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Key Findings

- The percentage of stakeholders who agree the District is on track to improve student achievement decreased slightly to 87% though remains the second-highest rating to date.
- The percentage of stakeholders who agree schools are on track to improve student achievement decreased slightly from 92% in 2020 to 90% in 2021.
- Parents who believe *their child's school* is on track increased by 1 percentage point to 92%, the highest rating in five years.
- The percentage of stakeholders who believe SCS is of similar or higher quality than neighboring districts decreased 2 percentage points from 73% in 2020 to 71% in 2021.
- The majority of SCS parents (87%) plan to re-enroll their children for the 2021–22 school year, up from 80% in 2020. Parents who are considering other schooling options cited virtual learning, both frustrations with 2020–21 and lack of availability in 2021–22, health and safety protocols, and negative experiences with school staff and teachers as reasons they may not return to SCS.
- The response rate was 12% higher than average, though still behind the 2020 rate.
- Most Priority schools had one to four community partners.

Overview

The three key performance indicators (KPIs) addressed in this report are aligned to Strategic Priority 5: mobilize family and community partners. This month's KPIs are:

- Priority 5, KPI 1: community survey data; stakeholder confidence and perceptions
- Priority 5, KPI 2: parent survey data; parents' intent to re-enroll students
- Priority 5, KPI 3: community/business partnerships with Priority schools

In June and July of 2021, SCS administered English and Spanish versions of the 2020–21 District Confidence Survey. Both versions were available for SCS parents, SCS employees, and community members.[1] This report combines the results of the shared questions in the surveys. To include all the 2020–21 respondents and align respondent grouping over the past four years, we report the results for three groups: SCS parents, SCS employees (school and District staff), and community members.[2]

The total number of respondents was 5,336, with 3,123 SCS parents, 1,858 SCS employees, and 355 community members.[3] The number of respondents in 2021 decreased from last

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[1] The 2018 Spanish version was only available for SCS parents. The 2017 and 2019–21 Spanish versions were available for SCS parents, SCS staff, and community members. In 2021, the majority (88%) of the respondents who took the Spanish survey were parents.

[2] Respondents could select multiple categories. In order to not overweight responses, each response was placed into a single category. The parent category took priority, followed by staff, then community member, (i.e., an SCS parent who also works at SCS would be placed only in the parent category for the analysis and results).

[3] Based on the number of respondents who answered more than the relationship to SCS question.

year (6,934 in 2020) in all three categories, resulting in a 23% decrease in total responses. However, this was a 12% increase compared to the average survey response rate since the data was collected (4,755 across 2017–2020). Appendix A shows the response rate broken down by Board district.

