

WHY NOT WESTON?

RESULTS OF A WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOL EXIT SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

During October 2015, the Superintendent of Weston Public Schools (WPS) contacted researchers at Social Science Research and Evaluation, Inc. (SSRE) to assist in the implementation of an exit survey of parents/guardians who made the decision to opt one or more of their children out of WPS between the 2007-2008 and 2015-2016 academic years.

METHODS

A thirteen-item survey was used to collect descriptive information from parent/guardian respondents on each of their K-12 school-aged children. Respondents were asked to provide the gender and grade of each child and the type of school each child is currently attending. If the child was not currently attending WPS at the time of the survey, the respondent was asked whether the child ever attended WPS, the last full grade the child attended in WPS, and the reason(s) they opted the child out of WPS. Each respondent was also asked to rate WPS along 11 different dimensions (e.g., class size) and whether they would be willing to take part in a follow-up “exit interview” with a district-level administrator. The survey accommodated responses for up to four K-12 school-aged children per family.

The survey, which was administered online, was promoted through several channels including: (a) an email list of parents/guardians who recently opted one or more of their children out of WPS, (b) the WPS website, (c) the Weston Grapevine, and (d) a brief message posted in the Weston Town Crier via Wicked Local Weston. The initial round of invitations to participate was sent on November 30, 2015 and the survey remained open through January 4, 2016 – roughly one month (35 days).

RESPONDENTS AND RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

RESPONDENTS

Parent/Guardian Respondents

A total of 236 parents/guardians visited the survey website during the time period when it was open. Two-thirds of these individuals completed the entire survey (n=148; 63%). An additional 12 individuals did not complete the entire survey, but provided enough data to analyze. Of the remaining 76 cases: 5 were duplicate entries and were removed from the sample, 11 visited the site but didn't answer any of the questions, and 60 only answered one or two questions. The final analysis file consisted of 160 of the 236 survey cases (68% of those who visited the survey website).

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Enrollment Status of Respondents' Children

Of the 160 parent/guardian respondents, 113 indicated that at least one of their K-12 school-aged children does not currently attend a Weston Public School (71% of respondents). The remaining 47 respondents (29%) indicated that all of their children currently attend a Weston Public School. Given that the purpose of the survey was to elicit feedback from parents who opted at least one of their children out of WPS, the majority of analyses focus on the subset of individuals (n=113) who fall in this former group.

Number of School-Aged Children Among Respondents

The 113 respondents who indicated that at least one of their K-12 school-aged children does not currently attend a Weston Public School were asked how many school-aged children in kindergarten through 12th grade are living in their household. Respondents reported having between one and five school-aged children. The largest proportion of respondents (41%) indicated that there are two school-aged children currently living in their household. Almost all respondents (93%) reported that there are between one and three school-aged children currently living in their household. Across the 113 respondents, there were 244 children in Kindergarten through 12th grade currently living in their household (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of School-Aged Children Among Respondents (n=113)

Number of School-Aged Children Living in Household	% of Respondents	Number of Children
One Child (n=29)	26%	29
Two Children (n=46)	41%	92
Three Children (n=30)	27%	90
Four Children (n=7)	6%	28
Five Children (n=1)	1%	5
TOTAL (n=113)	100%	244

Type of School Children Are Currently Attending

The 113 parent/guardian respondents with at least one school-aged child outside of Weston Public Schools were asked to identify the type of school that each of their children is currently attending. Responses were provided for 242 of the 244 children represented by respondents. Across the 242 children, 74 of them were currently attending a Weston Public School (31%). Given that the purpose of the survey was to focus on reasons for not attending WPS, the majority of analyses presented below focus on the subset of 168 children of the 113 parent/guardian respondents that are not currently attending WPS (69%).

Among the 168 children not currently attending WPS, the majority (61%) are currently attending an Independent Day School, followed by an Independent Boarding School (12%), and a school with specialized programming for learning needs or to meet an IEP (10%). Attendance at other types of schools was less common (Table 2).

Table 2: Type of School Children Are Currently Attending (n=244)

Type of School Children Are Currently Attending	% of All Children (n=244)	% of Children Not Attending WPS (n=168)
Weston Public School (n=74)	31%	-
Independent Day School (n=102)	42%	61%
Independent Boarding School (n=20)	8%	12%
School with Specialized Programming for Learning Needs or to Meet IEP (n=16)	7%	10%
Other (n=10)	4%	6%
Public School in Another State (n=7)	3%	4%
Parochial Day School (n=6)	2%	4%
Another Massachusetts Public School (n=6)	2%	4%
Massachusetts Charter School (n=1)	0.4%	1%
Parochial Boarding School (n=0)	0%	0%
Missing Data (n=2)	-	-
TOTAL (n=244)	100%	100%

Six of the ten respondents who indicated that their child attends an *Other* type of school provided a clarifying comment that identified the school type. Five of these children are currently home schooled and one attends an Independent Online School.

Last Full Grade in WPS for School-Aged Children

The 113 parent/guardian respondents with at least one school-aged child outside of Weston Public Schools were asked to identify the last full grade that each of their children completed in a Weston Public School. Fifteen children never attended a Weston Public School (10%). That is, they were opted-out prior to Kindergarten or they moved to Weston after Kindergarten. Among school-aged children who attended a Weston Public School in the past, the largest proportion (22%) were opted-out at the end of their eighth grade year prior to transitioning to high school. The second and third most common times of departure among children in this

sample were at the end of sixth grade (16%) and at the end of fifth grade (14%). None of the children in the sample were opted-out at the end of eleventh or twelfth grade (Table 3).

Separating the youth into three groups, 41% were opted out prior to middle school, 43% were opted-out prior to high school, and 16% were opted-out during their high school years after having started at Weston High.

Table 3: Last Full Grade in WPS Among School-Aged Children (n=168)

Last Full Grade Attended in WPS	% of All Children (n=153)	% of Children Who Ever Attended WPS (n=138)
Never Attended WPS (n=15)	10%	-
Kindergarten (n=5)	3%	4%
First Grade (n=6)	4%	4%
Second Grade (n=7)	5%	5%
Third Grade (n=10)	7%	7%
Fourth Grade (n=9)	6%	7%
Fifth Grade (n=19)	12%	14%
Sixth Grade (n=22)	14%	16%
Seventh Grade (n=7)	5%	5%
Eighth Grade (n=30)	20%	22%
Ninth Grade (n=13)	8%	9%
Tenth Grade (n=10)	7%	7%
Eleventh Grade (n=0)	0%	0%
Twelfth Grade (n=0)	0%	0%
Missing Data (n=15)	-	-
TOTAL (n=168)	100%	100%

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

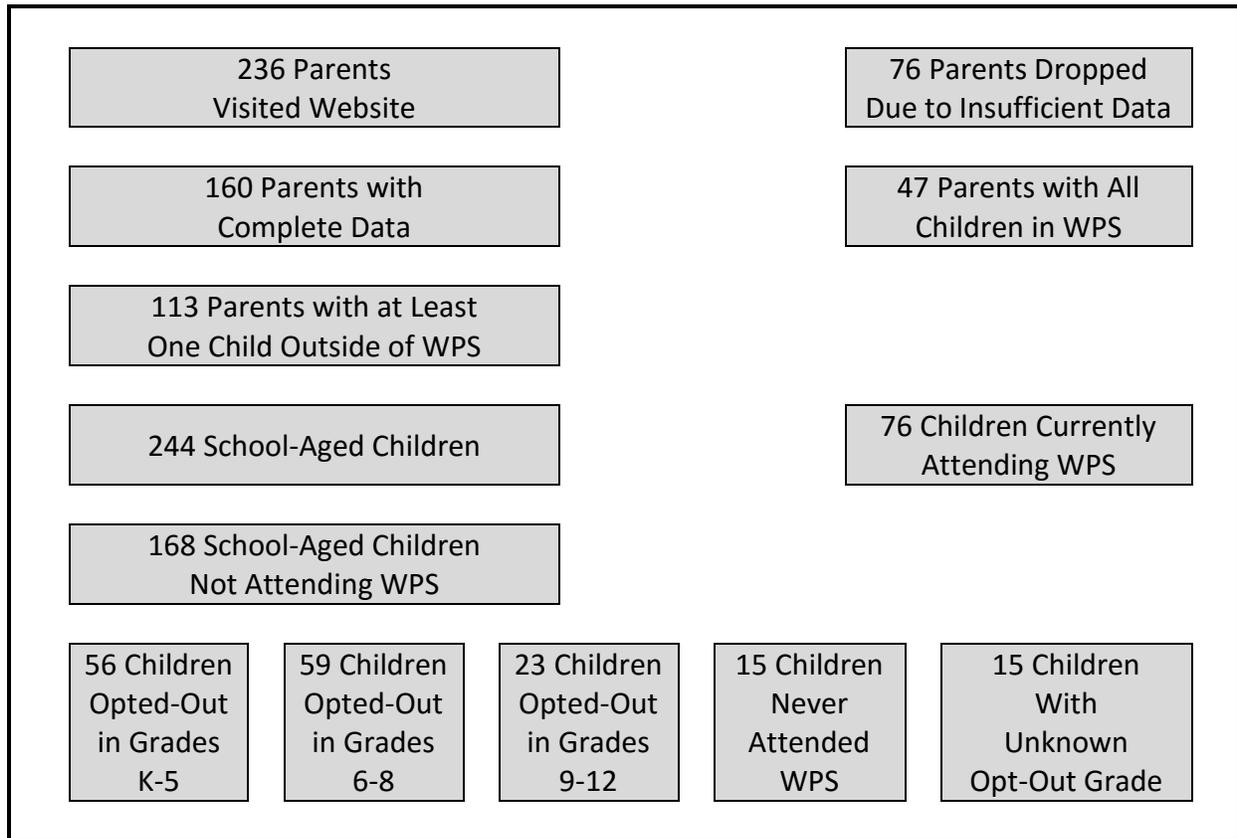
As shown in Figure 1, a total of 236 parents/guardians visited the survey website. Seventy-six of these individuals were excluded from the dataset because they did not provide enough data to analyze.

Of the 160 parents/guardians who completed the survey, 47 were excluded because all of their K-12 school-aged children currently attend Weston Public Schools.

The 113 parent/guardian respondents that were retained in the dataset had a total of 244 school-aged children. Seventy-six (76) of these children were excluded because they currently attend Weston Public Schools.

The majority of analyses in this report focus on the 168 school-aged children who were opted-out of WPS at some point in their academic career.

Figure 1 : Summary Flowchart



REASON(S) FOR DEPARTURE

REASON(S) FOR DEPARTURE AMONG ALL CHILDREN

The 113 parent/guardian respondents were asked to identify one or more reasons why they decided to opt each child out of Weston Public Schools from a list of 13 options. Respondents were also given the option to write-in a different reason than those listed. On average, respondents cited three reasons for each child that they decided to opt out of Weston Public Schools (range 1 reason to 8 reasons).

Across all school-aged children who were opted out of WPS, the most common reason was lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (44%), followed by academic class size (39%), lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to the child's needs or the parent's concerns (36%), and the child wanting to attend another school (25%). See Table 4.

Table 4: Reason(s) for Departure Among All Children (n=168)

Reason for Departure	All Children (n=163)
Lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (n=72)	44%
Academic class size (n=64)	39%
Lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to my child's needs or our concerns (n=59)	36%
My child wanted to attend another school (n=40)	25%
Lack of appropriate special education programming or services (n=28)	17%
Student safety issues, including bullying or bad behavior by other students (n=26)	16%
I'm concerned about college admissions (n=21)	13%
Weston school rankings by media in recent years (n=14)	9%
We relocated out of town (n=12)	7%
Attending independent or parochial school is a family tradition that we want for our child (n=9)	6%
Lack of athletic programs (n=10)	6%
Family or friends attend the school my child is now attending (n=7)	4%
Lack of arts (art, music, or drama), or other co-curricular programming (n=7)	4%
Some other reason not listed (n=48)	29%
Missing Data (n=5)	-

A series of chi-square analyses were enlisted to test for differences in the frequency of each reason by the opt-out grade level of the child. In general, there were few differences in the frequency of each reason based on whether the child was opted-out in K-5th grade, 6-8th grade, or during high school. Children who were opted-out during high school were significantly more likely ($p < .05$) to have been opted out because the child wanted to attend another school or for a reason not listed. Children who never attended Weston Public Schools (i.e., were opted out prior to Kindergarten or moved to the community after Kindergarten) were significantly more likely to have been opted-out because attending an independent or parochial school is a family tradition or because of a perceived lack of arts or other co-curricular programming. No other significant differences emerged based on the exit grade of the child.

REASON(S) FOR DEPARTURE AMONG CHILDREN WHO DEPARTED PRIOR TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overall Reason(s) for Departure – Prior to Middle School [K-5]

Of the 56 children who were opted-out of WPS prior to middle school at the end of kindergarten through fifth grade, almost half (46%) were opted out due to a perceived lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools. This was followed by 39% who were opted out due to a perceived lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to the child's needs or the parent's concerns and 34% who were opted out due to concerns about academic class size (Table 5).

