

# Sycamore Community Schools

*Sycamore vs Private Schools*

*Fostering Community and Selling Sycamore's  
Strengths*



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# Why was this project proposed?

- **Private School Appeal:** Parents are curious about why some families choose private schools despite the district's strong reputation, seeking alternatives to what the public school offers.
- **Loss of Talent:** There is disappointment over losing students who could have contributed significantly to academics, athletics, and community development within the district.
- **Teacher Concerns:** Teachers are worried about the impact of losing talented and engaged students, which can affect classroom dynamics and overall educational quality.
- **Ongoing Investigation:** Administrators are already looking into the issue, working to understand the underlying reasons for the trend and explore potential solutions.
- **Understanding Choices:** The goal is to better understand the reasons families choose private schools and to identify ways to address these concerns within the public school system.
- **Unseen Resources:** There is concern that families may not fully realize the resources and assistance available in the district, which may exceed what private schools offer.
- **Shifting Funding:** National and statewide evidence suggests more funding is moving toward private and charter schools, which could impact public schools like Sycamore.
- **Targeted Advocacy:** Gathering data on how families in our zoning area make school decisions could help create more targeted advocacy efforts as school funding models continue to shift.

# Why is it important to address this topic?

- **Strong Sense of Community:** Sycamore offers a welcoming environment where students connect, belong, and thrive. The school spirit is unmatched, with pride visible at events like Homecoming and sports competitions and the arts.
- **Diverse Extracurriculars:** With clubs like Tea Club, Fencing, Science Bowl, and Model UN, Sycamore ensures every student can explore their interests and build connections.
- **Active Community Support:** The Sycamore community extends beyond students, with retirees, parents, and families playing an active role in events and public activities, fostering strong relationships.
- **Academic Excellence and Diversity:** Sycamore blends strong academics, diversity, and a variety of opportunities, helping students discover and pursue their passions.
- **Pride from Alumni and Families:** Sycamore has strong support from current families and alumni, shown through visible pride like flags along Montgomery Road and participation in school events.
- **Successful Programs:** Sycamore's programs are top-tier, with championships at the district and state levels. Continued student enrollment will ensure more success in academics, arts, athletics, and extracurriculars.
- **Community Culture:** Sycamore's unique culture of pride and tradition, seen in events like the Homecoming parade, creates a sense of belonging that private schools cannot replicate.
- **Impact of Shifting Funding:** As more funding moves toward private and charter schools, maintaining strong enrollment at Sycamore is vital to preserving opportunities for students.

(based upon feedback from Taylor Porter, Ashwin Corattiyil, Andrew Ovington, Chad Lewis)

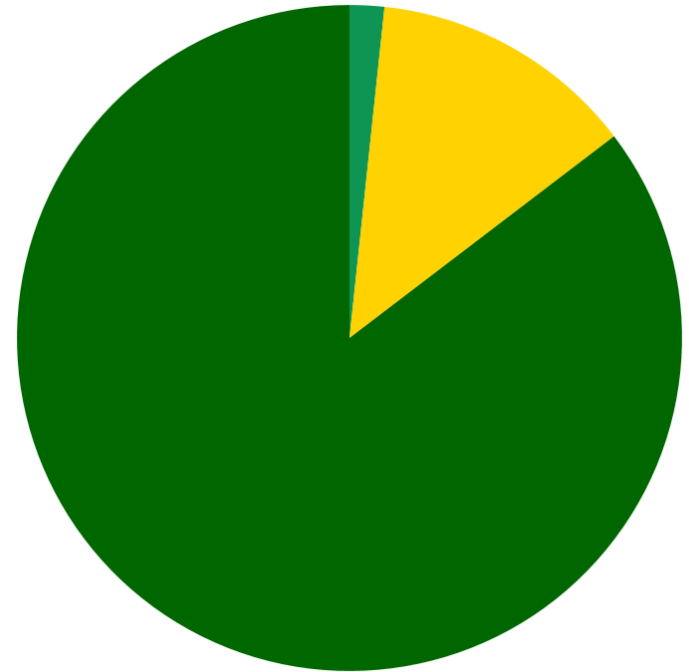
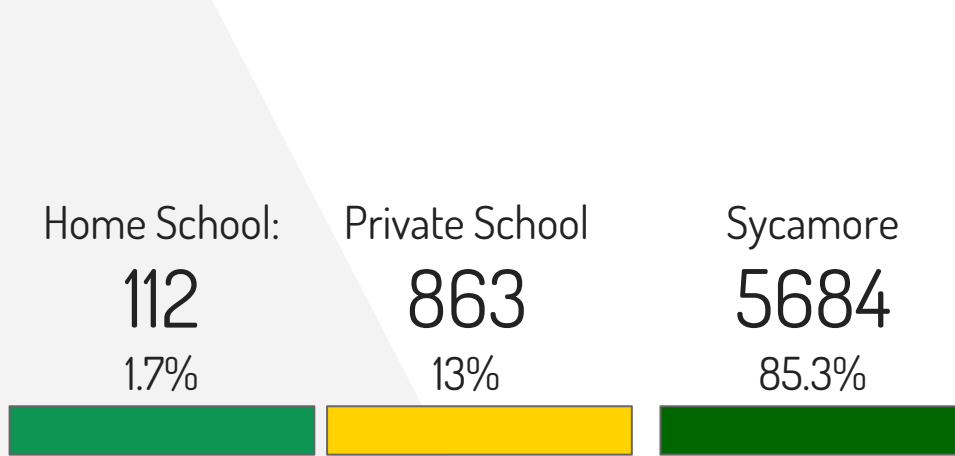
# Essential Guiding Questions / Problem Statement

The district seeks to identify, research, and develop recommendations to retain our students within our school district.