Stakeholder Confidence and Perceptions of SCS

On Track to Improve Student Achievement

The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the **District** is on track to improve student achievement decreased slightly from 89% in 2020 to 87% in 2021. However, the percent of people who "completely agreed" increased 7 points compared to last year. This year saw the second highest level of agreement in eight years (see Figure 1). The District's rating includes responses about the Central Office and Superintendent.
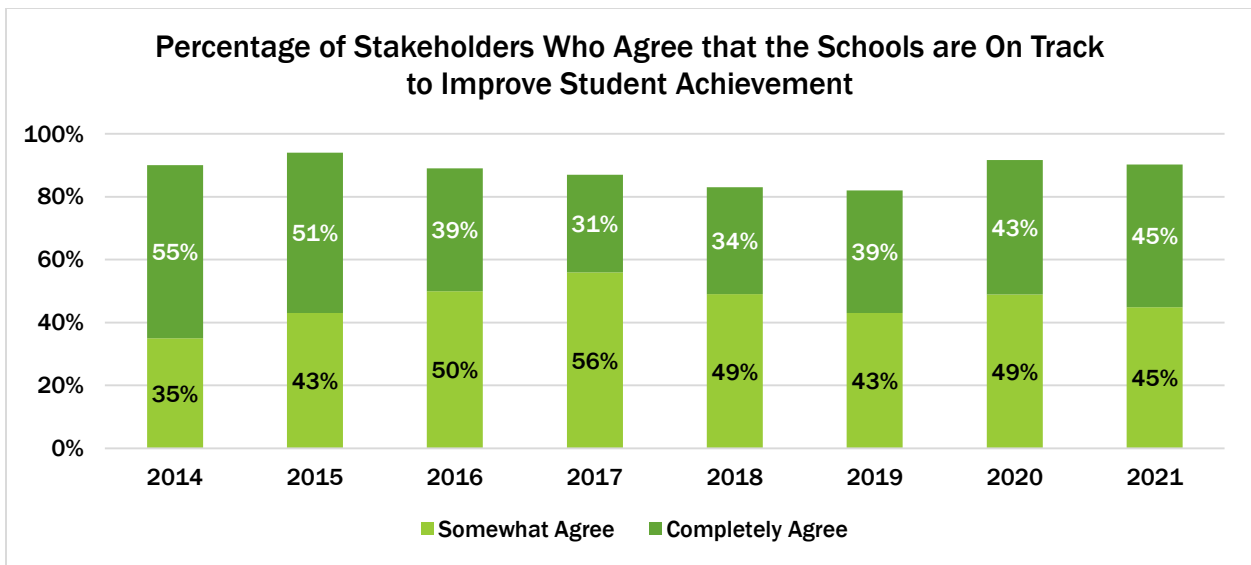
Percentage of Stakeholders Who Agree that the District is On Track to Improve Student Achievement