Table 5: Reason(s) for Departure Among Children Who Departed Prior to Middle School (n=56)

Reason for Departure	Prior to MS (n=56)
Lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (n=26)	46%
Lack of responsiveness by staff or administrators to my child's needs or our concerns (n=22)	39%
Academic class size (n=19)	34%
My child wanted to attend another school (n=12)	21%
Student safety issues, including bullying or bad behavior by other students (n=12)	21%
Lack of appropriate special education programming or services (n=11)	20%
Some other reason not listed (n=9)	16%
We relocated out of town (n=6)	11%
Weston school rankings by media in recent years (n=4)	7%
Family or friends attend the school my child is now attending (n=3)	5%
Lack of arts (art, music, or drama), or other co-curricular programming (n=2)	4%
I'm concerned about college admissions (n=2)	4%
Lack of athletic programs (n=1)	2%
Attending independent or parochial school is a family tradition that we want for our child (n=0)	0%

In comparison to youth who were opted-out later in their academic career, the children who were opted-out between Kindergarten and fifth grade were somewhat less likely to have been opted-out due to a reason not listed, due to concerns about college admissions, and because attending an independent or parochial school is a family tradition. As noted earlier, none of these differences reached the level of statistical significance.

Other Reasons for Departure – Prior to Middle School [K-5]

Nine of the 56 children who were opted out of Weston Public Schools prior to middle school were opted out for a reason other than those listed. Four (4) were opted out due to a perceived issue with the quality and consistency of instructors/teachers, two (2) were opted out due to a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child academically, one (1) was opted out due to a perceived lack of leadership within the schools, one (1) was opted out based on the positive experience that a sibling had at an independent school, and one (1) was opted out due to a perception that the child's special needs were not being met.

Primary Theme	Verbatim Response (n=9) – Other Reasons for Departure [K-5]
Instructor Quality	Lack of consistency with high quality teachers and administrators.
Instructor Quality	Not enough passionate, knowledgeable teachers; not enough student-centered learning.
Instructor Quality	Our daughter's teacher was uninspiring in 5th grade; classmates/bus mates were rude.
Instructor Quality	The amount of staffing changes and unclear curriculum for IEP students.
Academic Rigor	Her take away learning was not where we thought it should be. Not being challenged.
Academic Rigor	Weston does not offered programs for gifted students.
Administration	Lack of leadership*
Sibling Experience	Other sibling in an independent school that we really liked.
Special Needs	Weston public school failed my child for five years, ignoring his needs.

* This comment has been modified to protect the anonymity of the respondent or of an individual within WPS.

Clarifying Comments on Reasons for Departure – Prior to Middle School [K-5]

Parents/guardians were given the option to provide additional clarifying comments to accompany their reason(s) for opting their child out of WPS prior to middle school. Respondents provided clarifying comments for 30 of the 56 children. The complete list of comments, coded by primary theme, is provided below. Nine (9) respondents provided clarifying comments related to a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child, five (5) respondents provided clarifying comments related to special needs and special education programming or services, four (4) respondents elaborated on a perceived lack of instructor/teacher quality, three (3) respondents discussed a perceived lack of individual attention and the feeling that their child was slipping through the cracks, three (3) respondents commented on perceived safety issues, three (3) respondents indicated that they were seeking smaller class sizes for their child, two (2) respondents indicated that the only reason they opted their child out of the school system was because their family relocated to a different town, and one (1) respondent commented on a perceived lack of leadership.

Primary Theme	Verbatim Response (n=30) – Clarifying Comments for Reasons [K-5]
Academic Rigor	Lack of a strong English curriculum.
Academic Rigor	My son was honestly bored by the curriculum and begged us to let him apply to Meadowbrook. He was familiar with the school as our daughter attended middle school there. He knew it was a challenging school and he wanted that. It is my opinion that Weston does not offer adequate challenge for extremely bright students at the elementary level. I have 4 children and some of them have only been in Weston public and some of them have attended Meadowbrook for part of their education.
Academic Rigor	Our older child attended Weston until 3rd grade. When we started sending our older child to independent K-8, there was not a lot of strength in certain programs, like math, at the elementary level. We liked most of the teachers. But one even said they were having a hard time challenging our child in spelling as well. We did not actively look, but when we discovered that other schools had more challenging programs, and leveled the students in elementary school, we liked that aspect.
Academic Rigor	Our younger daughter is profoundly gifted. We saw the lack of appropriate challenge/programming with our older daughter at Woodland school which informed our decision to enroll in private school.
Academic Rigor	Simply put, my kids, none of whom were necessarily superstars, but all average to above average, never quite had THEIR needs met. We weren't looking for a pressure cooker, but the academics, in particular, the math and writing were a joke.*

Academic Rigor	This daughter stayed in Weston for a longer period of time as she was happy. Eventually in fourth grade she realized that her sister in private was achieving significantly more academically at a much higher level. She switched over to her sister's school as she wanted to be pushed more academically. Currently she is completing two years of math in one year and is positioned to start statistics and calculus as a sophomore. She is also completing three separate science classes, Physics, Biology and Chemistry. Her current school allowed to her move ahead when she was ready and thus has allowed her to be pushed ahead of her peers. She was ready for these challenges in fourth grade and they were not available in Weston.
Academic Rigor	We are unhappy with the curriculum at the Field School for our other two children and decided to place our child where we thought the curriculum was at a higher level.
Academic Rigor	We didn't feel our child was pushed to his potential. We expected more out of his homework than his teachers.
Academic Rigor	Weston does not offer advanced programs to challenge gifted students.
Special Needs	Even on an IEP for 3 yrs at Weston my son kept slipping farther and farther behind his peers in reading - until in 5th grade he was 2-3 yrs behind his peers in reading. His confidence began to deteriorate and his frustration increased. It became very clear he needed a specialized school like Carroll in order to have success.
Special Needs	My child was diagnosed with dyslexia. We were given mixed messages about his progress and felt the need to make a move. When I told the teacher of our decision, I did not receive a response from the email or any acknowledgment that it was received. My hope is that Weston Public will train teachers on OG so we would have the support for our son and could move him back. Early reading delays can be handled with early intervention.
Special Needs	We felt another public school had a better fit for our child's needs.
Special Needs	We were told that our child was not eligible for special education services. Upon alerting WPS that we were withdrawing our child and enrolling him elsewhere, we were offered an IEP.*
Special Needs	WPS could not provide an appropriate education for him. It had very negative effects on him. It was absolutely gut wrenching.
Instructor Quality	Although we moved, we also felt that his last teacher was not a great teacher. Our child wasn't challenged in math, and there was not the same passion in learning we've experienced in other schools.*
Instructor Quality	Our oldest daughter attended Woodland school from pre-k through grade 3. Grade 3 was abominably lackluster. Teaching staff was tired and non-responsive. She was not challenged academically in the least.
Instructor Quality	Our third child we ended up pulling to an independent school b/c our second child was there and we did not want to take the chance of him getting a teacher that didn't challenge him and potentially lose a year academically due to quality of education. We were very happy with the independent school where our second went and decided to move our third proactively.
Instructor Quality	Over the entire 10-year period that our three children spent in the Weston Public School system (in the elementary, field and middle school), we had VERY inconsistent teaching experiences. About 3/10ths of the teachers were considered "high quality" educators at the time that our children had them. We had an excellent teacher, about every third year. Our experience ranged from having to endure horrible to mediocre first year teachers (this happened to us on four different years in the Woodland and Field school). In addition, we felt the classes were so large that it was not possible for an average teacher to be able to individualize work for children as needed to either accelerate or remediate their learning as needed throughout the school year. Generally, we felt that the teachers did not give individualized feedback throughout the school year (with the exception of two very experienced teachers who really had a skill for it). We felt that the portfolio system that teachers kept for their records in the elementary school only served the purpose of keeping the teachers informed of our child's progress, but largely kept us in

	the dark. Teachers did not regularly send home children's work (which actually helps parents see how their children are progressing). We felt that the evaluative tools, including the report card - did not glean any meaningful information, or evidence about our child's ability, nor did it show evidence that our child's teacher truly had a deep meaningful understanding of our child's academic and social abilities. Furthermore, in our experience, WPS did not demonstrate an ability to provide a consistent stream of high quality teachers. Perhaps they should try hiring teachers that are not freshly minted, but have a decade under their belt? One bad teacher takes a long time to recover from, and WPS doesn't remove them from their posts after they are tenured.
Individual Attention	The child is the peacemaker and everyone loves her, both students and teachers. She is not a squeaky wheel and generally wants to please. Teachers loved her because she did her work and helped keep social issues balanced in the classroom. We noticed that she was getting left behind academically b/c she wasn't going to push her agenda and she was slipping through the cracks. She's a smart girl and is now thriving in an environment where classes are smaller and teachers know her REALLY well and they know how much they can push her academically. She has developed great study skills that she was not learning in the WPS.
Individual Attention	We realized that our oldest child needed closer instruction from his teachers and this was something that Weston had not provided for him.
Individual Attention	We thought that our child's academic needs were being overlooked due to the make-up of students in his classroom.
Safety Issues	My daughter was significantly bullied by another student and felt unsafe at school. The school administration and teacher did not respond appropriately or make her feel safe. We were also told that she had academic/learning issues that had not been identified. We made the choice to have her independently tested. The testing indicated that her intelligence was above grade level. The psychologist conducting the testing indicated within the notes that her current learning environment (Weston Public) was not providing an appropriate atmosphere for her to learn. She has been very successful in private school and been an honor roll student winning multiple academic awards in a very challenging academic environment.
Safety Issues	Safety issues including ongoing bullying and mistreatments by people at school and inability to arrest their ongoing misbehavior made the environment untenable.
Safety Issues	There were two classmates on the bus that made our kids' bus rides terrible. They were rude, inappropriate, used foul language, watched pornography, etc. The bus monitor put on the bus did nothing to stop this.
Smaller Class Size	Interest in attending a smaller school with a smaller class size. Also, somewhat concerned with the amount of time taken to study for standardized testing.
Smaller Class Size	The academic class size in Weston is too high and does not allow for individual attention needed. Arts funding in the high school is non-existent. My child did not want to leave WPS and later convinced others to change as well.
Smaller Class Size	We were very happy with Weston Public Schools for our children Kindergarten through 5th grade. The teachers were wonderful, our children had a good academic experience and we were happy in the school community. We decided to move our children to independent schools in grade 6 to benefit from the smaller class, which seems to offer more individualized attention, greater communication (student/teacher and parent/teacher) and a more personalized education. Weston Schools are excellent - for us, it was a decision mainly based on class size.
Relocated	We relocated. Her teacher at Field School was fantastic.
Relocated	We would have been delighted to continue in Weston schools had we been in the area.
Administration	I am concerned about the overall lack of leadership, which I viewed more as going through the motions than actually caring about the kids.*

* This comment has been modified to protect the anonymity of the respondent or of an individual within WPS.

Summary of Reason(s) for Departure – Prior to Middle School [K-5]

Fifty-six (56) children were opted-out of WPS prior to middle school. The top three reasons given for decisions to opt children out of Weston Public Schools between kindergarten and fifth grade were: (1) lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (44%), (2) academic class size (39%), and (3) lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to the child's needs or the family's concerns (36%). The most common write-in reason, provided as a reason for 4 of the 56 children, was a perceived issue with the quality and consistency of instructors/teachers.

The top three areas in which parent/guardian respondents chose to provide additional clarifying comments were for: a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child (9 respondents), issues with the perceived inability of the school system to respond to their child's special needs (5 respondents), and a perceived lack of instructor/teacher quality (4 respondents).

REASON(S) FOR DEPARTURE AMONG CHILDREN WHO DEPARTED PRIOR TO HIGH SCHOOL

Overall Reason(s) for Departure – Prior to High School [6th-8th]

Of the 59 children who were opted-out of WPS prior to high school at the end of sixth through eighth grade, half (51%) were opted out due to a perceived lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools. This was followed by 47% who were opted out due to concerns about academic class size and 37% who were opted out due to a perceived lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to the child's needs or the parent's concerns (Table 6).

Table 6: Reason(s) for Departure Among Children Who Departed Prior to High School (n=59)

Reason for Departure	Prior to HS (n=59)
Lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (n=30)	51%
Academic class size (n=28)	47%
Lack of responsiveness by staff or administrators to my child's needs or our concerns (n=22)	37%
Some other reason not listed (n=20)	34%
My child wanted to attend another school (n=14)	24%
I'm concerned about college admissions (n=12)	20%
Lack of appropriate special education programming or services (n=9)	15%
Student safety issues, including bullying or bad behavior by other students (n=8)	14%
Lack of athletic programs (n=7)	12%
Weston school rankings by media in recent years (n=6)	10%
We relocated out of town (n=4)	7%
Attending independent or parochial school is a family tradition that we want for our child (n=2)	3%
Family or friends attend the school my child is now attending (n=0)	0%
Lack of arts (art, music, or drama), or other co-curricular programming (n=0)	0%

In comparison to youth who were opted-out at other grade levels, the children who were opted out between 6th and 8th grade were somewhat more likely than their peers to have been opted out due to concerns about academic class size, a perceived lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston Schools, concerns about college admissions, lack of athletic programs, and due to a reason not listed. As noted earlier, none of these differences reached the level of statistical significance.