- Identify the list of private schools attended by Sycamore families (Sycamore transportation will have this information).
- What are the reasons that students are choosing to attend private school? What is the breakdown of the reasons?
- How many are attending due to athletics? Have they been successful?
- How can we get students to return?
- What barriers currently exist to achieving our goals?
- What key factors will need to be considered and addressed as part of this project?
- What costs are associated with ideas/programming that might be needed?
- How do we measure the success of this project? What does a successful project look like when completed?



# What percent of district students attend private schools?



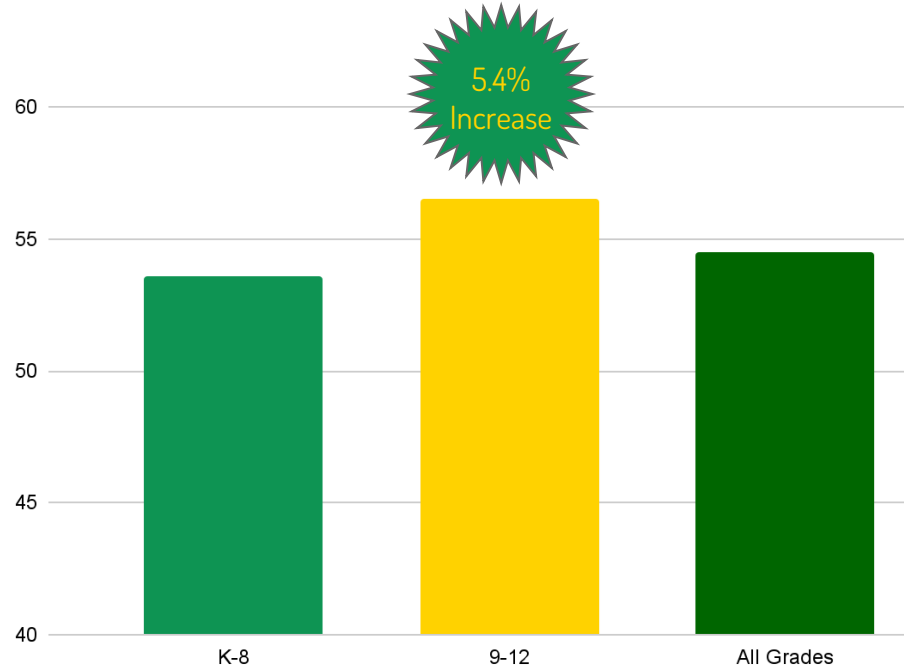
Source: Transportation Department, 2024-25

# Are students more likely to attend private schools in different phases of education?

Average  
Number of  
Students  
Grades  
K-8  
53.6

Average  
Number of  
Students  
Grades  
9-12  
56.5

Average  
Number of  
Students  
All  
Grades  
54.5



Source: Transportation Department, 2024-25, grade not known for 155 students who attend k-12 school

# Private School Value Propositions

## Key Marketing Messages of Private Schools in Greater Cincinnati

- **Academic Excellence:** Emphasis on rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum designed to foster critical thinking and lifelong learning. [countryday.net](http://countryday.net)
- **Individualized Attention:** Small class sizes and personalized learning plans to cater to each student's unique needs and talents. [niche.com](http://niche.com)
- **Faith-Based Learning:** Integration of religious values and teachings into daily activities, aiming to nurture moral development and spiritual growth. [CHCA](http://CHCA)
- **Athletic Programs:** Comprehensive sports offerings that promote physical health, teamwork, and school spirit with very high participation across varsity and club. [niche.com](http://niche.com)
- **Community Engagement:** Strong emphasis on building supportive, inclusive communities with active involvement from students, parents, and faculty. [Bethany School](http://Bethany School)

These elements collectively position Greater Cincinnati's private schools as institutions committed to holistic student development, blending academic rigor with spiritual and community values.

# What efforts are private schools making to attract Sycamore Students?

## Open Houses

Offered from Kindergarten to High School; largely happens in the fall, well in advance of registration deadlines.

## Ongoing Marketing and Communication

Professional mailers and emails are sent regularly to perspective families; yard signs are prevalent throughout the community; advertising via billboards; special interest features / PR in local magazines, etc.. Personalized phone calls/follow-ups.

## Camps

Summer camp schedules (academic & athletic) are communicated in the fall via professional catalogs. Allows for family planning and registration with the rest of camps in Jan/Feb/March. Registration through central site with a central payment system.

# Community Survey on Private School Decisions

## Objective:

- Understand decision making behind public vs. private school choice and the importance of factors affecting decisions
- Understand effectiveness of current efforts to inform decisions, and solicit input into how the process could be improved

## Timing:

- Fielded in late Jan - early March 2025 via postcard mailer & grassroots efforts