Year	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
2014	46%	31%
2015	57%	29%
2016	58%	20%
2017	58%	23%
2018	53%	27%
2019	44%	38%
2020	51%	38%
2021	42%	45%
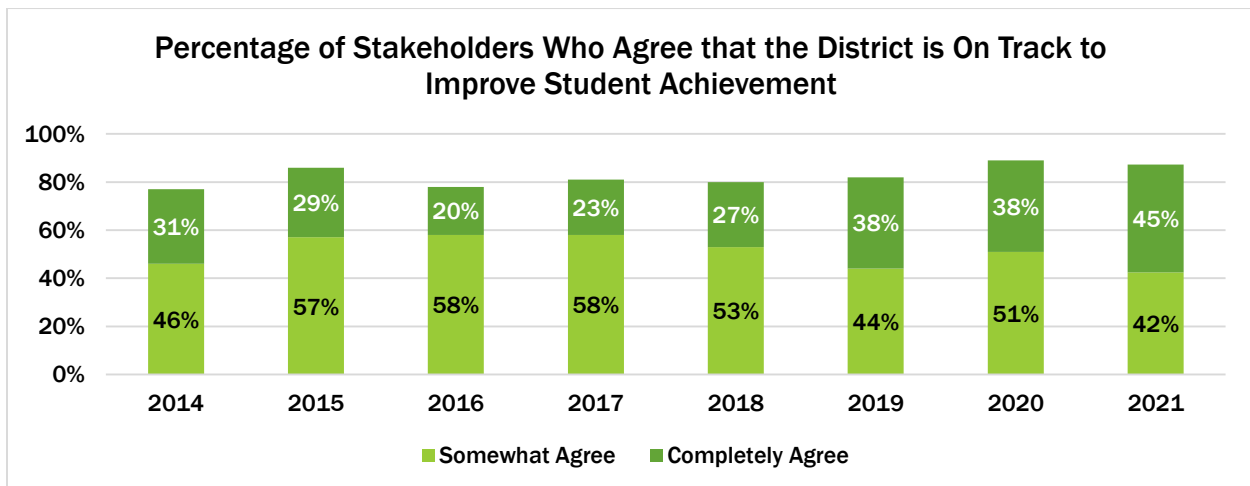
Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents agree that the **Superintendent**, Dr. Joris Ray, is on track to improve student achievement, a 2-point decrease from 2020. However, the percentage of stakeholders who "completely agree" rose 6 points to 47% in 2021. Employees reported the highest level of agreement (91%). Stakeholder's rated **Central Office** with an 85% agreement rating on the same question, also a 2-point decrease from the previous year.
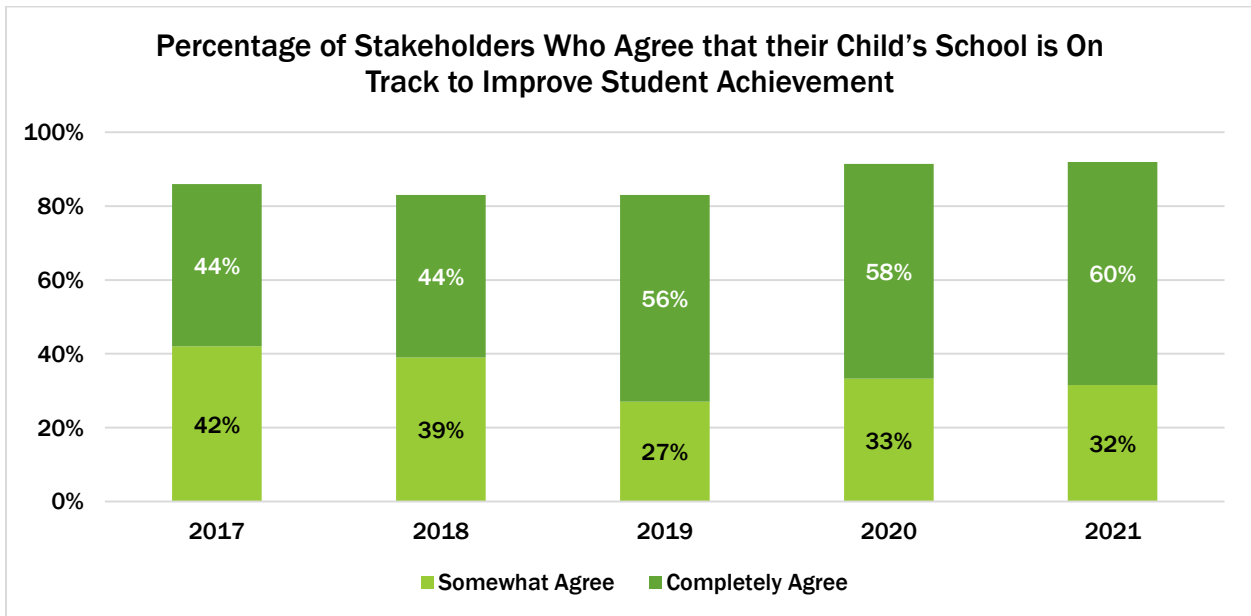
There was a slight decrease in the percentage of stakeholders who agree that **schools** are on track to improve student achievement from 92% in 2020 to 90% in 2021 (see Figure 2). The percentage of stakeholders who completely agree rose from 43% in 2020 to 45% in 2021.

Percentage of Stakeholders Who Agree that the Schools are On Track to Improve Student Achievement

Year	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
2014	35%	55%
2015	43%	51%
2016	50%	39%
2017	56%	31%
2018	49%	34%
2019	43%	39%
2020	49%	43%
2021	45%	45%

The 2017-2021 surveys asked SCS parents for their level of agreement on whether **their child's school** is on track to improve student achievement. Overall there was a 1-point increase from 2020, setting a new record of 92% agreement (see Figure 3).[4] While those who "somewhat agree" decreased to 32%, stakeholders who "completely agreed" increased by 2 points to 60%.

Percentage of Stakeholders Who Agree that their Child's School is On Track to Improve Student Achievement

Year	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
2017	42%	44%
2018	39%	44%
2019	27%	56%
2020	33%	58%
2021	32%	60%

## SCS Quality Compared to Neighboring Districts

Across all stakeholders, 26% report that SCS is of higher quality, 46% report that SCS is of similar quality, and 29% report that SCS is of lower quality than neighboring school districts. The percentage of respondents reporting that SCS is of higher or similar quality (71%)

[4] Parents had the ability to rate up to three of their children's schools for this item.