Other Reasons for Departure – Prior to High School [6th-8th]

Twenty (20) of the 59 children who were opted out of Weston Public Schools prior to high school were opted out for a reason other than those listed. Parents/guardians identified the specific reason in 17 of these cases. Three (3) were opted out due to dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in the school system, two (2) were opted out due to a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child academically, two (2) were opted out due to dissatisfaction with the Guidance Department, and two (2) were opted out based on the positive experience that a sibling has at an independent school. No other reasons were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	Verbatim Response (n=17) – Other Reasons for Departure [6 th -8 th]
Atmosphere	General dissatisfaction with the social milieu at Weston Middle School.
Atmosphere	Not motivated by public school environment, peers.
Atmosphere	Social issues. Didn't love grade cohort/peers.
Academic Rigor	Academic challenge [lack of].
Academic Rigor	Quality of education, rigor of math and science teaching.
Guidance Dept	Guidance department needs to pay more attention to individual students especially those whose parents hardly show their faces in school!
Guidance Dept	Not too happy with Weston Guidance Department.
Sibling Experience	Bad experiences with older daughter at older grades.
Sibling Experience	Saw problems at High School with older brother and wanted him out of that mess.
Academic Skills	The school did not teach our child to do their work independently. They gave plenty of accommodations but did not help with how to organize and prepare to do school work independently. The teachers were consistently more concerned about our child getting through MCAS testing then teaching in a way that met our child's learning style.
Arts Program	More intensive arts program.
Athletic Reasons	Ski racer.
Individual Attention	My child had poor writing skills and I did not see any concern from school, system lacking in advisors for kids.
Life Skills	Our child's new school is stronger in developing leaders and reinforcing moral/ethical behaviors.
School-Life Balance	Need for academic balance.
Special Needs	WPS failed to identify our child for special Ed services.
Too Structured	Lack of flexibility.

Clarifying Comments on Reasons for Departure – Prior to High School [6th-8th]

Parents/guardians were given the option to provide additional clarifying comments to accompany their reason(s) for opting their child out of WPS prior to high school. Respondents provided clarifying comments for 28 of the 59 children. The complete list of comments, coded by primary theme, is provided below.

Seven (7) respondents provided clarifying comments related to a perceived lack of individual attention and the feeling that their child was slipping through the cracks, five (5) respondents provided clarifying comments related to a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child, five (5) respondents provided clarifying comments related to special needs and special education programming or services, two (2) respondents indicated that they opted their child out for athletic reasons/opportunities, two (2) respondents provided clarifying comments on dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in the school system, and two (2) respondents indicated that they were seeking smaller class sizes for their child.

No other clarifying comments were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	<i>Verbatim Response (n=28) – Clarifying Comments for Reasons [6th-8th]</i>
Individual Attention	Most private schools require a lot of writing and I wanted my child to improve/focus on this. Class sizes are smaller. My kids have a more personal relationship with teachers and better access if they need help. In private, each year, the child and the parent has had an advisor to address concerns. And I do feel that I get the attention when I have a concern.
Individual Attention	Weston lacks commitment to quality education for all. There seems to be overriding concern about high profile college admissions and pre-occupation with only the highest level learners (all others attend at their own risk).
Individual Attention	He was happy in the middle school and was thriving in math and sciences, but needed more personal attention and encouragement in developing his liberal arts/writing skills than the larger class size permitted.
Individual Attention	My husband attended private school, I attended public. My husband wanted us to explore independent schools for our oldest. Our philosophy with regard to schools is to find the best learning environment for each of our children as learners and as people. In our son's case, he was doing well in Weston academically. He is very shy though and we thought a smaller size (class and school) would help draw him out. He was also attracted to the idea of their being "more kids like me who care about their academics, take it seriously." We thought that he'd engage more as a student with smaller class sizes (not that he wasn't already). We were disappointed in Weston's ELA curriculum, especially in MS and feel that developing strong reading and writing skills is very important. We also feel that there aren't sufficient challenges for a strong student in the MS. He attends an all-boys school.
Individual Attention	Our son is a typical teen-age boy: smart enough, but not motivated enough to focus on school work. An independent school with smaller class-sizes and more direct contact between teacher/student and school/parents is a better fit for his and our needs. He is also a very strong athlete and will be playing in a more competitive environment. We feel these two issues needed more direct individual attention to give him the best opportunity to get into the best possible college.
Individual Attention	Our son is thriving at the Willow Hill School in Sudbury. Weston could easily duplicate the teaching approach of Willow Hill and similar schools. You need to have smaller teaching classes for students that learn differently and help these students support themselves independently. After many years advocating for our son, my wife and I found that, the Weston School system's goal is to get these children through and graduate, however they would be poorly prepared for secondary education. Our child is very bright, he just learns differently and we saw a very enthusiastic child become discouraged with school in Weston. At Willow Hill he now comes home every night and does his homework independently and what he can't do, he can work on the next day.
Individual Attention	This was not an easy decision and honestly after moving to Weston 14 years ago, we never thought we would be pursuing a private school for one or more of our children. Our son is very bright, but has never been consistent with his studies. When he would study, he would do very well. Then he would slack off and not do well. Slacking off could be due to a number of things: not being prepared for class or a test -- not being organized, not using a calendar, not remembering a particular assignment, not able to manage time well when many things are due on the same day (focused more on sports, the phone, and friends than academics). In addition, our son could easily hide in class and was not made accountable by his teachers for doing his work. We held him accountable at home, but there wasn't the same accountability at school. My son exhibits a lot of characteristics of boys that I am told are 'normal,' yet there weren't programs in middle school to help him improve his: study skills, organization, time management, motivation, accountability. My son got decent grades, but he could have done so much better if pushed and made more accountable at school. More importantly, we knew that our son needs to learn better study skills/time management to serve him better in high school, college, and in life. It is sad that many boys in general aren't working to their highest potential. My son wasn't at the highest of abilities and wasn't at the lowest where he

needs an IEP. He was in the middle -- where there aren't any services for him. It is that middle area where I feel so, so, so many boys (in particular) get lost. They aren't advocating for themselves at the top of academics and they aren't failing classes to warrant an IEP. These middle boys are lost and simply sliding by. In addition, the class sizes were getting too big (we couldn't understand this since it just seemed like poor planning). My son's English Class in 8th grade had 30 kids in it -- English can be challenging for my son. If he handed in a paper, he wouldn't get it back graded for 3 - 4 weeks. By that point, he wouldn't even read the feedback comments, since it had been so long since he handed it in. And we get it -- it takes too long to grade that many papers. BUT, with kids who are struggling, quicker feedback turnaround time is better so that they are learning. Rather than simply handing something in and never going back to it again. We tried a number of things over the middle school years, but there was never an urgency or priority around my son and his inconsistent academics. I would consistently reach out to my son's teachers/vice principal/counselor to try and show them that we care at home and to learn what can we do at school? Some teachers would respond to me and others would not. My son may improve a bit, once I was getting involved, then 3 - 6 weeks later I would get emails from a teacher stating 'your son hasn't turned in 3 - 4 assignments or did poorly on an exam.' It was a cycle of my son doing well, then dropping off. Sometimes I would get frustrated when I would hear that my son hadn't handed in 3 - 4 assignments -- why wasn't I notified when he hadn't handed in the first one. And honestly... why wasn't my son notified? It was very challenging, since as a parent, we should be backing off to let the child learn to do their work on their own. But rarely did I see my son held accountable at school. We held him accountable at home, but we weren't doing the work for him. And we used both positive and negative results for his actions. If so many boys are like my son and the WPS are one of the best in the state, then why aren't there programs to help motivate boys? What has worked in the past to turn boys around? What works? What do academic institutions recommend? Is there a summer program? After school program? Mentor program? This challenge is so much larger than just my son. How do you make it 'cool' to do well academically for boys? How do you make it part of their routine to go in for extra help from teachers? To help one another and strive for greatness academically? How do you do that before it is too late? Grades matter in high school or these boys won't have many choices for colleges. --And it is the boys who need help, since the trend is that more girls are getting in and succeeding in college than boys.

Academic Rigor	Weston Public Schools don't seem to value STEM education. For students who are ahead of their peers academically, WPS do not provide them with the flexibility to take classes appropriate to their level. Guidance counselors don't advocate for their students.
Academic Rigor	Middle school math and science were not advanced enough for my child.
Academic Rigor	My daughter wanted to go to private school because she did not like the one size fits all academic approach and was bored at school, and also did not love her grade cohort.
Academic Rigor	Our oldest child graduated from Weston high in 2008. It was a great school then, with lots of smart kids who were challenged. Too many changes have made things worse at all levels for the top of the class kids and many of my youngest's friends left the system over the years, so she wanted to go to a private high school.
Academic Rigor	The schools in general do not have appropriate programs for high achieving students, particularly math/science.
Special Needs	Child is dyslexic and received great support from Special Ed, but the rest of the curriculum at WMS was lacking in structure and rigor. In our case, a dyslexic child works harder and does better in private schools without any special services. As a matter of fact, she was only tested and treated after going out of district because while in WMS full time, she never met the criterion of underperformance required in order to be testing.*
Special Needs	My children went to Woodland, where we had a positive experience across the board. Field School was a disaster for one child and poor for the other. Our family lost a lot of trust after an inaccurate (seemingly intentional) dyslexia evaluation by the school. My daughter was later diagnosed with dyslexia by an outside doctor who questioned the

	<p>methodology of the school testing. Unfortunately, there have been several other instances where the school has handled one-off situations in an inadequate manner. There have been situations where either my daughters or I have been treated inappropriately or with a lack of compassion by school employees. We have also had the gift of several great teachers! The nurses are amazing! The art program is fabulous at all grade levels. Eighth grade teachers are remarkable without exception. There are amazing things about Weston Public, but unfortunately the bad experiences and incompetent teachers make a large impression. In general, our interactions with principals has been poor with a sense they don't address problems. It is also important to note, that the cost of private school is a big deal for our family and not one that we wanted to incur or take lightly. That we are paying it really represents a dissatisfaction with the public schools.</p>
Special Needs	<p>My daughter's severe disabilities could not be addressed in a high school environment. The 8-day rotation schedule would cause her to miss classes because of therapy. It also would be too chaotic for her. She required more vocational/workshop training/ curriculum that Weston Public Schools would have to create for her instead of already offering this type of program.</p>
Special Needs	<p>The Middle School GOAL classroom inflicted emotional trauma on students while failing to educate. Weston cannot and will not provide appropriate education for students with significant need and must both outplacement and fully fund these students - rather than continuing to force parents to fight for years for appropriate education in Weston first and/or cost-share for appropriate out-placements.</p>
Special Needs	<p>We have met with the Superintendent and have discussed our concerns, including presenting him with a letter written to him by our daughter. He was personally very cordial, though we have received nothing from the district which analyzes the issues we presented or suggests any remediation.</p>
Athletic Reasons	<p>My child chose to go to a school with a more intensive athletic program. We love the Weston Schools. One child already graduated WPS and our third child will likely attend.*</p>
Athletic Reasons	<p>Weston high school does not help kids (and even adds barriers) who want to excel in a different path (i.e., athletic) not possible at WHS. Other public schools with very good track record are facilitating the continuity of the curriculum during their absence. Those kids usually get accepted to very good colleges. They have a unique curriculum with high academic standard. I understand it's extra work for the faculty, but don't understand why the school is not supportive. On the opposite, Weston middle school is very supportive which is greatly appreciated.</p>
Atmosphere	<p>We find everything being taught in Weston schools is worth learning. There's just too much of it. Our daughter did very well in school but was frustrated by (a) being in class with other students who were not interested in the material and therefore were disruptive, (b) some classes being taught in a rather worksheet-busy-work-heavy manner. Looking to work with other enthusiastic students, and for high ratio of learning-to-time-spent. Also looking for more variety of learning style, and more choice of material.</p>
Atmosphere	<p>When my daughter was in 6th grade, the 2019 class, in my eyes, was not a good group of kids as a whole. My daughter complained that they could not get through the curriculum because too many disruptive kids in class.</p>
Smaller Class Size	<p>Very large Class of 2019 and ability to play Varsity squash at a private school.</p>
Smaller Class Size	<p>We have 3 children, 2 of whom attended Weston Public schools through 12th grade -- and we were, in general, very happy with their experience. The primary factor that led us to change schools after 8th grade for our 3rd child was the overall size of the class of 2019. Class size had gotten excessively large, in our opinion.</p>
Academic Quality	<p>Having children who are older than our school age children...we have seen a steady decline in the quality of education the Weston schools have to offer. The root of the problem began many years ago...TOO much parent involvement...every parent looks at education through the lens of their child and demands the schools adapt...the Weston schools are so afraid of law suits that they cave like a spoiled child. The Schools need to</p>

	adapt the attitude: We are the educators! And that being said, they cannot be sneaky in regards to some areas such as the Special Ed fiasco that has happened in recent years.
Drama Program	My son wanted to go to a school to study theater more intensively. Because he had been falling behind in school without much support or intervention from the school staff at the high school, we felt that going to a smaller school would benefit him. In addition, we always felt that my daughter could have performed much better in school had she had a more supportive environment.
Instructor Quality	I was concerned about her entering high school. I have not been particularly impressed with the teachers there and felt she need a different atmosphere.
Safety Issues	Our child was bullied in the 7th grade by a boy in her grade. This led to a downward spiral. She began to hate school, hate her teachers, hate herself. The repercussions profoundly affected our oldest child, and our family really gave up on the possibility of WPS ever being able to meet the needs of our other two children (who are now in private school). In addition, the school failed to identify an academic disability, which also led her to be misunderstood by school, guidance counselors and administrators.
Sibling Experience	Our daughter was interested in looking at independent schools because her brother was at one. We think she was attracted by the sense of community that exists at an independent school (more present in the HS in Weston). We felt that it was a good move for her. She was an 'A' student primarily in Weston and a good kid. She didn't really push herself and was a student that "flies under the radar". The small class size in independent school and higher expectations academically have really caused her to "rise to the occasion". She takes herself more seriously as a student because there is closer scrutiny/less anonymity and higher expectations.