## Results:

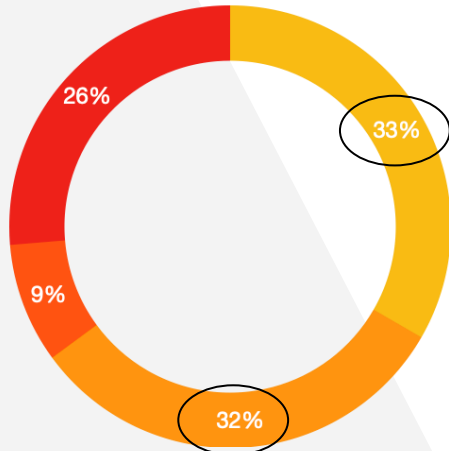
- 57 responses

# Timing of Decisions and Importance of Factors

## When Decisions Were Made

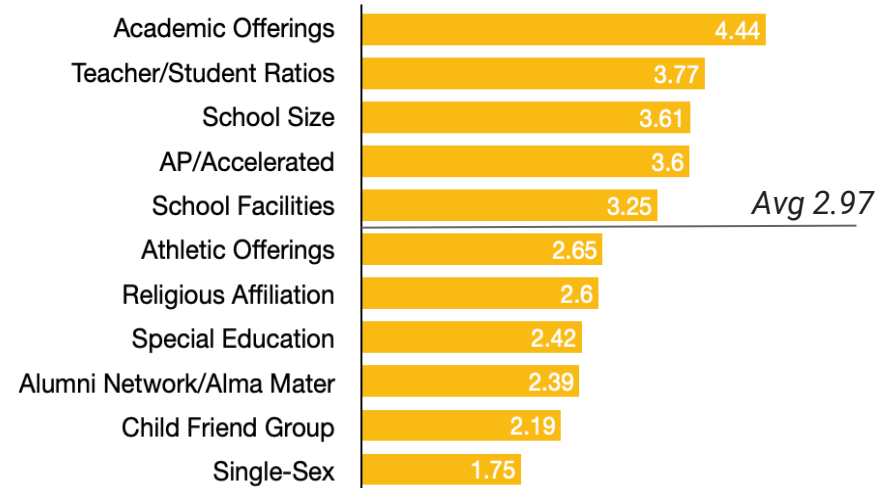
Nearly  $\frac{2}{3}$  of respondents had decided in **Elementary School or earlier**

- Birth - Preschool
- Elementary
- Greene/Junior High
- Differed by Child/Other



## Rank Order of Factors Affecting Decisions (on a 5-pt scale)

Highest ranking factors all **academic related**; athletics ranks below average



# Why Private Schools are Chosen over Sycamore

*(see appendix for additional verbatims on each)*

## Cultural Experience

"<Parents> are picking it based on culture, and what they feel is the best cultural fit for their kids. This has very little to do with Sycamore, and more to do about the culture that those schools offer."

## Developing the Whole Person

"<They> offer an opportunity to grow both educationally as well as a person....their mission to develop the kids to be more than just students, but also active members in the community is important to us."

## Educational Preferences/Needs

"I have expectations for what/how my children are taught and the private schools they attend are the ones who fulfill them. Sycamore was never a consideration."

## Personal Fit

"...the whole point of education should be about what is best for the child...the beautiful thing about living in Sycamore schools, is that there is a variety of options for families in the local area to truly find the best environment for their child."

## Faith-Based/Alumni Factor

"If you want religious affiliation, Sycamore won't ever be able to fulfill that need. For us, religion was the most important aspect of education for our children."

"A huge factor was my husband going to St. X...so that was sort of always the plan for our boys as well."

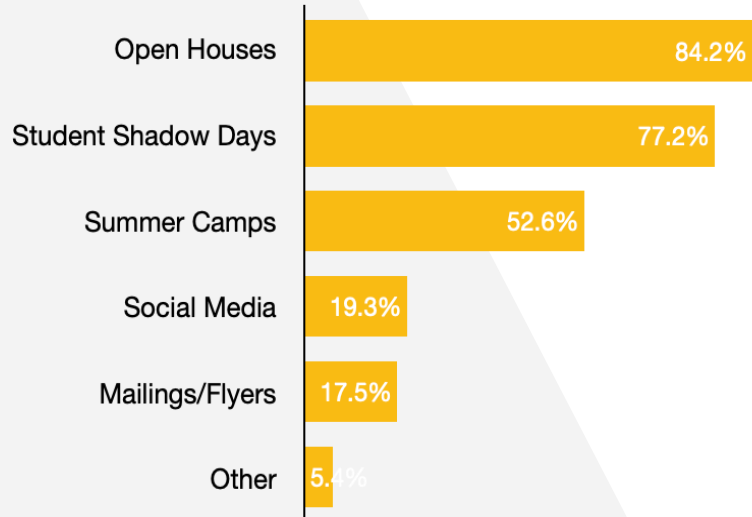
## Specific Situations/Frustrations

"We had one major concern that was flat out disregarded; the quantity of the electronic "academic offerings". Everything, including free time, was on a computer."

# How Can Sycamore Improve During the Process?

## Which School Marketing Materials are Most Effective?

*Open houses and shadow days are ranked as most effective by respondents*



## Respondent Feedback on Sycamore Efforts to Help Decision Making

"Open houses, opportunities to learn more about what is happening in the schools."

"More information about kindergarten enrollment earlier and open houses to tour the schools."

"Build community connection in younger grades."

"...inform parents what Sycamore can offer at Greene and Jr High. We all know Sycamore High school has a great reputation."

"Families begin making high school choices no later than 7th grade. Get the kids in the building. Get them excited early."

"... Catholic schools are doing a nice job of capturing the hearts of these K-8 students EARLY via summer camps that seem to really build pride in the school. Could Sycamore do something similar?"

"...it's hard to compete with all of the private school open houses and shadow days. It seems harder to find this information <for Sycamore>."



How is Sycamore currently helping families  
make a school decision?

# Current efforts to encourage students to pick Sycamore

## To Attract Upcoming High School Students:

- October 17-Aviator Preview Night (improved - expanded and targeted last 2 years)
- November 21 Aviator Shadow Day (targeted - new this year based on 8th grade feedback)
- December 13- JH/HS Choir Tours
- January 11- JH Pep Rally with AveCave (newer)
- January 17- 8th grade day at the HS
- January 16- Academic Fair (added clubs this year)
- January 16- Freshman Camp
- January 31- Mr. Porter joined the JH PTO meeting (newer, biggest this year, watch it [HERE.](#))
- Feb- Course optioning with SHS counselors
- February 4 - Student to Student Panel
- February 10 - Meet Mr. Porter at the Junior High with JH PTO (newer - year 3)
- February 14 - Student received letter in mail from Mr. Porter welcoming them to Sycamore High School. (new this year)

## To Attract the Entire Community:

- Increased “Youth Nights” at High School athletic programs
- Athletic Camps and Clinics provided throughout the year and over summer
- Theater Camp provided in summer/shows throughout the year
- Homecoming Parade and Pep Rally
- Ask Anything Sessions
- Mailers sent to incoming kindergarten families
- Mailers sent to community about accomplishments/strategic plan
- Social media posts to highlight district wins