decreased from 73% in 2020. Opposite of 2020, the higher quality rating saw an uptick (23% in 2020 to 26% in 2021), while the similar quality rating decreased (50% in 2020 to 46% in 2021). By group, parents and staff perceive the quality of SCS as lower than SCS community members (see Figure 4).[5]
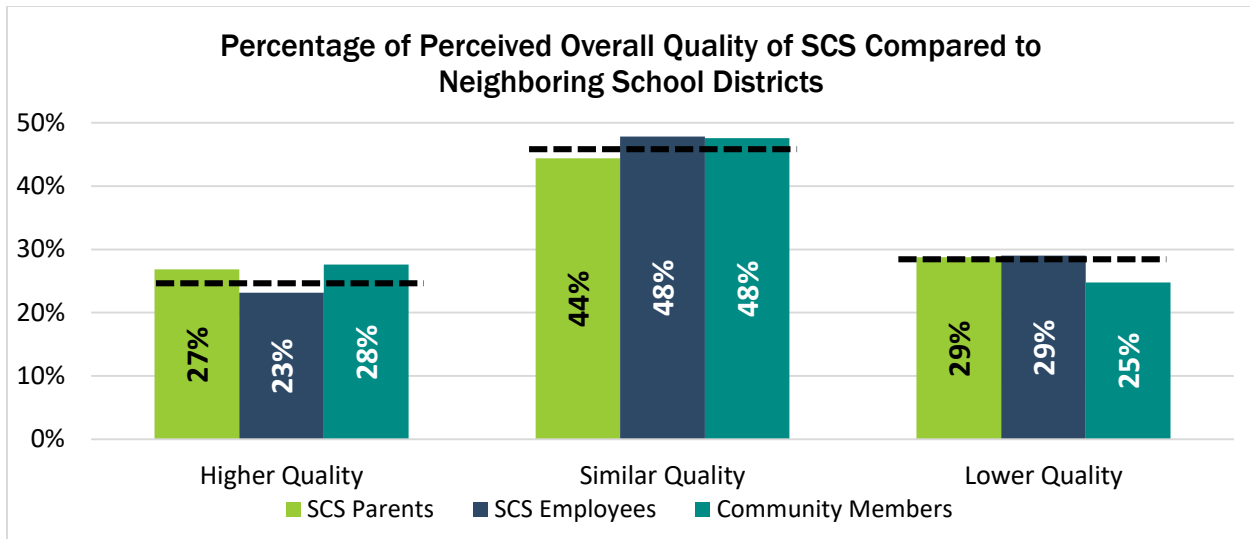
Parent's Intent to Re-enroll Students

The majority (87%) of SCS parents report that they will re-enroll their school-age children next year (see Figure 5). Parents' plans for re-enrollment increased since last year (80%).
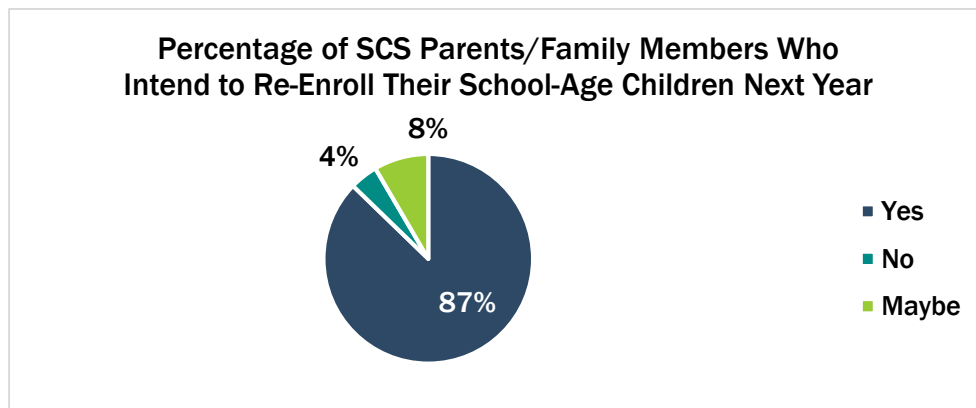
In 2021, approximately 95% of the parents completing the Spanish version said that they would re-enroll their children compared to 85% of the parents completing the English version. Ninety-four percent (94%) of parents who considered not re-enrolling left a reason in the optional open-ended response section. A primary reason parents considered not re-enrolling was concerns about virtual learning, both frustrations with how 2020–21 went and lack of virtual options available in 2021–22 were cited, and decisions about how the 2020–21 school year was handled. Appendix B provides complete themes and a sample of related comments based on qualitative analyses of the responses.