* This comment has been modified to protect the anonymity of the respondent or of an individual within WPS.

Summary of Reason(s) for Departure – Prior to High School [6th-8th]

Fifty-nine (59) children were opted-out of WPS prior to high school. The top reasons given for decisions to opt children out of Weston Public Schools between sixth and eighth grade were: (1) lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (51%), (2) academic class size (47%), (3) lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to the child's needs or the family's concerns (37%), and for a reason not listed (34%). The most common write-in reason, provided as a reason for 3 of the 59 children, was dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in the school system.

The top three areas in which parent/guardian respondents chose to provide additional clarifying comments were for: a perceived lack of individual attention and the feeling that their child was slipping through the cracks (7 respondents), a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school system to challenge their child (5 respondents), and their child's special needs and/or special education programming or services (5 respondents).

REASON(S) FOR DEPARTURE AMONG CHILDREN WHO DEPARTED DURING HIGH SCHOOL

Overall Reason(s) for Departure – During High School [9th-12th]

Of the 23 children who were opted-out of WPS during high school, over half (57%) were opted out for a reason not listed in the survey, half (52%) were opted out because the child wanted to attend another school, and 48% were opted out due to concerns about academic class size (Table 7).

Table 7: Reason(s) for Departure Among Children Who Departed During High School (n=23)

Reason for Departure	During HS (n=23)
Some other reason not listed (n=13)	57%
My child wanted to attend another school (n=12)	52%
Academic class size (n=11)	48%
Lack of responsiveness by staff or administrators to my child's needs or our concerns (n=7)	30%
Lack of appropriate special education programming or services (n=7)	30%
Lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (n=6)	26%
Student safety issues, including bullying or bad behavior by other students (n=4)	17%
I'm concerned about college admissions (n=4)	17%
Lack of athletic programs (n=2)	9%
Attending independent or parochial school is a family tradition that we want for our child (n=2)	9%
We relocated out of town (n=1)	4%
Weston school rankings by media in recent years (n=1)	4%
Family or friends attend the school my child is now attending (n=1)	4%
Lack of arts (art, music, or drama), or other co-curricular programming (n=0)	0%

In comparison to youth who were opted-out at other grade levels, the youth who were opted out between 9th and 12th grade were more likely than their peers to have been opted out for a reason not listed (statistically significant at $p < .05$), because the child wanted to attend another school (statistically significant at $p < .05$), lack of appropriate special education programming or services, and academic class size. These individuals were less likely than their peers to have been opted out due to lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston Schools. With the exception of the two reasons noted above, none of these differences reached the level of statistical significance.

Other Reasons for Departure – During High School [9th-12th]

Thirteen (13) of the 23 children who were opted out of Weston Public Schools during high school were opted out for a reason other than those listed. Three (3) were opted out due to dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in the school system and two (2) were opted out due to a perception that the child's special needs were not being met. No other reasons were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	<i>Verbatim Response (n=13) – Other Reasons for Departure [9th-12th]</i>
Atmosphere	Don't like Weston's intense atmosphere and large amounts of homework.
Atmosphere	I can't even begin. Disrespectful kids, mean girls, physically aggressive boys, overall negative atmosphere--unless you want to peak in high school, of course. Then Weston is perfect. And it's too bad, because there are some excellent and truly dedicated teachers who are losing their best students to schools that don't have to deal with things like food fights in the cafeteria. Thankfully for Weston, there are enough good kids and good parents to keep the school as a top tier school with respect to test scores and good college admissions. It's just too bad that those kids are not celebrated as they should be.
Atmosphere	We didn't like the culture of the high school, and found some of the teachers to be incredibly unprofessional.
Special Needs	The school system was not able to adequately meet her needs--a combination of school culture, social/emotional, and academic considerations.
Special Needs	Weston high school does not adequately support students with different learning styles, i.e.- ADHD, executive function deficit. High school teachers do a poor job with regard to extra help and identifying students who are struggling. Individual student attention is nonexistent.
Academic Rigor	Administration cared about bringing the bottom students up and did not care about the smart kids.
Ballet Schedule	Ballet schedule.
Guidance Dept	Not able to successfully work with guidance staff to sufficiently address issues.
Individual Attention	Faculty only concerned with top 10% or bottom 10% of their classes. Middle group of students was ignored and passed along.
Instructor Quality	Some bad teachers.
Peer Relationships	Poor peer relationships among girls at school.
School-Life Balance	Need for life balance.
Smaller Class Size	Overcrowding in honors classes, lack of attentiveness by teachers.

Clarifying Comments on Reasons for Departure – During High School [9th-12th]

Parents/guardians were given the option to provide additional clarifying comments to accompany their reason(s) for opting their child out of WPS during high school. Respondents provided clarifying comments for 18 of the 23 children. The complete list of comments, coded by primary theme, is provided below.

Five (5) respondents provided clarifying comments related to dissatisfaction on their part or on the part of their child with the atmosphere in the school system, three (3) respondents provided clarifying comments related to a perceived lack of individual attention and the feeling that their child was slipping through the cracks, two (2) respondents commented on a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child, and two (2) provided clarifying comments related to special needs and special education programming or services.

No other clarifying comments were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	<i>Verbatim Response (n=18) – Clarifying Comments for Reasons [9th-12th]</i>
Atmosphere	K-8--Fantastic in all respects HS---Parents are as big a problem as some of the students. The HS leadership needs to take a harder line when it comes to drinking, drugs, bullying, cheating, and general bad behavior. And that means not being cowed by some of these parents. We are fortunate to have had the best of Weston and fortunate to have been able to get out when we did.
Atmosphere	Not enough access to honors classes and the "labeling" of students. There is a lot of negativity in Weston High with many unhappy students and an abundance of drugs and alcohol. There is an appreciation for the private school zero tolerance policies!
Atmosphere	Our daughter left WHS in mid-year of her sophomore year, looking for a friendlier and open social environment among students, primarily female. She was not the victim of bullying, but saw it, along with other hostile and competitive attitudes among students.
Atmosphere	Regarding teacher unprofessionalism, it seemed that one of my son's teacher thrived on humiliating students (fortunately not our son), while another used profanity and tried to impress her views on students as being correct instead of trying to facilitate open discussions, e.g. on the topic of capital punishment. Regarding culture, kids seem to be nasty to each other as a way to make themselves look cool, and the school seems to accept, by looking the other way, alcohol and drug use. Kids show up at school events, dances, football games, etc., clearly drunk, with no consequences. Also, there seems to be a lack of respect among students for each other and adults.
Atmosphere	School has a serious drug problem and control over the students' actions problem. The students smoke in the parking lot at lunch and treat the campus like a dump. The administration is weak and the kids all think the punishments are jokes. As for academics, when we noticed that on an English paper he got a B+, yet the paper had misspelled words, run on sentences and wrong tense for verbs we saw a problem. We had him tested and discover he has dyslexia. Informed teacher who said "Oh that explains his work." Apparently she couldn't take the time to reach out to us and discuss his work. The whole school system seems disinterested in the middle group of kids who are working hard.
Individual Attention	Our child is an above average student on the quiet side, she has experienced much greater interactions with her teachers due to smaller class size.
Individual Attention	Our second child wanted closer relationship with teachers, and smaller class size. He also wanted more subject choices, and more competitive sports.
Individual Attention	Our experience has been that at the high school level, despite the heroic efforts of a handful of teachers and administrators, the system caters to a small percentage of students who "fit the mold," e.g. those who respond well to rote learning methodologies designed to help students perform well on tests and those who are able to make themselves very visible to teachers. Our kids have fallen in the "missing middle," e.g. those who are looking for more creative, applied learning opportunities that are less mass produced and in which success is more dependent on being a thoughtful versus a loud voice within the process.
Academic Rigor	Independent schools foster environments that are collaborative which help to create a more intellectual student body. When looking at the college process, the inflated GPA of Weston is ridiculous!
Academic Rigor	Lack program for high achieving students.
Special Needs	From failing in Weston public schools, my son has been an honor student consistently at a private independent prep school. Small class size, flexibility on the part of the staff, high expectations and personal respect for my son have made all the difference. Special education in Weston is not individualized no matter how much they say it is. It is a cookie cutter solution that just cannot work for a lot of kids. Simple solutions that cost next to nothing rather than services are the real answers. I gave up trying to educate that Weston school system. I wish I had the funds to get my second child out of the Weston public school system. For any student who is different, and doesn't fit into a neat little category, Weston fails miserably. Nice people, nice staff, but past ineffective, truly detrimental to kids who are different and learn different. My children started the Weston

	Public school system in grade K and it was ALWAYS a challenge, never the best for them. I am not by nature hard to please. I attended only public school myself. Weston did not do right by my children - even if they intended to.
Special Needs	Our issues stemmed from a lack of communication between the Regular Ed teachers and the Special Ed teachers, lack of communication from Regular Education teachers to us, limited acknowledgement by some teachers of our child's IEP, and inflexibility of some teachers to follow the parameters and recommendations of the IEP.
Academic Quality	Weston used to have good schools and I moved there for the schools. The schools were going downhill under the administration's concerns about achievement gap and issuing smart kids ok no matter what. I moved to Lexington and much happier with schools there.*
Athletic Reasons	Our child opted for full-time online school with more flexibility to accommodate his/her athletic schedule.*
Guidance Dept	Guidance/staff was responsive in meeting, but not flexible to meet needs of this student for her learning style or to feel comfortable/safe in the WHS environment. In addition, she felt uncomfortable with the high rate of drinking/ drugs and other behaviors prevalent at WHS that she witnessed frequently, and that didn't seem to her to be addressed seriously by the staff.
Instructor Quality	Too many times my children have had bad teachers. The academic support is non-existent or not good enough. My child was very frustrated with Weston and He chose to change schools.
Music Class	Our daughter is very involved in music. It was basically: challenging classes, sufficient music practice, healthy amount of sleep: pick two. Can't have all three. She tried various ways to achieve a balance - sleeping fewer hours, not practicing enough, taking CP rather than honors classes. Each of these resulted in an interesting new type of frustration. She returned to homeschooling because it gives a measure of control over the academic schedule. The challenge level is achieved by taking classes at Harvard Extension and using other online resources.
Single-Sex School	All 3 of my children have attended single sex schools during a part of the k-12. We've liked and have seen the benefits of single sex education for our kids, and have also seen the benefits of a mission-driven school philosophy, one which places emphasis on character building, the nurturing of relationships as well as academic excellence.

* This comment has been modified to protect the anonymity of the respondent or of an individual within WPS.

Summary of Reason(s) for Departure – During High School [9th-12th]

Twenty-three (23) children were opted-out of WPS during high school. The top reasons given for decisions to opt children out of Weston Public Schools between ninth and twelfth grade were: (1) a reason not listed in the survey (57%), (2) because the child wanted to attend another school (52%), and (3) concerns about academic class size (48%). The most common write-in reason, provided as a reason for 3 of the 23 children, was dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in the school system.

The top areas in which parent/guardian respondents chose to provide additional clarifying comments were for: dissatisfaction with the atmosphere of the school system (5 respondents) and a perceived lack of individual attention and the feeling that their child was slipping through the cracks (3 respondents).

REASON(S) FOR DEPARTURE AMONG EXIT GRADE UNSPECIFIED CHILDREN

Overall Reason(s) for Departure – Exit Grade Unspecified

There were 25 children for whom the parent/guardian did not specify the exit grade – including 15 cases where the child never attended Weston Public Schools and 10 cases where the parent/guardian skipped the exit grade question. Among these 25 children, 40% were opted out due to concerns about academics and 32% were opted out due to concerns about a lack of responsiveness by staff or administrators to the needs of the child or the concerns of the parents (Table 8).

Table 8: Reason(s) for Departure Among Children Who Departed in an Unspecified Grade (n=25)

Reason for Departure	Unspecified Grade (n=25)
Lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (n=10)	40%
Lack of responsiveness by staff or administrators to my child's needs or our concerns (n=8)	32%
Some other reason not listed (n=6)	24%
Academic class size (n=6)	24%
Attending independent or parochial school is a family tradition that we want for our child (n=5)	20%
Lack of arts (art, music, or drama), or other co-curricular programming (n=5)	20%
I'm concerned about college admissions (n=3)	12%
Weston school rankings by media in recent years (n=3)	12%
Family or friends attend the school my child is now attending (n=3)	12%
My child wanted to attend another school (n=2)	8%
Student safety issues, including bullying or bad behavior by other students (n=2)	8%
Lack of appropriate special education programming or services (n=1)	4%
We relocated out of town (n=1)	4%
Lack of athletic programs (n=0)	0%

In comparison to youth who were opted-out at other grade levels, the youth who were opted out at an unspecified grade level or who never attended WPS were more likely than their peers to have been opted out because attending an independent or parochial school is a family tradition (statistically significant at $p < .05$) or due to a lack of arts and other co-curricular programming (statistically significant at $p < .05$). These individuals were less likely than their peers to have been opted out because the child wanted to attend another school, due to academic class size, or due to lack of appropriate special education programming or services. With the exception of the two reasons noted above, none of these differences reached the level of statistical significance.