# What are Sycamore's Value Propositions?

## Advertised Value Propositions

1. Academic Excellence:
  - *Niche ratings, Ohio Dept of Ed data etc.*
2. Comprehensive curriculum:
  - *programs in arts, music, technology, and phys ed.*
3. Extracurricular activities:
  - *athletics offerings, clubs, and other enrichment*
4. Community Engagement:
  - *PTOs, partnerships, aligned with local businesses*
5. Supportive Learning Environment:
  - *Social-Emotional Learning , special education, gifted programs*
6. College Counseling and Readiness:
  - *college counseling, internships etc.*
7. Instructional Quality:
  - *high quality staff, teaching support and prof dev for teachers*

# How are other districts maintaining their student populations? Is this a concern?

**All public schools are losing students to private schools.  
No district is immune.**

**Public schools are attempting to showcase their schools to retain students.**

## **Madeira**

Quality Report postcards with a link are mailed to all Madeira residents.  
Videos on Culture of Madeira, Made in Madeira Scholarships.

## **Mason**

Showcase opportunities of the district on the homepage. School tours throughout the year. Guides on School Culture, Inclusiveness, Personalized Learning. Learning nights to learn about skills, teaching, courses, resources, etc. 'Mason Moment Matters' on homepage - Stories about School Staff.

# How are other districts maintaining their student populations? Is this a concern?

## **Lakota**

Why Choose Lakota video on homepage during school registration. Showcase 'Lakota Gems'. 'We Are...' Lakota as a way to showcase the district.

## **Mariemont**

'Distinctively Mariemont' branding. State of the Schools video highlighting accomplishments. Homepage showcases scores, scholarships, courses, athletics.

## **Finneytown**

'Why Finneytown' videos.

**Districts don't seem to have advertised open houses similar to private schools or really sell the district like private schools do.**



# Our Recommendations

# Strategy Considerations for the District

- Problem definition and refinement: what kind and how severe of an issue this for the district?
- Opportunity for the District to refine strategy based on their interpretation of the problem and areas where there is most benefit is
  - District should decide what resources need to go into areas identified as strategic
  - District to decide what outcomes determine success
  - Need to focus on getting families in EARLIER to see facilities, educational process, etc
  - More Remind Notifications
  - Inform our Administration on different efforts
- Set up criteria and measures to track annual changes:
  - Follow up on students who replied “considering private schools” in 8th grade
  - Seek feedback after events aimed at retaining families
  - Track trends in percentage of students in district that attend private schools

# Recommendations

- **Ensure communication of any district event goes to both current & prospective families**
- Start high school transition activities in early fall to align with Private Schools
- Extend recruiting to earlier grades to capture families deciding as early as 5th/6th grade
- Create open house for kindergarten/grade school families prior to registration (Oct/Nov)
- Schedule & communicate summer camps by late fall. Centralized catalog and registration/payment system
- Ensure candidates for Community Relations backfill have experience with strategic institutional marketing
- Make Sycamore's Value Proposition clear and easy to access on the district website for searching families
- Showcase Sycamore's value proposition beyond just Social Media - how do we broaden reach?
- Use testimonials from families who moved here specifically for the schools in marketing and media
- Ask each building's PTO to consider yard signs for incoming students to create pride & visibility
- Track percentage of students choosing private schools or other metrics deemed important
- *Monitor EdChoice/Levy Structure Education/SGO incentives for state income tax refunds*

# Risk Factor- State Vouchers

- What are Educational Vouchers? (IE. School Choice)
- What happened in 2023 to change the state voucher program?
- How have Universal Vouchers affected the state budget?
- Lessons from Arizona and Florida.
- Could our community be impacted by Universal Vouchers?

## **Possible Outcomes:**

**As Sycamore is surrounded by private school alternatives, more students may consider private schools because of the tuition funding from vouchers.**

**As voucher cost expands at the state level and public school funding is diminished, more pressure will be placed on local schools to raise money through local taxes and levies.**

# Final Considerations

- Making an impact will require partnership and coordination across buildings & administration - it's not just a high school issue!
- Is prioritizing this issue more important than other initiatives? Must consider the time and resources of administration and others that would be involved to engage families across all grade levels.
- Private Schools have dedicated Alumni or Admissions Offices that own this workstream. Is that something the district is willing to do instead to alleviate the burden on administration?
- Can the district re-think the qualifications and role/responsibilities of Ms. Bonbright's backfill to better combat the issue of Private School marketing & attrition?
- **Creating a culture of community, connection, and whole-child development is KEY**

The slide features a dark green background with a white text area. The background is decorated with geometric shapes: a yellow triangle in the top-left corner, a grey triangle in the bottom-left corner, and a yellow triangle in the top-right corner. A dark green horizontal bar is located at the bottom of the slide.

# Appendix

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Cultural Experience

"<Parents> are picking it based on culture, and what they feel is the best cultural fit for their kids. This has very little to do with Sycamore, and more to do about the culture that those schools offer."

"I chose All Saints over Sycamore due to 1) concerns of too much technology use in elementary, 2) fears of the unknown for reading curriculum in primary grades, 3) religious affiliation / wanting our kids to be in a Catholic environment to grow their faith beyond our house, 4) small size / tight community."

"Smaller community, close knit feeling was desired; wanted our kids to feel a part of a community and feel seen and valued; wanted our kids to grow in their faith as a foundation for their upbringing; academics aligned to our values."

"We appreciate the faith based education, smaller classes, flexible schedules, individual help, quality courses and athletics. We like the house system."

"Greater accountability, higher standards, tighter community, more conservative."

"We were also glad to have a house system that made a fairly big school smaller and a mentor group class that made it smaller yet. These also provide opportunities for leadership and there is an expectation that all students lead - it doesn't always go to the highest performers."

"The fear of sycamore...growing too big is a very real concern since this area continues to boom! But I do not want my child going to a huge school like Mason. I think sycamore has a big challenge of making it feel like Madeira school district but not big like Mason."

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Cultural Experience (Cont...)