[5] The across-stakeholder dotted lines represent the average across all groups.

District Rebranding

As part of the Reimagining 901 campaign, the District is proposing a name change from Shelby County Schools (SCS) to Memphis-Shelby County Schools (M-SCS), given that the majority of schools and families are located within the city limits of Memphis. Stakeholders were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement: "incorporating 'Memphis' into the District's name is an effective way to represent the entire community we serve." Overall 56% of respondents agreed while 17% disagreed with the name change. SCS employees reported the highest levels of strong agreement (35%) and strong disagreement (9%) compared to the other two groups (see Figure 6).
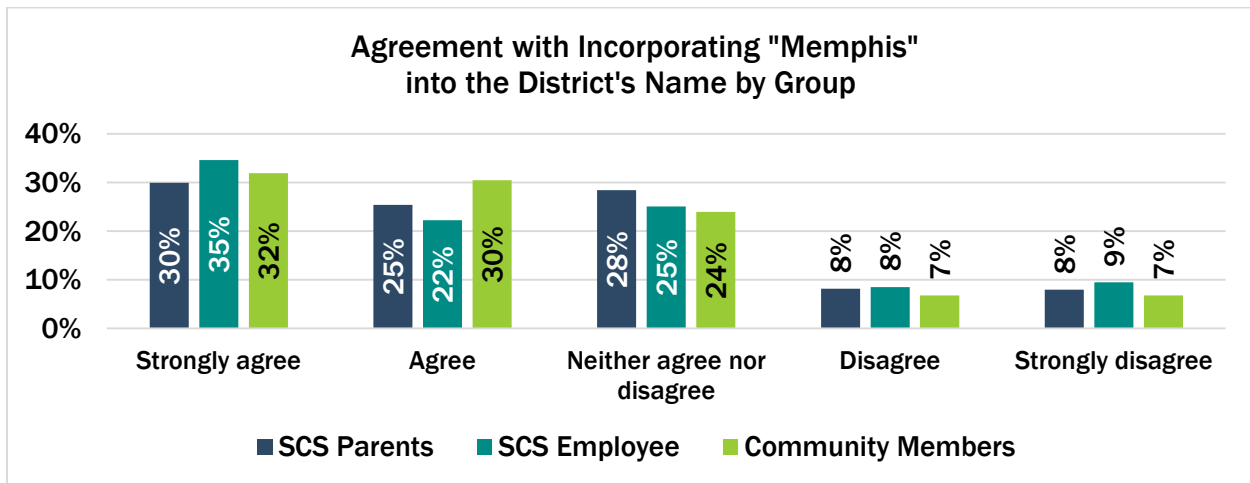
Priority Schools' Community/Business Partnerships

SCS currently has 17 schools (14 District-managed, 3 charter) on the State Priority List because they are in the bottom 5% for student achievement across Tennessee. Based on 2020–21 school reports to Family and Community Engagement, District-managed Priority schools had a range of one to seven community/business partnerships. Most Priority schools (85%; 11) had one to four partnerships (see Figure 6). [6]