Other Reasons for Departure – Exit Grade Unspecified

Six of the 25 children who were opted out of Weston Public Schools during an unspecified grade were opted out for a reason other than those listed. Two (2) respondents commented in perceived issues with the school administration. No other comments were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	Verbatim Response (n=5) – Other Reasons for Departure [Unspecified Grade]*
Administration	[Elementary School] – Poor decisions re: administrative positions.
Administration	[High School] – Dealing with administration at any level with regard to curriculum can be psychologically taxing. Some Department heads at the HS are under-qualified and uninterested in challenging your child or allowing them to advance at their own pace. Guidance staff are sub-par and unhelpful.
Atmosphere	[Elementary School] – Sense of community, high ethical standards, very hard to teach to such a wide range of learners who may not be as "academic," lack of performance-based grouping at Weston.
Education Approach	[Middle School] – We visited another school that really seemed to get boys. They schedule both morning and afternoon recess each day plus gym multiple times a week. This was exactly what my son needed in the early grades.**
Pick-Up Times	[Elementary School] – Lack of late pick up.

*Note the exit grade-level of each child has been *inferred* from other information provided in the survey (e.g., current grade level, other comments). This information appears in brackets preceding each response.

** This comment has been modified to protect the anonymity of the respondent or of an individual within WPS.

Clarifying Comments on Reasons for Departure – Exit Grade Unspecified

Parents/guardians were given the option to provide additional clarifying comments to accompany their reason(s) for opting their child out of WPS during an unspecified grade. Respondents provided clarifying comments for 10 of the 25 children. The complete list of comments, coded by primary theme, is provided below. Three (3) respondents provided clarifying comments related to a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child. No other clarifying comments were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	Verbatim Response (n=10) – Clarifying Comments for Reasons [Unspecified Grade]*
Academic Rigor	[Middle School] – Especially at the high school, they try to limit honors classes; and as a result, college admissions (with the exception of Legacy parents) are not impressive anymore.
Academic Rigor	[Middle School] – My nieces went to Weston several years ago. They got a much better education than smart kids get in Weston today - differentiated math beginning in 3rd grade, better projects, etc. The curriculum is very dumbed down. I was already supplementing so much (Russian math and so on) so I decided it would be easier to just find a good private school.
Academic Rigor	[Elementary School] – No math levels in elementary school. My son was bored at school and the teachers would not give more meaningful work. [Elementary School]
Administration	[Elementary School] – I have begun to be disheartened by the choices and decisions being made in Weston.**
Afterschool Care	[Elementary School] – After school program in Weston is expensive.
Atmosphere	[Elementary School] – We thought there was a lot of attention to discipline in my child's class, mostly as a result of a problem child who apparently was so bad in first grade he had to change classrooms. There was focus on rewards and earning this or that, not love of learning. My child liked the teacher but the memorable part of school was her friends - a fantastic group of girls.
Sibling Experience	[Elementary School] – We originally moved to Weston for the exceptional schools, but with the mediocre to lackluster experience we had putting our first two children through the system, we felt we would rather pay the independent school \$25,000 per child tuition to insure that they have consistently high quality teachers, small classrooms, and an

	academic experience that is more tailored to address their individual strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, we wanted a community that truly felt like they cared about our children.
Single-Sex School	[Elementary School] – We felt our son would be better served by attending an all-boys school. We have a very bright, charismatic, empathetic, kind, but energetic little boy. We were afraid that in a larger classroom with the wrong teacher that the aspect of his personality that would be highlighted, emphasized and defining for him would be his level of energy, and we were afraid this would impact his self-esteem, his approach to school and the way others viewed him. We haven't thought twice about our decision to send him to a private school. All that we had hoped for him has happened, he has matured over the years, never felt badly about himself, never was labelled and he has grown, in just a few years, into the type of student we hoped he would be. He loves school, he has learned appropriate outlets for his energy and when he is in the classroom he is diligent, focused and hardworking.
Special Needs	[Middle School] – The IEP was insufficient.
Unique Experience	[Middle School] – After attending a different for a unique middle school experience, we did not see him transitioning into the Weston High School for many reasons, academic and cultural.**

*Note the exit grade-level of each child has been *inferred* from other information provided in the survey (e.g., current grade level, other comments). This information appears in brackets preceding each response.

** This comment has been modified to protect the anonymity of the respondent or of an individual within WPS.

Summary of Reason(s) for Departure – Exit Grade Unspecified

There were 25 children for whom the parent/guardian did not specify the exit grade – including 15 cases where the child never attended Weston Public Schools and 10 cases where the parent/guardian skipped the exit grade question. The top reasons given for decisions to opt these children out of Weston Public Schools were: (1) lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (40%) and (2) lack of responsiveness by staff or administrators to the child's needs or family's concerns (32%). The most common write-in reason, provided as a reason for 2 of the 25 children, was related to perceived issues with the school administration.

The top area in which parent/guardian respondents chose to provide additional clarifying comments was for a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child (3 respondents).

SUMMARY OF REASON(S) FOR DEPARTURE

All Youth. Across all school-aged children represented by the survey who were opted out of WPS (n=163), the most common reason given was lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (44%), followed by academic class size (39%), lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to the child's needs or the parent's concerns (36%), and the child wanting to attend another school (25%). In general, there were few differences in the frequency of each reason based on whether the child was opted-out in K-5th grade, 6-8th grade, or during high school. [See Page 6.](#)

Prior to Middle School [K-5]. Fifty-six (56) children were opted-out of WPS prior to middle school. The top three reasons given for decisions to opt children out of Weston Public Schools between kindergarten and fifth grade were: (1) lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (44%), (2) academic class size (39%), and (3) lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to the child's needs or the family's concerns (36%). The most common write-in reason, provided as a reason for 4 of the 56 children, was a perceived issue with the quality and consistency of instructors/teachers. The top three areas in which respondents chose to provide additional clarifying comments were for: a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child (9 respondents), the perceived inability of the school system to respond to their child's special needs (5 respondents), and a perceived lack of instructor/teacher quality (4 respondents). [See Pages 7-11.](#)

Prior to High School [6th-8th]. Fifty-nine (59) children were opted-out of WPS prior to high school. The top reasons given for decisions to opt children out of Weston Public Schools between sixth and eighth grade were: (1) lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (51%), (2) academic class size (47%), (3) lack of responsiveness by school staff or administrators to the child's needs or the family's concerns (37%), and for a reason not listed (34%). The most common write-in reason, provided as a reason for 3 of the 59 children, was dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in the school system. The top three areas in which parent/guardian respondents chose to provide additional clarifying comments were for: a perceived lack of individual attention and the feeling that their child was slipping through the cracks (7 respondents), a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school system to challenge their child (5 respondents), and their child's special needs and/or special education programming or services (5 respondents). [See Pages 12-17.](#)

During High School [9th-12th]. Twenty-three (23) children were opted-out of WPS during high school. The top reasons given for decisions to opt children out of Weston Public Schools between ninth and twelfth grade were: (1) a reason not listed in the survey (57%), (2) because the child wanted to attend another school (52%), and (3) concerns about academic class size (48%). The most common write-in reason, provided as a reason for 3 of the 23 children, was dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in the school system. The top areas in which parent/guardian respondents chose to provide additional clarifying comments were for: dissatisfaction with the atmosphere of the school system (5 respondents) and a perceived lack of individual attention and the feeling that their child was slipping through the cracks (3 respondents). [See Pages 18-21.](#)

Exit Grade Unspecified. There were 25 children for whom the parent/guardian did not specify the exit grade – including 15 cases where the child never attended Weston Public Schools and 10 cases where the parent/guardian skipped the exit grade question. The top reasons given for decisions to opt these children out of Weston Public Schools were: (1) lack of appropriate academic programs in Weston schools (40%) and (2) lack of responsiveness by staff or administrators to the child’s needs or family’s concerns (32%). The most common write-in reason, provided as a reason for 2 of the 25 children, was related to perceived issues with the school administration. The top area in which parent/guardian respondents chose to provide additional clarifying comments was for a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child (3 respondents). See Pages 22-24.

Write-In Reasons. Across the 163 youth who were opted out of Weston Public Schools, parent/guardian respondents wrote-in a reason for 44 of these youth in addition to or in lieu of the list of 13 reasons provided. The most common write-in items were: concerns about the general atmosphere in the school system (7 respondents), a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child (5 respondents), and concerns about the quality and consistency of instructors/teachers (5 respondents).

Clarifying Comments. Parent/guardian respondents were provided the opportunity to write-in additional clarifying comments to elaborate on their reason(s) for opting their child or children out of Weston Public Schools. The largest number of respondents used this opportunity to elaborate on: a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child (19 respondents), a perceived lack of individual attention and the feeling that their child was slipping through the cracks (13 respondents), issues with the perceived inability of the school system to respond to their child’s special needs (13 respondents), dissatisfaction with the atmosphere of the school system (8 respondents), and concerns about the quality and consistency of instructors/teachers (6 respondents).

PERCEPTIONS OF WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LEVEL OF REGARD FOR WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ON VARIOUS DIMENSIONS

Level of Regard – All Parent/Guardian Respondents

All parent/guardian respondents, regardless of whether or not all of their school-aged children currently attend Weston Public Schools (n=160), were asked to share their perceptions of the school system across 11 areas (Table 9). Across the 11 areas, parent/guardian respondents reported the highest average level of regard for athletic programs, arts (art, music, drama), and other co-curricular programming (mean = 2.99 out of 4.00). Three-quarters of respondents (73%) reported that they held this area in either high regard (45%) or very high regard (28%). Fewer than half of the respondents reported that they had high or very high regard for class size (45% combined) or for the responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to their child's needs or their family's concerns (39% combined).

Table 9: Perception of Weston Public Schools – All Respondents (n=160)

Perception of WPS	Low Regard	Some Regard	High Regard	Very High Regard	Mean (1-4)
Athletic programs, arts (art, music, drama), and other co-curricular programming. (n=149)	1%	26%	45%	28%	2.99
The quality of classroom instruction. (n=150)	8%	40%	30%	22%	2.66
The number of appropriate programs for students. (n=149)	11%	36%	36%	18%	2.61
The quality of appropriate programs for students. (n=149)	13%	34%	33%	20%	2.60
Concern for student safety, including addressing bullying or bad behavior of students. (n=149)	19%	25%	34%	22%	2.60
The rankings of the schools in Weston. (n=147)	11%	36%	35%	18%	2.60
Preparation of students to enter the college of their choice. (n=144)	8%	42%	31%	19%	2.60
The availability of classes which meet the needs of my child. (n=149)	16%	36%	30%	19%	2.51
The availability of appropriate special education programming or services. (n=139)	25%	27%	31%	18%	2.42
Class size. (n=150)	20%	35%	30%	15%	2.39
The responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to my child's needs or my family's concerns. (n=146)	25%	36%	22%	17%	2.31

Differences between the 113 parents/guardians who have at least one child outside of Weston Public Schools and the 47 parents/guardians who send all of their children to Weston Public Schools were tested using a series of independent samples t-tests to compare the mean values for members of each group. Results found that respondents who send all of their children to Weston Public Schools had significantly ($p < .05$) higher perceptions of WPS than their peers who send at least one child outside of the school district. This was the case for all 11 items.

Level of Regard – Parents Who Opted at Least One Child Out of WPS

The 11 perception items were analyzed for the subset of 113 parents/guardians who currently send at least one child outside of the Weston Public School District (Table 10). Across the 11 areas, parent/guardian respondents reported the highest average level of regard for athletic programs, arts (art, music, drama), and other co-curricular programming (mean = 2.90 out of 4.00). Two-thirds of respondents (67%) reported that they held this area in either high regard (42%) or very high regard (25%). Only one in every three respondents reported that they had high or very high regard for class size (33% combined) or for the responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to their child’s needs or their family’s concerns (28% combined).