"While a catholic education is important to our family, there are many cultural aspects that influenced our choice to send to catholic school vs Sycamore."

"I grew up going to a large public school and my husband grew up in small, catholic school. We wanted our kids to be a part of a smaller community to foster friendships and have better oppty for extra-curricular activities."

"Prefer smaller schools with a strong sense of community and where everyone knows each other."

"It's important that my child feels comfortable in the school community and not lost in the crowd"

"...their house system and mentor group programs make the school feel smaller. Additionally these provide additional leadership opportunities for students. Every student is expected to be a leader in some way. At Sycamore it feels like many of the same kids are leaders in everything."

"We want a small environment with more control on the culture."

"The facilities in class offerings are available at Sycamore...but the key difference is culture. While only a few students at each school may take advantage of the most advanced, academic offerings, the culture at a school like Saint X has every student striving to achieve at whatever level, and they push each other for mutual success."

"I want the kids to be surrounded by students who try hard and have a decently high expectation for themselves. For me, it's the values and tone of the school more than the specific types/diversity in offerings."

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Developing the “Whole Person”

“We choose St. X because to us, it feels like they have the ability to focus on developing the 'whole child'. We are sending them to a school that is just as disciplined in their academic studies as they are their community service.”

“...the one thing that Sycamore cannot compete with is the culture. Saint X, is able to offer an opportunity to grow both educationally as well as a person....their mission to develop the kids to be more than just students, but also active members in the community is important to us.”

“My husband went to St. X and loved his experience there, so it definitely had a huge impact in our decision to send our boys there. He felt like St. X developed him as a whole, including his values, his faith, his service to others, as well as giving him a strong academic foundation to take into college and beyond with him.”

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Educational Needs

"I think education isn't one size fits all, and different children need different things which can mean different spaces."

"Offer more than a one size fits all special ed approach. The school tried to accommodate my son but it was too little."

"We concluded that Moeller would be a better fit for our child "in the middle."

"...we feel that we can avoid a focus on testing and instill a love of learning being in an environment that is more focused on my kid than state standards."

"We did not feel that our child was receiving the most beneficial education, due to the extreme use of technology in her first grade class, which was the most important aspect for us."

"I have expectations for what/how my children are taught and the private schools they attend are the ones who fulfill them. Sycamore was never a consideration."

"Class sizes and active learning outside the classroom are the most important factors for us."

"For my older it was about special needs services."

"More Technology is not always better. Being on shorts and youtube channels during the school day is not acceptable for many families."

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Educational Needs (Cont...)

“For special ed it is having small groups of like students with specialized teaching staff. Not forcing kids to be with gen ed kids especially if the child is overwhelmed by the number of kids in a classroom/gym/lunchroom. Stop forcing round peg through square hole.”

“Word on the street- easy school....they know how to play the game so all the kids get into college. We wanted something richer. We sacrificed vacations and neighborhood friends to do so. That was after 3 years of asking for better and fighting for all of the kids.”

“EdChoice has removed monetary obstacles that may have previously held families back from seeking a private education that aligns more with their preferred educational style.”

“Symmes was way too large for my youngest autistic son. Every day he would start his day in a large crowded environment and it was difficult for him to regulate and it just started the day off on the wrong foot.”

“We wanted limited screen use, play based kindergarten, focus on enrichment activities, the arts, science that was hands on.”

“Kids aren’t meant to sit at desks all day. It’s important for us to find a school that incorporates active learning outside of the classroom.”

“Sycamore offers foreign languages at an age that is too late to acquire language and reach a proficient level, most kids I know have dropped out as soon as they have the minimum 3 years for college application and unable to speak even at beginner level. Not enough visual arts in 5-8, not enough gym in 5-12.”

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Personal Fit

“From my perspective, there is nothing wrong with Sycamore. We made a personal decision that seemed right for our sons...kids sometimes need to explore different spaces and it’s no negative reflection on the home school.”

“Sycamore was too big and did not meet his needs. Having a smaller school with individualized learning and not a one size fits all is so important.”

“...the whole point of education should be about what is best for the child...the beautiful thing about living in Sycamore schools, is that there is a variety of options for families in the local area to truly find the best environment for their child and to allow their child to succeed whether that be at Sycamore or somewhere else in the area.”

“We felt that Saint X would be able to provide a more tailored experience for my son’s high school career and provide mentorship into manhood. We also like that Saint X had a separate college counseling center.”

“For my youngest she went there since daycare and fell in love so it was hard for us to move her. The support, personal care and attention, and small classes influenced her and our decision.”

“Nothing they can do, just difference in what people value and can afford. Not right or wrong.”

“Grew up going to private schools, feel like it’s a better education and matches our values. Feel public schools are too liberal and don’t have as higher standards. Personal decision.”

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Personal Fit (Cont...)

“I did not want my children feeling lost in a large population at school. My shy sensitive introverted daughter thrives much better in smaller environments.”

“Our oldest child tends to do better in a smaller environment with close relationships with teachers, so we liked that All Saints felt small for him. 2) We liked the idea of seeing the same ~50 kids in each grade, meaning our kids would always have someone he's friends with in his classroom each year. 3) I am a transplant to Cincinnati, which can be hard as a mom, so the constant discussion of the closely knit All Saints community stemming from its small size felt appealing.”

“More than teacher/student ratios, was the fact that I know and trust who will be teaching my children. And I know the expectations & values the schools look for in their hiring process and know we share the same views on how to best educate children. We share the same views on curriculum choices. I know at a private school, teachers are partners & will call/text me if my child has an issue, has misbehaved or was being picked on. I know they will parent my kids & their peers the same way we do as parents.”

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Faith - Based or Alumni Factors

"We are Catholic ...It was very important to us to have our children in a faith based community."

"My husband felt strongly about a Catholic education and I liked the small grade size at All Saints. I don't love the diversity statistics but we try to expose our kids to people in other ways."