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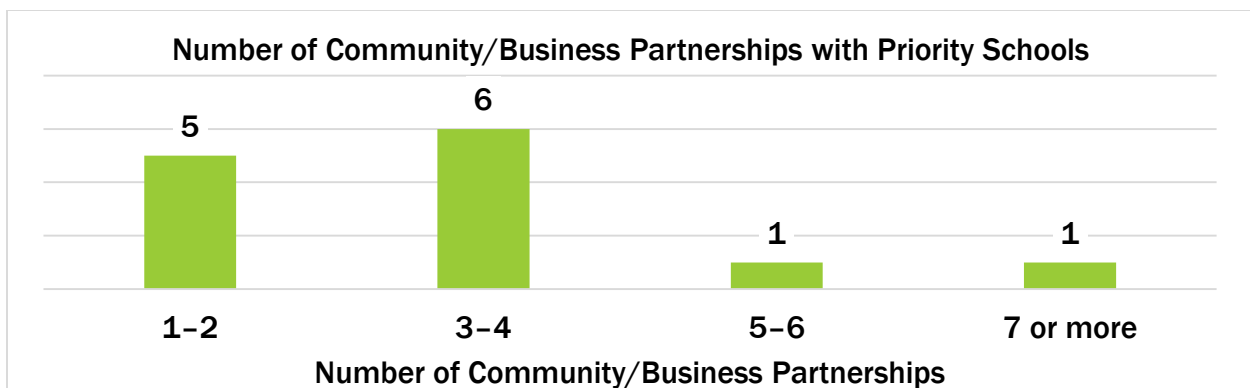
[6] The charter schools and one District-managed school did not report their number of partnerships.

Recommendations

Improve School Level-Experiences
- Continue training and monitoring on customer service with Customer Service WORKS program
- Continue to utilize school-based Communications PROs to increase social media presence and positive story-telling at the school level
- Strengthen collaboration between FACE and Schools & Leadership Office to support feeder patterns
- Increase focus on SEL and discipline practices along with parental involvement in these processes
- Continue deploying communications tool kits for principals to share important information and updates with parents

Improve District Level-Experiences
- Continue utilizing Spotlight 901 webpage to share best practices and successes of schools
- Strengthen cross-collaboration between teams to provide families with resources to assist with recovery and re-entry efforts
- Continue to host Family Forums to share important District information/resources and gather ongoing feedback
- Provide ongoing support from the Parent Welcome Center
- Expanding outreach efforts on District social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and outlets (e.g., 88.5FM, C19TV, website) to keep all stakeholders informed

Improve Community Perceptions
- Utilize Multicultural Services to expand partnerships with key providers of multicultural and multilingual supports within the community to ensure open communication channels for families and other stakeholders.
- Involve community leaders in planning and feedback efforts

Shelby County Schools partnered with the Harvard Government Performance Lab and:
- Met monthly with two high-priority student support providers to troubleshoot and find solutions to challenges encountered in the schools and align on district, school and providers' initiatives.
  - Presented academic performance and attendance data by school, grade, and subject to two high-priority student providers for the first time this year.
  - This work informed provider's decision to add tutors to support lowest performing schools and subjects.
- Developed tools to capture data on contracted services, provider performance, and school needs to align students' needs with wraparound services contracted.

APPENDIX A: Response Rate of Parents by Board Member District

There were 2,925 parents who completed the school question portion of the survey. Since parents could select up to three schools for their family, 3,921 responses for individual schools were recorded. Below is the breakdown of parent responses by Board member district.

District	Board Member	Survey Responses	% of Parents Responding to Survey Based on Enrollment*	
			2019–20	2020–21
1	Michelle McKissack	471	7%	6%
2	Althea Greene	385	5%	3%
3	Stephanie Love	184	5%	3%
4	Kevin Woods	529	7%	5%
5	Sheleah Harris†	443	8%	5%
6	Shante Avant	403	5%	4%
7	Miska Clay Bibbs	256	3%	2%
8	William "Billy" Orgel	601	10%	7%
9	Joyce Coleman	468	6%	4%

*Based on 40-day enrollment counts.
†New Board member.

APPENDIX B: Parents' Explanations for Why They May Not or Will Not Re-Enroll Students in SCS Next Year[7]

Key Themes

- Concerns about virtual learning and health and safety guidelines
    - Frustrations about the 2020–21 school year
    - Lack of virtual options in the 2021–22 school year
- Issues with teachers and school leadership and staff
- Considering alternative school options

Virtual Learning and Health and Safety Guidelines

2020–21 School Year Decisions

Roughly 10% of respondents cited frustrations over virtual learning and/or the health and safety protocols during the 2020–2021 school year. Parents felt that their children fell behind academically and did not have their needs met in the virtual setting.