Table 10: Perception of Weston Public Schools – Parents Who Opted Out at Least One Child (n=113)

Perception of WPS	Low Regard	Some Regard	High Regard	Very High Regard	Mean (1-4)
Athletic programs, arts (art, music, drama), and other co-curricular programming. (n=102)	1%	32%	42%	25%	2.90
The rankings of the schools in Weston. (n=100)	13%	41%	32%	14%	2.47
The quality of classroom instruction. (n=103)	11%	47%	28%	15%	2.47
Quality of appropriate programs for students. (n=102)	17%	38%	32%	14%	2.43
Preparation of students to enter the college of their choice. (n=99)	10%	49%	30%	11%	2.42
The number of appropriate programs for students. (n=102)	14%	44%	32%	10%	2.38
Concern for student safety, including addressing bullying or bad behavior of students. (n=102)	23%	32%	29%	16%	2.38
The availability of classes which meet the needs of my child. (n=102)	22%	40%	25%	14%	2.30
The availability of appropriate special education programming or services. (n=94)	30%	28%	27%	16%	2.29
Class size. (n=103)	25%	42%	26%	7%	2.15
The responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to my child’s needs or my family’s concerns. (n=100)	32%	40%	17%	11%	2.07

A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical tests were enlisted to test for mean differences across the 11 items between parents who opted out all of their children prior to middle school, prior to high school, during high school, and those who opted children out at multiple grade levels. There were no statistically significant differences for any of the 11 items based on the opt-out grade(s). In other words, respondents were very similar to one another independent of the grade level when they opted their child or children out of WPS. For example, the mean scores for the level of regard related to the responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to the child’s needs or family’s concerns was 2.07 out of 4.00 for the whole sample, 2.11 for those who opted a child out between kindergarten and 5th grade, 2.00 for those who opted a child out between sixth and eighth grade, 2.06 for those who opted a child out during high school, and 2.17 for those who opted children out of multiple grade levels. This degree of consistency was observed for most of the 11 items.

Level of Regard – Parents Who Opted Out All Children Prior to Middle School

The perception items were analyzed for the subset of 41 parents/guardians who opted out all of their school-aged children prior to middle school – at the end of Kindergarten through fifth grade (Table 11). Across the 11 areas, parent/guardian respondents reported the highest average level of regard for athletic programs, arts (art, music, drama), and other co-curricular programming (mean = 2.94 out of 4.00). Two-thirds of respondents (69%) reported that they held this area in either high regard (44%) or very high regard (25%). Only one in every three respondents reported that they had high or very high regard for the availability of classes which meet the needs of their child (34% combined) or for the responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to their child’s needs or their family’s concerns (30% combined).

Table 11: Perception of Weston Public Schools – All Children Opted-Out Before Middle School (n=41)

Perception of WPS	Low Regard	Some Regard	High Regard	Very High Regard	Mean (1-4)
Athletic programs, arts (art, music, or drama), and other co-curricular programming (n=36)	0%	31%	44%	25%	2.94
The quality of classroom instruction (n=37)	11%	32%	35%	22%	2.68
Preparation of students to enter the college of their choice (n=34)	9%	32%	41%	18%	2.68
The quality of appropriate programs for students (n=36)	14%	33%	28%	25%	2.64
The rankings of the schools in Weston (n=36)	19%	28%	36%	17%	2.50
The number of appropriate programs for students (n=36)	22%	36%	25%	17%	2.36
Class size (n=37)	22%	38%	30%	11%	2.30
The availability of appropriate special education programming or services (n=32)	41%	19%	19%	22%	2.22
Concern for student safety, including addressing bullying or bad behavior of students (n=36)	36%	19%	31%	14%	2.22
The availability of classes which meet the needs of my child (n=36)	31%	36%	17%	17%	2.19
The responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to my child's needs or my family's concerns (n=36)	31%	39%	19%	11%	2.11

Level of Regard – Parents Who Opted Out All Children Prior to High School

The perception items were analyzed for the subset of 41 parents/guardians who opted out all of their school-aged children prior to high school – at the end of sixth grade through eighth grade (Table 12). Across the 11 areas, parent/guardian respondents reported the highest average level of regard for athletic programs, arts (art, music, drama), and other co-curricular programming (mean = 2.83 out of 4.00). Two-thirds of respondents (66%) reported that they held this area in either high regard (47%) or very high regard (19%). Only one in every three respondents reported that they had high or very high regard for class size (34% combined) or for the preparation for students to enter the college of their choice (32% combined). Only one in every four respondents reported that they had high or very high regard for the responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to their child’s needs or their family’s concerns (24% combined).

Table 12: Perception of Weston Public Schools – All Children Opted-Out Before High School (n=41)

Perception of WPS	Low Regard	Some Regard	High Regard	Very High Regard	Mean (1-4)
Athletic programs, arts (art, music, or drama), and other co-curricular programming (n=36)	3%	31%	47%	19%	2.83
The rankings of the schools in Weston (n=35)	6%	43%	37%	14%	2.60
The availability of appropriate special education programming or services (n=32)	19%	28%	34%	19%	2.53
Concern for student safety, including addressing bullying or bad behavior of students (n=36)	14%	39%	28%	19%	2.53
The availability of classes which meet the needs of my child (n=36)	17%	39%	31%	14%	2.42
The quality of classroom instruction (n=36)	6%	58%	25%	11%	2.42
The number of appropriate programs for students (n=36)	11%	44%	39%	6%	2.39
The quality of appropriate programs for students (n=36)	17%	42%	36%	6%	2.31
Preparation of students to enter the college of their choice (n=35)	9%	60%	26%	6%	2.29
Class size (n=36)	19%	47%	28%	6%	2.19
The responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to my child's needs or my family's concerns (n=34)	29%	47%	18%	6%	2.00

Level of Regard – Parents Who Opted Out All Children During High School

The perception items were analyzed for the subset of 19 parents/guardians who opted out all of their school-aged children during high school – at the end of ninth or tenth grade (Table 13). Across the 11 areas, parent/guardian respondents reported the highest level of regard for athletic programs, arts (art, music, drama), and other co-curricular programming (mean = 2.72 out of 4.00). Over half of respondents (56%) reported that they held this area in either high regard (39%) or very high regard (17%). Only one in every four respondents reported that they had high or very high regard for class size (24% combined) or for the responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to their child's needs or their family's concerns (23% combined).

Table 13: Perception of Weston Public Schools – All Children Opted-Out During High School (n=19)

Perception of WPS	Low Regard	Some Regard	High Regard	Very High Regard	Mean (1-4)
Athletic programs, arts (art, music, or drama), and other co-curricular programming (n=18)	0%	44%	39%	17%	2.72
The availability of classes which meet the needs of my child (n=18)	11%	44%	33%	11%	2.44
Concern for student safety, including addressing bullying or bad behavior of students (n=18)	17%	44%	22%	17%	2.39
The number of appropriate programs for students (n=18)	6%	56%	39%	0%	2.33
The rankings of the schools in Weston (n=18)	6%	61%	28%	6%	2.33
The quality of appropriate programs for students (n=18)	22%	33%	39%	6%	2.28
The availability of appropriate special education programming or services (n=18)	22%	33%	39%	6%	2.28
The quality of classroom instruction (n=18)	11%	56%	28%	6%	2.28
Preparation of students to enter the college of their choice (n=18)	17%	61%	17%	6%	2.11
The responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to my child's needs or my family's concerns (n=18)	33%	39%	17%	11%	2.06
Class size (n=18)	39%	33%	22%	6%	1.94

Level of Regard – Parents Who Opted Out Children in Multiple Grade Levels

The perception items were analyzed for the subset of 12 parents/guardians who opted out all of their school-aged children out of multiple grade levels (Table 14). Across the 11 areas, parent/guardian respondents reported the highest level of regard for athletic programs, arts, and other co-curricular programming (mean = 3.25 out of 4.00). Three-quarters of respondents (75%) reported that they held this area in either high (25%) or very high regard (50%). Fewer than 20% of respondents reported that they had high or very high regard for class size (17%) or for the availability of appropriate special education programming or services (16% combined).

Table 14: Perception of Weston Public Schools – Children Opted-Out of Multiple Grade Levels (n=12)

Perception of WPS	Low Regard	Some Regard	High Regard	Very High Regard	Mean (1-4)
Athletic programs, arts (art, music, or drama), and other co-curricular programming (n=12)	0%	25%	25%	50%	3.25
Preparation of students to enter the college of their choice (n=12)	8%	42%	33%	17%	2.58
The number of appropriate programs for students (n=12)	8%	50%	25%	17%	2.50
The quality of appropriate programs for students (n=12)	17%	42%	25%	17%	2.42
Concern for student safety, including addressing bullying or bad behavior of students (n=12)	17%	33%	42%	8%	2.42
The quality of classroom instruction (n=12)	25%	42%	17%	17%	2.25
The rankings of the schools in Weston (n=12)	27%	45%	9%	18%	2.18
The responsiveness by Weston school staff or administrators to my child's needs or my family's concerns (n=12)	42%	25%	8%	25%	2.17
The availability of classes which meet the needs of my child (n=12)	25%	50%	17%	8%	2.08
The availability of appropriate special education programming or services (n=12)	42%	42%	8%	8%	1.83
Class size (n=12)	33%	50%	17%	0%	1.83

SUMMARY OF PERCEPTIONS OF WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Across the 160 parents/guardians who took part in the survey, 47 send all of their children to Weston Public Schools and 113 have at least one child outside of WPS. The parents/guardians who send all of their children to WPS had significantly higher regard for WPS ($p < .05$) across all 11 perception items in the survey than their peers who have at least one child outside of WPS.

Among the subset of 113 parents/guardians who have at least one child outside of Weston Public Schools, these individuals have the highest level of regard for athletic programs, arts, and other co-curricular programming in Weston. The rankings of the schools in Weston and the quality of classroom instruction in Weston were both also held in higher regard. At the opposite end, class size and the responsiveness of Weston school staff or administrators to the child's needs or family's concerns were both held in comparatively lower regard – fewer than one in three respondents held these areas in high or very high regard.

Respondents were very similar to one another independent of the grade level when they opted their child or children out of WPS. No significant differences emerged across the items based on the opt-out grade level of the child.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY OPT-OUT GRADE LEVEL

Additional Comments – Parents Who Opted Out All Children Prior to Middle School

Parents/guardians who opted all of their school-aged children out of Weston Public Schools prior to middle school (at the end of kindergarten through fifth grade) were given the opportunity to provide additional comments. Fifteen of the 41 parents/guardians in this group provided a comment. The complete list of comments, coded by primary theme, is provided below. Four (4) respondents provided additional comments related to a perceived lack of academic rigor and the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child, three (3) respondents provided additional comments about special needs and special education programs or services, two (2) provided additional comments about dissatisfaction with the administration, and two (2) commented on the need for smaller class sizes. No other comments were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	<i>Verbatim Response (n=15) – Additional Comments [K-5]</i>
Academic Rigor	I would be happy to share my experiences with Weston public elementary schools compared to Meadowbrook. I have extremely high regard for the public school system in Weston and feel there is a lot in place at the elementary level for kids who need help, but not a lot in place to challenge a subset of kids who really thrive in a slightly more competitive, challenging atmosphere.*
Academic Rigor	My husband and I never set out to have our children attend private school and we loved our K-3 experience at Woodland School. So, we were quite disappointed with the Field School. While we had some excellent teachers, we thought that the curriculum itself was lacking. We couldn't understand why we had to supplement our children's education with extra tutoring to provide more outside work. We just truly thought that there was a substantial lack of homework especially in the 5th grade and that the students were completely ill prepared for their middle school years.
Academic Rigor	There is very little available for children who could do more than the standard curriculum at a given age/grade level. A lot of emphasis on technology at the sacrifice of depth of learning and understanding. Many subjects touched on superficially (which makes for a great selling talk or presentation) but not much substance underneath.
Academic Rigor	We have had a mixed experience in Weston. We have had some outstanding teachers and some mediocre. On balance, we have had average teachers. Similarly, we have had some outstanding administrators and some mediocre. Our concerns have been addressed, but not always to our satisfaction. We moved to Weston 9 years ago for the public schools. If we were moving again, we would look at other districts. I think that Weston is in danger of losing its high rankings if it doesn't take steps to shore up its core curriculum. Now that we have a child in the HS, we have been extremely disappointed with the course offerings and the administration. I would echo a concern expressed by many about the difference in quality between honors/AP level course work and CP course work. I also think the process for placing students in honors or AP level work is broken.
Special Needs	I am beyond happy with my decision to take my 4th grade son out of WPS. He is getting what he needs at the school he is at now. I wish I sent him there earlier and minimized the damage that WPS did to him. I also wish I sent my oldest child there. And I'm keeping a close eye on one of my 2nd grade son, as he might need to go.
Special Needs	In addition to choosing to unilaterally place our son in a private school due to his lack of effective progress and the school's inability to provide appropriate programming for

	students with language-based learning disabilities, our daughter has asked to apply to private high schools for want of smaller class sizes and more teacher attention. She has benefitted from work with a private writing tutor since winter of 6th grade (almost 2 years), as she has received very little explicit writing instruction in Weston. Moreover, she has not received the math instruction that she requires. In 6th grade she advocated for herself and pursued extra-help, but she found her classroom teacher confusing and unapproachable. Because my daughter is competent and cooperative, she is overlooked and slips through the cracks. Weston schools, especially the math department and high school in general is very focused on high achieving students. Typical students who require good instruction are often over looked and therefore do not achieve to their full potential. With regard to Special Education WPS does not identify students or provide appropriate instruction, and the process to get services for children is extraordinarily contentious.*
Special Needs	Need OG trained reading teachers for dyslexic children.
Administration	We need stronger building principals and emphasis on good teaching. Just because our kids are affluent doesn't mean they will be fine which is all we hear.
Administration	Weston is not all its made out to be and the void of leadership has only made it worse.
Smaller Class Size	The academic class size in Weston is too high and does not allow for individual attention needed. Weston needs more teachers; they are outstanding professionals but not enough of them. Also, arts funding in the high school is non-existent - need more classes!
Smaller Class Size	The teachers were all really wonderful! We think Weston offers many wonderful options and academics for kids, but ultimately felt our kids would be served best elsewhere with smaller class size.
Academic Leveling	Two levels of instruction in a school this size is UNACCEPTABLE. Math is either too hard or too simple. Same with science.*
More Innovation	So our oldest returned to the high school because of the new science wing and what it brings, as well as the statistics of the high school. There could be a bit more diversity of classes, perhaps offering certain classes every other year so teachers are not spread so thin. I think the school has been a bit slow to add in engineering and maker workshop activities, too late for our child, but at least it is happening. It is difficult in a public school setting, but stepping up innovation is where the schools could improve. Also, reducing class size a bit could help. My impression from our start in the schools is that elementary is so-so in terms of academics (very kind and interesting curriculum, but not challenging), middle school ratchets it up and high school ratchets it up again. Between each level is a huge step up that is tough for some. It is a natural survival of the fittest. So kids are as well prepared to go to such a challenging high school and that increases the pressures already rampant on these kids. Music/arts and sports programs are great.
Relocated	The principal and staff of Weston Elementary made unusual and concerted effort to help my child enter the school as a 4th grader, become accustomed and comfortable there, and thrive in a supportive environment. Even the staff of CCW, the after school program took special care to include and encourage our child, as did the psychologist at the school. And as for his teacher--she was superb. She pushed him and cared about him. He made friends, and grew academically. We were happy in Weston schools, and miss it greatly.
Total Experience	In the end, the total experience in Weston convinced us we were right to opt for private schools. But there were many wonderful parts of our experience at the schools in Weston, and above all we are grateful for what it did for our eldest.