"A huge factor was my husband going to St. X when he was in high school, so that was sort of always the plan for our boys as well."

"Alumni legacy was the biggest factor, followed closely by the religious affiliation."

"If you want religious affiliation, Sycamore won't ever be able to fulfill that need. For us, religion was the most important aspect of education for our children."

"Bringing in God (our religion affiliation ) and religion brings a feeling of greater purpose and love to a lot of kids who can feel and be lost in so many ways."

"My husband & I are both products of Catholic education; it was important for us to give our son the same exposure."

"We liked that he learned more about own faith and about others."

My spouse and I both went to Catholic schools and had a wonderful experience. We want the same experiences and education for our children."

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Faith - Based or Alumni Factors (Cont...)

“Wanted to raise our children with Catholic/religious upbringing; want this to be core to their foundation.”

“We were married in the Catholic Church, my husband attended private Jesuit high school. He felt strongly about a Catholic education which caused us to look at All Saints, the church we attend, for our kids schooling.”

“I want prayer to be part of their daily life, I want them to know the Bible, I want the values of Christianity incorporated into school policies and classes”

“My catholic faith, along with the church community, played a big part in the decision. While I do not know how much spirituality or religion will play a part in my kids lives when they grow up, it was important I gave them a foundation that fits our family. They will choose their own path one day, but having an education rooted in that tradition works for where we are. Plus, the catholic schools do not feel like I am sacrificing the educational side as they seem strong and the values feel lived out in a positive way.”

“I believe God is so important for children to learn about and know friends who feel the same. I love diversity but wish public schools opened this concept or even had classes the kids could take to choose to learn about religion.”

“The alumni network is extremely important. Having a very engaged alumni group that continues to promote the school decades after they graduate, and offers opportunities to high school students to get exposure in new areas that may be of interest to them is extremely important. Classroom work is important, but life experiences are better and supplemental classroom experience.”

“We discovered that the private schools do have a strong network that can be vital in supporting roles post college.”

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Specific Situations/Frustrations

“As previously mentioned, my child was coming home bored in one subject but yet he needed help in reading due to starting during COVID. Instead I couldn't get his teacher to help him or meet my child where he was. The tone from the top did not help us either, which was alarming to experience. In addition in first grade she was sharing many beliefs with him that are not appropriate for the classroom. Also, she never stood in front of the class to teach but instead would put him in front of the laptop.”

“I think we got lucky in Kindergarten ...my daughter loved her time there. School was her favorite place to be. First grade came around and she had a new teacher. A class with many IEP kids who all were behavior issues. There was no classroom management and when I asked it was brushed over every time. It was such a bad year the teacher even quit! My Daughter cried every morning before school. She hated it. I immediately knew we had to make a change.”

“Our choice was primarily driven by the pandemic first and foremost. We wanted a safe school with appropriate caution in place. We also wanted a school that would take our toddler. Since we were new to the community, joining people with a similar faith seemed the most comfortable and easiest way to help our transition.”

“As two Sycamore grads raising a family, we were open to a large school size, as it aligned with our experiences, however with our children, we saw and experienced the flaws in where students can become overlooked.”

“My child was getting bored in class. Instead of helping him find more challenging materials his teacher sent me a list of websites that I should use to challenge him at home. She told him he needed to slow down and wait for the other children and sit there quietly. He was a first grade boy at that time.”

# Verbatims Outlining Survey Themes

## Unique Situations/Frustrations (Cont...)

"We had one major concern that was flat out disregarded; the quantity of the electronic "academic offerings". Everything, including free time, was on a computer."

"Electronics were being used in place of real world application, reading a book verses being an e-book. Playing mathematic games verses writing mathematical equations or learning with physical tools. They also had the option of playing video games during any and all down time instead of connecting with other students and building relationships in meaningful and lasting ways."

"Young children aren't meant to be starting at a screen all day. It was extremely alarming when A. we expressed our concerns to the principal and the response was "well if you think this is bad, just wait until your child gets to the fifth grade", and B. we asked why the curriculum required so much technology use and the response was, "Well because that is how the curriculum companies build it" (Shouldn't that be a red flag?). It is a disservice to young students to have them engaging daily with a screen instead of people."

"#1 reason why we left. Sycamore has a great special ed reputation but it was not a good fit for my son. Too large and never addressed the main problem. Having a small classroom environment with teachers who understand autistic children has been a game changer for my son."

"From day one in this new chaotic classroom, my son was distressed. He went from a happy kid who loved preschool to crying every single day. It got to the point where he said he "wanted to go to sleep and never wake up ever again" because he didn't want to go to preschool ever again."

"...a combination of social issues and interaction w that particular teacher lead to our decision to change schools. My son ultimately had an amazing day shadowing at Country Day where he ultimately enrolled and is currently thriving and loving school."

# More Ideas to Assist with Decision Making

**“Showcase how they can connect at a more personal level.** Offer classes to the kids in the district that don’t attend the school (specials, summer). Invite them to mingle with students from the school to make connections.”

“If a family has chosen private for elementary (like All Saints) **hit them directly with the superior academic experience Sycamore has to offer.** They may also be able to showcase spiritual/religious extracurriculars like service clubs, etc. **so parents see a 'full person' experience.**”

**“I think open houses at entry point grades would help (ie kindergarten, 5th grade and 9th grade) would help.** Entering a large system from a private school is likely to be a culture shock, need to find ways to ease that worry and build community and connections that don’t happen naturally.”

**“Perhaps more ability for parents to tour the school and engage with the school prior to enrollment.** When deciding to send our child to private school there was no opportunity to easily learn more about what the local public elementary school had to offer unless you were already enrolled.”

**“Maintaining statistics about the academic and career success of graduates** would be very useful. I suspect people would be shocked at what Sycamore Graduates are doing.”

“I like the direction the Athletic programs are going with where they **try to include the younger grades in camps, games, and activities to keep the athletes wanting to go to Sycamore.**”

“I REALLY appreciated my tour of Montgomery Elementary...**Is there a group way to do that for those parents in the preschool years who are on the fence** (I think that’s actually a pretty big group), much like All Saints would do an info night in fall and open house in January?”