- "SCS did not return to school until March, while other local school systems returned on time in fall. SCS was unprepared and unable or unwilling to adapt to CDC recommendations to get kids back in the classroom, while other schools did so."
- "Very disappointed at how this year was handled."
- "We transferred our oldest- rising 7th grader- to a private school partly [because] we did not want to take a chance on having no opportunity for in person learning and/or participation in extra-curricular activities. "
- "Virtual has set many kids behind and I am worried they will not catch up…"
- "Tired of abuse heaped upon the kids with mask nonsense. Last district back to school is a joke."
- "I want them to stay in SCS, but only if the in person learning means a true return to switching classes & being taught with their teachers in the classrooms, NOT sitting in front of devices learning through Microsoft Teams. If that can't happen I will enroll them elsewhere."
- "My child fell behind in virtual school. Nobody cared. He went through three home room teachers. My former straight A student/99th percentile tester was rejected from all optional schools, and again nobody cared. I'm so disappointed in SCS."
- "It was ridiculous how my child was virtual for most of the year. He fell behind along with I am sure a lot of other kids. Shelby County should have followed what other schools around the city/county were doing and succeeding by allowing kids to be in person [if] that was their choice. I was highly unimpressed with the leadership [initiative] and thought process on that. Now my kid is in summer school because of this mistake."

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[7] Ninety-four percent (*n* = 334) of parents who responded "maybe" or "no" to the re-enrollment questions provided an explanation.

2021–20 School Year Decisions

Roughly 13% of respondents voiced concerns about the lack of virtual options offered in 2021–22 or are waiting on more information about how the District will implement health and safety protocols next year.

- "I really want to continue my children virtual due to this new strain of the Delta covid and RSV disease that affects children; we already lost to many to these diseases. I just want my children to be safe in my care until we have vaccine for the younger children."
- "If the dithering indecisiveness of in-person vs. virtual learning continues to be an issue, then we must make choices that will most benefit our children."
- "It depends on covid precautions."
- "I want my kids to be online its safer."
- "Do not believe my children will be safe in the school with the COVID-19 still here and a new one that is out now and that our students are still in uniform and the other Shelby County students are not that's making a difference in our children really don't like that because all of the children should be treated equal."
- "I am not truly sure what I want to do because of the covid; people still not taking it seriously."
- "COVID strains are getting worse if virtual is not offered I might home school."

Issues with School Staff and Teachers

Parents also reported experiences with school administration, staff, and teachers as a reason for considering other schooling options. Some comments were related to teaching in a virtual setting though the majority focused on teaching practices and interactions parents had with school staff and principals.

- "Teachers just don't seem to care enough. Instead of going above and beyond to actually teach they just blame it on the child and/or try to remove them from their class when they don't catch on as quickly as others."
- "The teachers have too many mundane assignments to complete instead of focusing on my child's education."
- "[T]hey … actively target and single out students who are in any way problems for them. They refused to learn my child's name or pronounce it correctly, did not follow through on providing information or instructional materials to children, and refused to take any action to stop bullying other than punishing the child being bullied."
- "Teachers lack care and concern for children at this school. Teachers are unwilling to go the extra mile. Principal is not visible."
- "School leadership and staff is inadequate."
- "Staff is rude and dismissive towards parents and their concerns. Contact District office with same results."
- "The teachers are not vested; their attendance is just as poor as some of the students."

Considering Alternative Options

About 15% of parents are considering another public school system, private schools, charters, or homeschooling their child for the next academic year. The reasons given varied greatly, while many did not indicate what caused them to look outside of SCS.

- "I am concerned about the school system as a whole and I looking into moving into county school districts before school starts in the fall if possible."
- "I am exploring other options for my child including neighboring districts, private and charter schools."
- "I am considering switching school districts. Shelby County Schools system doesn't seem to care about high quality education. "
- "Debating on other schools with more advanced curriculums and activities."
- "Moving out of town to better school district."
- "Comparing alternatives."