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Additional Comments – Parents Who Opted Out All Children Prior to High School

Parents/guardians who opted all of their school-aged children out of Weston Public Schools prior to high school (at the end of sixth grade through eighth grade) were given the opportunity to provide additional comments. Fourteen of the 41 parents/guardians in this group provided a comment. The complete list of comments, coded by primary theme, is provided below. Five (5) respondents provided additional comments related to a perceived lack of academic rigor and the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child, three (3) respondents commented on the need for smaller class sizes, and two (2) provided additional comments about special needs and special education programs or services. No other comments were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	Verbatim Response (n=14) – Additional Comments [6 th -8 th]
Academic Rigor	Areas that Weston could strengthen (within reason) that would have impacted our choices to put some children in independent schools are to significantly strengthen the caliber of the MS English program. We have had great English teachers in 6th and 8th. The 6th and 7th grade curricula are very light (especially 7th) in terms of the writing and reading. In addition, the teachers don't seem well able to challenge an above average student. While we understand that you don't want to have a lot of leveled classes in MS and that this comes in HS, the curriculum is simply not challenging for a chunk of kids in the MS (not true for Math). Our daughter, who is still in Weston MS, did about 15 minutes of homework per day in 7th grade and did no writing assignments to speak of throughout the whole year. The only class that challenged her was math (advanced algebra). She loved her teachers, had great experiences in drama, band, sports and the Hale program through 7th grade. Her level of real academic engagement and challenge was remarkably different from (less than) her sister who is in independent school. Please note, that I am still a big proponent of Weston Schools. I am philosophically supportive of public education and think we have excellent schools in the town. My husband and I have different viewpoints although share the desire for our kids to get a great education. We've gone down this path of finding the right school for each child. There are pros and cons to it.*
Academic Rigor	I was going to leave my son in Weston but with cancelling the 7th grade algebra class I am now looking for alternative school options for him.
Academic Rigor	I was happy with my oldest's path through the public schools in Weston, but sad things have changed so much. I'm glad I could afford private high school for my youngest. It is absurd to no longer care about achievement at the high end, but to instead only focus on the low end and Metco and Sped kids. I get no child left behind mandates, but a social agenda has trumped sensitivity to the context of Weston's population in the minds of many administrators.
Academic Rigor	My perception is that for families who have had multiple children, younger siblings benefit from knowing the system. Being an outsider puts one at a disadvantage for knowing which classes and teachers are best. My impression is there is a general lack of rigor.*
Academic Rigor	More rigorous curriculum in math/sciences. I would like more emphasis is Art and foreign language in all years.
Smaller Class Size	Class size is random. 2018 class is small which is great! 2019 is large...not great!
Smaller Class Size	Fantastic teachers at all levels K-12. Very strong Science/Math and advanced English at HS level in particular. Less support for students outside of the classroom and in college process, in particular. For the latter, too many students tax too few well-meaning advisors due to class size.
Smaller Class Size	Large grade sizes for my kids' grade levels was concerning. Both of them were in "boom" years and large class sizes followed suit. With English and writing in particular, larger class

	sizes make it extremely difficult for the teacher to effectively teach individuals with specific feedback and personalized comments.
Special Needs	We found that the school system is much better equipped to teach children that do not have special needs. Our oldest child had a positive experience throughout the school system with the exception of his guidance counselor during the college selection process. He did not know our son well even though our son spent his entire time within the Weston Public Schools. The counselor had limited knowledge of schools appropriate for our son. He did no research. This was the only issue we had during his time in the public school system and in the end it worked out.
Special Needs	When our child attended Weston Public Schools, we advocated for services based on what was recommended to us by specialists. Admittedly, we ourselves had no experience with exactly how those services might be carried out in order to bring about a positive response--or what a positive response might look like in our child. In fact, we were often told that the recommendations we requested would turn off our child to school. Now that we have left Weston Public Schools and witnessed how our child responds to the recommended special education services, when provided by administration and staff who are competent and confident in providing evidence-based instruction, we know what a positive response looks like in our child.
Academic Leveling	The schools should differentiate students based on their achievement level. The schools focus too much on low achieving students at the expense of high achieving students. That is why enrollment keeps going down, while Lexington, Wellesley, and Concord enrollment keep going up.
Atmosphere	Stop worrying about the rankings!!! The high rank brings the overbearing, difficult parent who gets involved and has spoiled the school system. Stop worrying about MCAS and standardized test scores.
Common Core	Common Core. PARCC is a significant concern for my youngest son. We may be looking for options for him if Weston adopts Common Core. I am EXTREMELY concerned if Weston adopts this program. Weston was a BETA site last year! Absolute waste of time. Common Core needs to be removed from Weston Public Schools. We have great teachers. Let them teach. Bring back 2011 MCAS.
Instructor Quality	For some staff, responsiveness is fantastic, for others not. The quality of teaching really varies by teacher. There are mostly good to great teachers, but a few really poor teachers make a huge impact especially at the elementary school level when you only have one teacher for a full year. In terms of quality of programming and appropriateness, I worry about the amount of homework when aggregated. In a competitive world, we can't expect kids to choose to take the easier lighter loads to get more sleep. There is evidence that more homework is not always better. I wish there was a task force to really look at the demands across typical course loads. Also, the difference between CP and honors or AP is too vast, making the course choices more challenging.

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Additional Comments – Parents Who Opted Out All Children During High School

Parents/guardians who opted all of their children out of WPS during high school were given the opportunity to provide additional comments. Eight of the 19 parents/guardians in this group provided a comment. Two (2) respondents provided additional comments related to a perceived lack of academic rigor and the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child and two (2) commented on the Guidance Department. No other comments were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	Verbatim Response (n=8) – Additional Comments [9 th -12 th]
Academic Rigor	The difficulty of the some of the work at Weston doesn't compare to that of some private schools. Specifically, in the English department. There is not enough writing, and the level is too low! If your child is not in an honors class, the work load is to easy. College prep classes should be held to the same standard of work.
Academic Rigor	The LACK of textbooks is a HUGE problem. STEM education is weak and underwhelming. Math for honors and advanced students is poor at best. Easy for students to fall through the cracks, especially for students that do not have an IEP. School Committee makes un-trustworthy decisions and choices. Curriculum in 5th grade needs to be addressed. Need improved curriculum to teach critical thinking, the kids that do well in this area are naturally bright and are able to do this with or without curriculum, the kids in the middle are NOT getting it! College matriculation success is 80% dependent on private family resources/finance, if WPS was in Framingham, matriculation wouldn't be as impressive.*
Guidance Dept	The one complaint we have ever had is the guidance support kids receive at the HS level.
Guidance Dept	Completely fire all guidance counselors and start fresh. Their attitude toward students and parents is negative and hostile and not at all helpful to the student.*
Education Approach	While the school system invests so heavily on test performance, my belief is that doing so is at the expense of developing healthy, happy, and engaged citizens. I would advocate pilot programs that develop less structured models of education (delivered at scale). Read the book <i>The End of the Rainbow</i> by Susan Engel for a sense of principles around what it would take to educate kids in a way in which they could thrive rather than conform.
Instructor Quality	We moved to Weston for the supposedly excellent school system. High school teachers and leaders have been a disappointment. We are unlikely to send our two middle school children to Weston high school. Too many students per class. Teachers do a poor job supporting individual students. Elementary & middle school are fair/adequate. High school has been frustrating/disappointing.*
Peer Relationships	Our daughter is extremely happy in her all-girls boarding school. The school fosters a family-like relationship among students. She never felt that she fit in completely with the Weston students. She now knows that that was not her fault, and in fact is likely to be elected as head of school by her peers and the faculty at her new school. She is so happy to be where she now is. It's shame about the atmosphere at WHS.
Special Needs	Several years ago, one of my children required special education needs. Despite his needs, he was not supported in WPS, until we insisted he be supported, many years later. This took a significant toll on his education, self-esteem and much more. We made the decision to leave Weston for a period, later coming back to a somewhat improved but not significantly improved special education initiative/program. We still hope to see exceptional support for different and challenged learners the same way mainstream students are cared for and supported in WPS. We look forward to a day when these students and families feel well taken care of and educated according to the law and to Weston's high standards for exceptional education.

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Additional Comments – Parents Who Opted Out Children in Multiple Grade Levels

Parents/guardians who opted multiple school-aged children out of Weston Public Schools at different grade levels were given the opportunity to provide additional comments. No comments were provided by more than a single respondent.

Primary Theme	Verbatim Response (n=5) – Additional Comments [multiple grade levels]
Administration	It may be that changes in leadership of high school administration/guidance may be necessary to return Weston High to its prior highly-regarded excellence, academically and behaviorally.
Atmosphere	Weston does a great job within the current crazy NCLB and college admissions environment. I'd just like to change that environment, the sort of arms race of homework and academics and sports and activities and resume building. It's kind of a vicious circle: kids doing crazy amounts of work and then applying to schools. Schools need to have some way to filter which students to admit. Students doing even more work to be among the top in the applicant pool. I can't honestly say I'd organize a school any differently in that world. I just don't think it's healthy, and it tends to kill the love of learning for its own sake.
Class Size	The middle school is the area that could benefit from smaller class size, and more teaching resources. The teachers should not be allowed to teach after school sports or extra-curricular activities right after school until after scheduled office hours. Our children should always have access to a teacher after school if they need additional help. One year I was told that my child's teacher could not get after school help from her science teacher because her teacher taught tennis. The academic support for our children should come first. There should be more opportunities for children to attend a homework academy, to help build independence in the Field and middle schools. Our child was unable to consistently get help in classes, as needed. They should provide executive function scaffolding for things like organization - throughout the school year. The WPS should make Friday the day that they provide teacher development, and identify Fridays the day that any days off or half days occur. The Wednesday half day is just inconvenient for parents, and the Town is not set up to meet the demands of kids who might have parents that work. Furthermore, this just recognizes what the private schools (most get out at noon or 1 PM on Fridays) already know, that half the Town of Weston goes to a ski destination on Fridays between December and March, or elsewhere when the weather warms up. There should be more Rec classes for all kids to opt into on these half days.
Individual Attention	I think WPS does better for children who are type A personality and are willing to push back and get their needs met. Children who are quiet or middle of the pack get overlooked.
Instructor Quality	I am disappointed in the high school. The teachers seem unconcerned, inattentive and not that high caliber. I expect better. The guidance counselors are spread way too thin.

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Parent/guardian respondents were provided the opportunity to write-in additional comments at the end of the survey. The largest number of respondents used this opportunity to comment on: a perceived lack of academic rigor or the perceived inability of the school to challenge their child (11 respondents), issues with the perceived inability of the school system to respond to their child's special needs (6 respondents), concerns that class sizes were too large (5 respondents), dissatisfaction with the administration (3 respondents), and concerns about the quality and consistency of instructors/teachers (3 respondents). The remaining comments in this section were limited to one or two individuals without any distinct themes emerging.

RESPONDENTS WITH ALL CHILDREN ATTENDING WPS

COMMENTS BY RESPONDENTS WITH ALL CHILDREN ATTENDING WPS

As previously noted, 47 parents/guardians who currently send all of their school-aged children to Weston Public Schools also took part in the survey. Reviewing the comments provided by these parents may highlight the concerns of parents/guardians who are considering sending their child out of District at some point in the future.

Twenty-three (23) of these 47 individuals provided a comment. The complete list of comments, coded by primary theme, is provided below.

The largest number of respondents commented on: a perceived lack of WPS at meeting the academic needs of all students in an equitable manner (5 respondents), concerns that class sizes are getting too large (3 respondents), concerns about the quality and consistency of instructors/educators (3 respondents), perceived issues with the school curriculum (2 respondents), and concerns about declines in the quality of education (2 respondents). None of the other comments were provided by more than a single individual.