# More Ideas to Assist with Decision Making P.2

**“Introduce them to the school.** Invite them to participate in events like father daughter dance, other community events, after school sports and classes, summer camps.”

**“Summer sports camps should be an easy way to help sell the school!** Put some time and energy into getting those stronger.”

“Info night. Personal outreach. **Exit interview upon disenrollment form.**”

**“Volunteer in the community. Stay connected with Alumni.”**

**“Highlight the Synn lab more** and provide a way for parents to see that a big school like Sycamore can have small intimate experiences.”

**“Read up on studies regarding technology for young learners and how it impacts their brains,** their learning, and their communication skills and think about changing how much the district relies on technology for the younger students. Also, a focus on true learning and content rather than programs like SEL would be good too.”

**“Have a cadence, every 5 years, to re-assess if new technology is actually benefiting the growth and development of children.** Ed Tech is changing schools, and its also re-wiring our children's brains. It felt that the decisions for new products were made at a high level and there was no thought into how these technological "tools" could be more harmful than beneficial compared to the traditional way of learning.”

“Do a better job of **communicating with new families.**”

# More Ideas to Assist with Decision Making P.3

**“Act like a private school when it comes to marketing and engaging with families during Junior High.** The Junior High experience is the least strong of all the Sycamore schools so I would improve this and start adding much more accelerated courses, better athletics, and attention to the pending decision into the engagement with those families. **Do more to engage younger kids into the 'Aviator' experience** at the high school as well - the more they see themselves there the more they will consider it a first option vs a fall-back option to private choices.”

“You cannot be all things to all people, but you can **choose areas that you are good at and be the go to in those areas.**”

**“Give parents an alternative resource when they feel that they have a roadblock** in the lower level administration.”

**“I think open houses and shadow days are huge.** Anything that gets the kids AND parents more comfortable with the buildings, faculty, offerings, etc.”

**“Please consider a house system at the high school like at Moeller.** Each house has students from every grade and you stay in the same house throughout your study. Consider converting the aviator bell to be more similar to the mentor group model. Here again, students are in the same group all four years and there are a small group of kids from each grade in the group. Older students help and lead.”

# Marketing From Private Schools

**ST. XAVIER**

## SUMMER CAMPS

2025

600 W. North Bend Rd. Cincinnati, Ohio 45224

**ST. XAVIER** Summer Camps – Save The Date

St. Xavier High School offers a variety of summer camps where students meet new friends, develop new skills and explore core tenets of Jesuit education. Through hands-on activities, St. Xavier teachers and coaches promote fun filled summer experiences. Financial aid is available; contact admissions@stxavier.org. 9th grade boys are limited to St. Xavier students. Registration begins on February 12.

### Explore

**Chess Camp**  
Boys and Girls rising into 6th-9th grades. From beginners to intermediate players. Campers will learn the basics and more sophisticated strategies. June 9 - 13 12:30 - 3 PM.  
Cost: \$200.

**Guitar Camp**  
Boys and Girls rising into 7th, 8th and 9th grades. For beginners and intermediate players. Campers will practice techniques and improve skills with peers. Wicked jam sessions encouraged. June 23 - 27 from 12:45 - 3 PM.  
Cost: \$200.

**Camp A Cappella**  
Open to everyone 6th-9th grade. Camp A Cappella will feature a variety of arrangements of pop songs, all summing with a performance. Come as you are, even the most seasoned singer to someone looking to explore their voice, this camp is for you. Let's make some great harmony together at St. X's. Camp A Cappella, June 9 - 13 from 12:45 - 3 PM.  
Cost: \$200.

**Jr. High Jazz Workshop**  
Open to boys and girls entering 7th-9th grades. No matter if you are a beginner, intermediate, or advanced player, learn how to play jazz with a rotating new band. The workshop concludes with a closing performance. All instruments welcome. Questions contact Dr. Judy Best (jbest@stxavier.org). June 16 - 20 from 12:45 - 3 PM.  
Cost: \$200.

**Maker Space Camp**  
Boys and Girls entering 7th, 8th and 9th grades. Learn to safely use 3D printers, CNC machines, wood working tools. Hands-on, creative, and collaborative. June 2 - 13. 9 AM - 12 PM or 12:30 - 3:30 PM and June 16 - 27. 9 AM - 12 PM or 12:30 - 3:30 PM.  
Cost: \$400.

### Specialty Camps

**Summer Enrichment Program (SEP)**  
Rising 8th grade boys only. Students will make a film, solve puzzles, build a soap box derby car and play games with future classmates. All activities done in a collaborative and fun environment. Breakfast and lunch provided. June 9 - 27 from 8:00 - 12:30. Cost: \$375 before March 1 or \$425 afterwards. (Registrations begin Feb. 12)

**Companion Scholars Program (CSP)**  
Academic enrichment program developed by St. Xavier High School for any high achieving multicultural and/or low to moderate income boys currently in the 5th-8th grades from any Cincinnati area school. Students will engage in academic, elective, and physical education designed to prepare them for St. Xavier High School. Breakfast and lunch are included. June 9 - 27 from 8:00 - 3:00.  
Cost: \$200. Application required for admittance. Additional financial aid is available.

# What are Educational Vouchers?

The state of Ohio's voucher program is a “school choice” initiative that allows parents to use public funds to pay for private school tuition. The program has been in place since 1995 which until 2023 it was reserved for students in low income or failing districts.

