrid homeschool students tend to value overall school structure ("Better learning environment," "Better education," etc.) over specific school outcomes ("Higher standardized test scores," or "More extracurricular opportunities," for example). Relatively few respondents listed aspects such as "Better student discipline," "Improved student safety," or "Less gang activity," compared to respondents to Kelly and Scafidi. No respondent listed higher standardized test scores as one of their top three reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool, and only one listed it in their top five. (This contrasts Zeehandelaar and Winkler, who classified 23% of parents "test score hawks.") In addition, while 29.6% of respondents to this survey listed "More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement" as a top five reason in this survey, only 4.6% did so for Kelly and Scafidi's less affluent subjects. Differential parental motivations accord with prior findings on the demand side of school choice, such as Harris and Larsen (2015) and Stewart and Wolf (2014) who find limited motivation from test scores as such; rather they

prioritize their decision making along Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Parents of students coming from lower-performing schools focus on the more pressing needs of safety and basic skills, while the parents in the market for hybrid homeschools, having had those needs satisfied at home or through other schooling options, seek other things.

Finally, it is worth noting again that all of the schools in this study are explicitly religious. Eighty one point seven percent of respondents listed religion as a reason they chose their hybrid homeschool, but only 55.2% listed "Religious education" as a top five reason, and fewer than 20% of responding parents included religion as the most important reason for choosing one of these schools, suggesting that religious education, while important to these parents, may not be as important as other academic priorities. (In comparison, 29.7% of respondents listed "Religious education" as a top five reason for Kelly and Scafidi.)

Sources of information

Respondents reported that they would seek out and value information regarding a hybrid homeschool's curriculum, class size, accreditation status, religious nature, and success in sending graduates on to college. This accords with reported valued criteria by the private school parents surveyed by Kelly and Scafidi. However, the parents in this survey seem more definite in judging the "most important" evidence. They rated accreditation, curriculum, and religion as their top priorities more consistently than did the Kelly and Scafidi respondents. This may reflect the sample: unlike Kelly and Scafidi, all these schools are explicitly religious, and Georgia's HOPE Scholarship program provides college tuition and book funding for students graduating from accredited programs, perhaps sensitizing parents to accreditation (Kelly and Scafidi's respondents all come from public schools, per the regulations of Georgia's K-12 tuition tax credit program, and may have assumed their new schools were accredited). Both sets of parents seem confident that they could acquire sufficient information for informed decisions about their school options.

Conclusion

More work would be useful in drilling down into hybrid homeschool parents' responses to gain a fuller picture of their values and motivations. Interviewing hybrid homeschool parents (especially a group of parents who arrived from a variety of other schooling options) would be a fruitful next step. Other research paths would likely yield additional insight. For example, because of the explicitly religious nature of the schools here, one might expect a higher percentage of respondents to list that as a choice motivator.

It would be useful to know more about this aspect of parental choice (and if, for example, there is a gap between school founders/leaders, and the rest of the parent population at such schools). Second, several families indicated that they would prefer a full-time private education, but could not afford it. Given the large commitment even part-time homeschooling entails in terms of work and forgone income, these families likely differ qualitatively from those who would choose full-time homeschooling absent their hybrid schools. This suggests a third avenue: looking at the differences among the families who choose hybrid homeschools. Hybrid homeschools seem to attract families from a wide range of schooling experiences; parental motivations may vary depending on whether a family is choosing between a hybrid school versus full-time homeschooling, or a hybrid school versus a full-time private or public school. Finally, issues such as curriculum, finances, and the push/pull of the motivations suggested by Murphy (2012) would add to the discussion.

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