

FOCUS GROUP AND SURVEY FINDINGS MEMO FOR MY SCHOOLS NEWARK

To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: February 14, 2022
Re: Newark Parents Welcome My Schools Newark Website

The following memo outlines key findings based on quantitative and qualitative research among parents in Newark, New Jersey. Global Strategy Group conducted a survey between August 30 – September 9, 2021, and online focus groups on February 2 - 3, 2022.

Key Findings

Parents give the enrollment system lukewarm ratings. Accessibility and lack of information key complaints.

- Parents in Newark rate the current enrollment system net positively (47% positive/34% negative), but among those who are dissatisfied, common themes that are brought up include “hard to use,” “takes work,” and “information.”
- Online focus groups revealed that parents were generally aware of Newark Enrolls, and a number of participants had positive experiences using it, while others shared confusion or questions about the system.

There is real appetite for additional help when enrolling students in Newark schools.

- Nearly half of parents in Newark say that they or someone they know had a hard time finding whom to contact for support or questions (48% applies to me, my family or someone I know), which nearly three quarters of Newark parents say is very important (71%).
- More than a third of parents also say that they or someone they know have had a hard time getting a response from Newark Public Schools’ contact center (40% applies to me, my family, or someone I know) and nearly three quarters say that this is most important (72%).

Parents welcome a new resource that provides clear information about schools in Newark.

- More than four in ten parents say that they or someone they know experienced not getting reliable, clear information on schools in the area (43% applies to me, my family, or someone I know), and more than two thirds believe it is very important (68 %).
- Almost all parents say that a new resource that makes it easier and more direct to get information about all school options in Newark would be helpful (85% helpful), and even more are interested in an in-person support option that would help them choose where to enroll their child (92% helpful).

- In qualitative research, we saw that many parents reference how there was not a single resource that had compiled all the information about schools in Newark, which meant they had to rely on searching individual schools on Google.

Teacher quality, school resources, and location are key priorities for parents when picking a school.

- Many parents in online focus groups bring up the quality of the teachers, their backgrounds, their capacity to dedicate time to the students, and student-to-teacher ratio as important metrics when deciding where to send their children to school.
- Others bring up the available resources at the school as well as quality teachers, programs, and academic quality.
- Location also comes up as a priority for parents who want to be able to send their children to a school that is close to their home so that it is more easily accessible and they don't have to incur the cost of commuting.

My Schools Newark gets universally positive initial reactions.

- When focus group participants are initially introduced to the My Schools Newark website, not a single participant had anything negative to say about it.
- They like that it is easy to read, well-organized, and appreciate the useful information provided.
- When asked to rate the usability after just spending a few minutes on the website, nearly every participant rates the website's usability as a 7 out of 10 or higher.
- Without prompting, many participants quickly gravitate towards the "Explore Schools" tool of the website.

Most welcome and appreciate the "Explore Schools" tool.

- There is an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the "Explore Schools" tool in qualitative research.
- Parents point out how they like that it is a map tool, and that they can type in their address or zip code and figure out which schools are in their radius.
- Parents also appreciate the information provided for each school, including an actual picture of the school and the neighborhood it's in, upcoming deadlines, and information about the school's sports programs and academic scores.
- Parents like that you can bookmark schools and revisit them at a different time. Ultimately, parents found the "Explore Schools" tool easy to use and well-designed. Most participants rate the usability of the "Explore Schools" tool as a 7 out of 10 or higher, with only a few participants rating it as a 5 or 6.

Methodology

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey among 400 voters in Newark that included 216 interviews among parents in Newark between August 30 – September 9, 2021. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 4.9% among voters, and +/-6.7% among parents. Care was taken to ensure geographic and demographic divisions of the population of both voters and parents are properly represented.

Global Strategy Group conducted four online focus groups with parents from Newark, New Jersey on February 2-3, 2022.