Primary Theme	<i>Verbatim Response (n=23) – Comments by Respondents With All Children in WPS</i>
Meeting Academic Needs of All Students	Frankly, if you have an above average kid who comes into the school year with the skills the teacher is hoping to have kids leave in June with, there's not much for your kid. Many families are frustrated by this and leaving the system and if they have a child on an IEP, they are leaving the Special Ed. child IN WPS and their child who is average/above average out to private. In my 10 years in WPS, I have only seen ONE teacher "differentiate" instruction. The emphasis, if one looks at the budget and where money and resources seem to go is on kids who are academically, behaviorally needy. And these kids ABSOLUTELY need to have their needs met, but I am sad to say, this is often at the cost of other kids' needs. In classrooms, the teacher/aids spend a disproportionate amount of time with kids who need to make grade level or have behavior issues and this seems unfair. Being cooperative and competent isn't a good thing in a WPS elementary classroom, at least. Also, I fear at times (and so do dozens and dozens of my friends) that Special Education programming seems to be the tail that wags the system (and my friends with kids on IEP's only complain about how bad sped is in WPS, anyway). At the high school, there are parents who actually admit out loud that the reason why adding an honors 10th grade class is because it'll pull from CP, kids who are high achieving and essentially this will be bad for the SPED kids in CP. THIS IS A JOKE. You don't hold a child back from his/her potential for any reason. Closing the gap in WPS, statistically, has been about raising the floor while keeping the ceiling put. It's a false closure then. The real solution is to provide good teachers in ALL level classes so that ALL kids will thrive. DO NOT offer a higher level course b/c some parents fear it is bad for Special Ed. kids.*
Meeting Academic Needs of All Students	From a parent's perspective I think the administration faces tradeoffs for funding programs that benefit a few advanced students vs. programs that benefit the majority of students vs. programs that help struggling students. We have children at both ends of the spectrum and know difficult it must be to meet the needs of everyone in a limited budget situation. From the perspective of our child, he believes he will have more opportunities to learn if he attends a very selective private high school. I think he is generally happy with Weston but he expressed a desire to apply to a school that is more academically selective so he can be grouped with students more like himself. Not clear to me if a private school will deliver a better education or the variety of programs that Weston can

	<p>but we support his desire to want to be with exceptional students in a smaller environment that is more flexible to his unique needs. Not clear if he will be accepted to the program he wants to apply to. If he isn't accepted, then I think he will want to stay at Weston. From our perspective either would be great, but I think the administration could do a much better job at talking to the more gifted students in the middle school to explain what Weston offers them and the options they have to reach their positive potential. Specifically based on our experiences this year our perception is that the school and community actively sends a message to the advanced students which discourages 'acceleration' or adjusting to trends/skills like software programming. When you do that with a more advanced student who loves to learn, they interpret as Weston is more focused on the average student and they start to ask about private schools. Instead encourage them to learn outside of school and tell them about the options at the high school level where they can tap into the college programs or apply to a magnet school if they want later. Show them a path where they can be exceptional at Weston and they are less likely to start talking about other options. You can do a much better job at marketing what you offer these students in my opinion.</p>
Meeting Academic Needs of All Students	<p>I think we could improve on both ends of the spectrum. For kids that need more of a challenge, we need to provide more options within the regular school setting to get them excited and challenged. For kids getting special education, I would like to see teachers provide students the tools to learn to do this better vs. just being provided support to complete classwork and homework. We also need to evaluate our method of assessing the students. Needs to be someone besides the teacher providing services to evaluate the methodology and outcomes.</p>
Meeting Academic Needs of All Students	<p>We have not decided to put our kids in another school yet but are exploring. We feel that the one size fits all approach to the curriculum is not working for our kids. Common Core the approach to learning feels flat and uninspiring. Teachers seem frustrated (which is understandable) and kids have lost the joy of learning.</p>
Meeting Academic Needs of All Students	<p>They (guidance, academic departments, and administration) don't care if your child is prepared for college so long as there are enough rich connected kids who get into the right colleges. With regard to college matriculations, they care about fostering the top 20% only.</p>
Class Size	<p>Class sizes are getting very big.</p>
Class Size	<p>I think the classroom size needs to be smaller. I feel that class work should be customized to a child's need versus a one-size-fits-all approach. I don't understand why there is timing for math test and such as early as 3rd grade. It causes a tremendous amount of stress for the child. Do you really want to cause that level of stress at such a young age? I would like to have the grade appropriate curriculum (by month) sent home so we know what to expect for the school year. We are constantly running blind as a parent. We need more communication and support from the school. Even as it pertains to homework, the questions sent home in math are often so vague that at times we as adults don't know how to guide the child in the right direction. If the school expects parents to actively participate, we should know IN ADVANCE what they were learning that week to guide the child to the correct answer.</p>
Class Size	<p>The quality of instruction and assistance by the WHS staff is outstanding. What limits our excellent teaching team is the size of classes and the need for additional focus on the arts. We need more instructors so that children get more one-one assistance within and outside the classroom. If we had a larger teaching team, individual guidance, and the focus on the growth of the child would make Weston number #1. Our town has the money to accommodate this change. We would easily gather the funds from the town for additional staff resources. Our town and the school committee focus on maintaining our school budget rather than doing what is right to enhance our great school reputation shows in our less than stellar ratings, lower property values and disgruntled teachers.</p>
Instructor Quality	<p>I am very worried about the quality of staff and curriculum at the Field School. My oldest child experienced a significant drop in quality while attending the Field School, which</p>

	made the first year at the Middle School quite challenging. I am also very worried about the quality of the language program in the middle school. If the early language program is supposed to be about understanding the options, then it should include all four language options.*
Instructor Quality	The biggest concern I have is the variability of the quality of the teachers. Most of my children's teachers have been very good or great, but there have been a few that do not belong in a school system as strong as Weston's.
Instructor Quality	The teachers in the middle school are far superior to every other school. It is the gem of the district. The teachers honestly care about the whole child, and almost every teacher there goes above and beyond.
Curriculum	All children are in WPS, but attended private school prior to enrollment in WPS and we are considering if that is an option for the future. Over the past four years, I have noted what appears to be systemic challenges at the elementary school level in regard to curriculum and voiced concerns with multiple teachers. I have received agreement, but not seen action. Learning math facts, spelling, and cursive are large areas for improvement at the elementary level. Children are expected to have facts memorized, but inadequate time is allowed in the school day. Homework assignments vary greatly and communication with the parents is inconsistent with regard to how much time and what method should be used at home. Basic spelling rules are not sent home, reinforced, and memorized. Spelling also concludes in fifth grade. I have been told cursive is not part of the standard curriculum and some teachers will include it, while others will not. Curiously, the fourth grade spelling text book contains exercises written in cursive that the students are expected to complete, although they don't necessarily know how to read cursive. Attention to these points is greatly appreciated as it may help future students.
Curriculum	Curricula selection in Weston is highly political as evidenced by decisions regarding foreign language options and approach to STEM. Deep focus on testing is palpable vs. project-based learning. Social environment is competitive with students often making fun of each other's grades in tests. Empathy is not a fostered culture by the families and it permeates the school culture especially amongst girls.
Quality of Education	I am concerned that the Weston Public Schools are slipping. This may be evident in the test scores already. I think turnover of principals is a red flag. I believe that the Field School's curriculum is weaker than it should be and artificially increases the already steep ramp into Jr. High. The curriculum for the basics - English and math - needs to be stepped up. I see too much newfangled theory here that might work for some children but not others. Kids do not do enough writing in Field School or Jr. High. I am seeing my own kids' test scores deteriorating from 3rd grade to 8th, especially in English, and blame the school. On a more minor note, I am not a big fan of showing videos (movies) at school, kids get enough screens at home, do not overuse. Going on a field trip to the movies I think is a terrible idea. Could have had a writing workshop that day!! I think a lot of precious time is wasted with nonproductive activities!! And so I consider sending my children to a private school, where the learning environment may be more productive.
Quality of Education	We moved to Weston in 1990 with school system our top priority for picking a place to live. Over the next 25 years, there has been a gradual erosion of the quality of education based on standardized test rankings. This is further evidenced by our continual need to retain private tutors to help with development of basic concepts in some subjects, especially math. It makes no sense that a school system like that of Weston should require private tutors throughout HS to achieve above average academic standing.
Advanced Students	In academics, there almost seems to be an effort not to distinguish or offer specialized programs for advanced students, as if doing so would make the bulk of students feel inadequate or something. This weakness in addressing needs of advanced students and actually challenging them is making us strongly consider sending our children to private school. (the schools are perfectly happy to distinguish and provide opportunities for advanced students when it comes to athletics, music, and drama -- why is that?).

Atmosphere	<p>We are considering independent school options for at least two of our older children in the Weston schools. Our children in the younger grades are happy, learning, safe, and in the best of hands. As our older children make their way from the middle school to high school, we continue to find the teachers excellent, and understand that the college placement options in Weston are on par with the best independent schools. However, we are concerned with the number of (what we understand to be many) kids abusing drugs on campus. We see the pervasive culture of drinking and using outside of school as well. As a family, we are stunned that there does not seem to be greater consequences for the kids who are using or knowingly in the presence of those who are. Sadly, there seems not to be an open dialogue between parents and administrators about how we can handle this together. Each independent school we've explored seems to have a culture of teamwork and student accountability in this area.</p>
Communication	<p>Weston is an excellent school district. The only downside is the communication between schools and parents and the website is too slow and difficult to get information from.</p>
Guidance Department	<p>We have a child who is now a freshman in college (as well as two children currently in the WPS). Our child who is now a freshman in college would never have been accepted to their first choice college had they stayed at Weston High. They had some struggles, both academic and social, while at Weston High. There were a couple of teachers that did reach out to help, and that was greatly appreciated. However, we felt the counselor did nothing to assist. No one did anything to help with the negative social situation that had developed over time. I feel strongly that the High School does not look after the whole child and does not do enough to create an environment where kids feel welcomed when kids struggle. Leaving Weston High was absolutely the right choice for our oldest child and it resulted in them flourishing. Our other children, also now in the high school, have also had an experience of a non-existent counselor. The counselor has done nothing at all (really) to help sort out college options. We have very motivated children, so we have navigated that issue successfully on our own. However, this is an extremely weak part of the school and I have heard this issue aired by many other parents (and not solely in relation to college needs). We have been very disappointed with the math department. One of our children, who was having a challenging time, but not a totally disastrous time, in honors math sought help from his teacher. Our child was in the majority of the class who felt that the teacher was not doing a good job of instruction. When they sought help, the teacher basically said that outside of class help was not his job and that it would be best to get a tutor. Is this what we should expect from one of the best high schools in the state? I wonder how bad the math department is in the lower ranked schools? There seem to be too many teachers in the high school biding their time until retirement. This is a travesty. We had a much better experience with the elementary level schools and the best experience with the middle school. We have kept our younger children in the Weston schools as it was cost prohibitive to have them attend private school as well as our oldest child. If we were to do it all over again, we likely would have lived in a less expensive community and sent all of our children to private school.</p>
Political Slant	<p>Left wing politics are pervasive throughout the system. A double-digit percent of teachers are more interested in their left wing viewpoints than history, science, English and even in some cases unexpected subjects like math. K-5 actively discourages academic competition. The trend of not using textbooks is terrible. It makes it harder for a student or parent to verify what is on the next test. Teachers have been able to walk all over administrators. Parents of discipline problems have walked all over administrators. Students cheat. It is common occurrence for papers and projects to be recycled by siblings or written by tutors. Tutors sometimes prepare crib notes. Very little racial or ethnic prejudice has been seen but there is a strong undertone of upper class arrogance by some and everything is someone else's fault attitude or some Black Metco students. Most teachers deserve a D- for computer skills. The various websites are less organized, less updated, and less reliable than a pile of used electronics at a flea market.</p>

Special Needs	Have had two kids so far on IEPs. Very unimpressed with quality of skills program and support of administration for skills program and students on IEPs.
Teacher-Student Relationships	There are few personal relationships built between teachers and students. Engagement and style of teaching varies fairly widely across teachers and classes with some being very interactive and engaging (great for my child's learning style) and others being very lecture based (not great for my child).
Transportation	Outside of school, my main concern is busing. Bus B seems to be consistently late in picking up my children after school (2:45pm for the Middle School and 2:50pm for the High School). Generally, the bus comes between 3:00pm to as late as 3:30pm. On average, it seems like the bus comes around 3:15pm. On Wednesdays, although the bus comes earlier, it can still come late, but not as late. As a result, my children get home between 3:45pm - 4:00pm. It takes them as long as 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) to get home after school ends. That is a considerable amount of time wasted waiting for the bus. Also, because of the inconsistencies and the fear of my children's missing the bus, they can't utilize the time waiting for any productivity work like doing homework. In addition, the late bus, which comes more consistently between 3:30pm -3:40pm and with fewer children aboard, gets my children home almost only a few minutes later (around 4:00pm - 4:10pm) than the regular bus. Many times I end up telling my children to take the late bus instead to minimize lost productivity and to use the time to do homework or seek after school support from teachers. Please address this situation. Thank you.

* This comment has been modified to protect the anonymity of the respondent or of an individual within WPS.