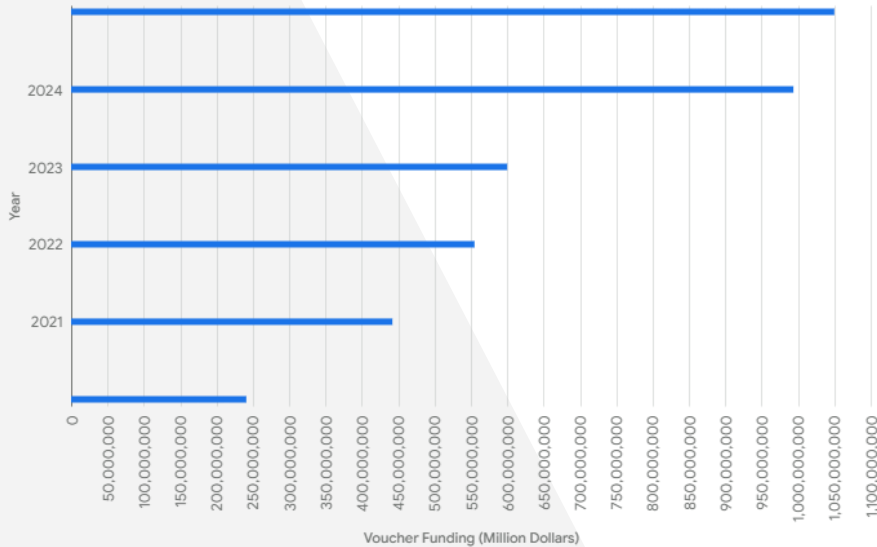
## EdChoice Expansion in 2023

Universal availability was written into the state budget in 2023.

Meaning that all K-12 students are now eligible, with the amount of the scholarship being determined by household income.

# Expanding Voucher Costs in the State Budget

Rise of School Voucher Money in Ohio (2020-2025)



The state is slated to spend more than 1.2 Billion dollars on the voucher program in 2025. The current state budget proposal slashes public school funding while allowing the massive increase in vouchers.

Source: Statehouse News Bureau.  
<https://www.statenews.org/2025-02-19/dewines-budget-includes-less-money-for-ohios-public-schools-more-for-vouchers-and-charters>

# Ohio Voucher Reward Amounts

Federal Poverty Levels with Gross Annual Amounts								
Number in Family/ Household	200%	450%	500%	550%	600%	650%	700%	750%
1	\$29,160	\$65,610	\$72,900	\$80,190	\$87,480	\$94,770	\$102,060	\$109,350
2	\$39,440	\$88,740	\$98,600	\$108,460	\$118,320	\$128,180	\$138,040	\$147,900
3	\$49,720	\$111,870	\$124,300	\$136,730	\$149,160	\$161,590	\$174,020	\$186,450
4	\$60,000	\$135,000	\$150,000	\$165,000	\$180,000	\$195,000	\$210,000	\$225,000
5	\$70,820	\$158,130	\$175,700	\$193,270	\$210,840	\$228,410	\$245,980	\$263,550
6	\$80,560	\$181,260	\$201,400	\$221,540	\$241,680	\$261,820	\$281,960	\$302,100
7	\$90,840	\$249,809	\$227,100	\$249,810	\$272,520	\$295,230	\$317,940	\$340,650
8	\$101,120	\$278,079	\$252,800	\$278,080	\$303,360	\$328,640	\$353,920	\$379,200
For each additional person add:	\$10,280	\$23,130	\$25,700	\$28,270	\$30,840	\$33,410	\$35,980	\$38,550

Source: Office of the Asst. Secretary for Planning & Eval/US Dept of HHS.

All first-time EdChoice Expansion applicants must have their income verified by the Office of Nonpublic Educational Options. Scholarships for EdChoice Expansion are awarded based on the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of a family's household. If a family's household income is at or below 450 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, they will be awarded the maximum scholarship amount. If a family's household income is at or above 451 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, the student's scholarship award will be prorated based on the chart below.

Federal Poverty Level	Award Amount for Grades K-8	Award Amount for Grades 9-12
0 - 450%	\$6,165	\$8,407
451 - 500%	\$5,200	\$7,050
501 - 550%	\$3,650	\$5,000
551 - 600%	\$2,600	\$3,550
601 - 650%	\$1,850	\$2,500
651 - 700%	\$1,300	\$1,750
701 - 750%	\$900	\$1,250
751% or higher	\$650	\$950

# Expanded Vouchers Targets Our Community

In the 2023-24 school year, Ohio gave out nearly 69,000 new EdChoice Expansion vouchers, but private school enrollment grew by fewer than 3,000 students. This means that some 66,000 vouchers went to those private school families.

That same year, participants in the EdChoice Expansion program became less diverse: only 17% of users in 2023-24 qualified as low-income compared to 68% the previous year. The number of white participants in the Expansion program more than quadrupled in the 2023-24 school year.

**As Sycamore is surrounded by private school alternatives, more students may consider private schools because of the tuition funding from vouchers.**

Sources: Policy Matters Ohio - <https://policymattersohio.org/research/public-money-for-public-schools/>

# To See the Future in Ohio Look at Arizona or Florida

**“School Vouchers Were Supposed to Save Taxpayer Money. Instead They Blew a Massive Hole in Arizona’s Budget.”**

Sources:

<https://www.propublica.org/article/arizona-school-vouchers-budget-meltdown>

<https://www.politico.com/news/2024/05/26/desantis-florida-school-closures-00159926>

<https://www.daytondailynews.com/local/ohio-thinks-15-more-students-will-use-private-school-vouchers-next-year/CMSR7IIZ5VHIFIU5WROIJRUC7Y/>

**“School choice programs have been wildly successful under DeSantis. Now public schools might close.”**

For Sycamore this could mean less state money and even more reliance on local taxes and school levies.

# Current School Funding Headlines

## Top stories :

 News 5 Cleveland WEWS :

Vouchers for Ohio private schools score double funding over public schools



2 hours ago

 News 5 Cleveland WEWS :

Ohio House GOP budget proposal slashes public school funding



6 days ago

 Toledo Blade :

School funding and property tax reform collide in state budget



3 hours ago

 Signal Cleveland :

School funding 101: Understanding how we pay for Ohio's public education



1 week ago