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Customer-Based Execution & Strategy



SPORTS OR ACADEMICS: SHARPEN YOUR DISTRICT'S FOCUS WITH THE RIGHT STRATEGIC CHOICE

ACHIEVING CUSTOMER FOCUS AT SCHOOL DISTRICTS

“Our community really values sports. As a student I benefitted from sports. So, we are going to emphasize sports, because it is the best way to attract new families.”

- Principal of an underperforming middle school

“As part of strategy planning, we listened to hundreds of students, parents, and community members. Sports was mentioned many times – sports brings the community together, teaches students discipline, and creates a whole child.”

- Superintendent of an urban school district

Sports and Academics in K-12 School Districts

Many public-school leaders and school-district executives believe that sports will help differentiate their school from competitors. They believe a strong sports program can help them gain and retain families that may otherwise defect to competitors.

School leaders cite perennially complaining parents as a rationale to promote sports over academics. When a few parents harangue school leaders demanding a stronger sports focus, should school leaders invest in sports to appease them?

Setting strategy based on the few, but vocal parents can be misleading.

C-CUBES-K12™ Parent Voice Study: 2022

The Parent Voice Study is based on parents residing in the U.S., are 18 years of age, and currently have a child in school.

Survey Administration

Results are based on a national sample of 10,633 parents who completed an online survey in November-December 2022. The survey uses proprietary items to measure their student’s school and educational experience.

Methodology

This report analyzes two items rated as: completely disagree=1, somewhat disagree=2, neither agree/nor disagree=3, somewhat agree=4, completely agree=5.

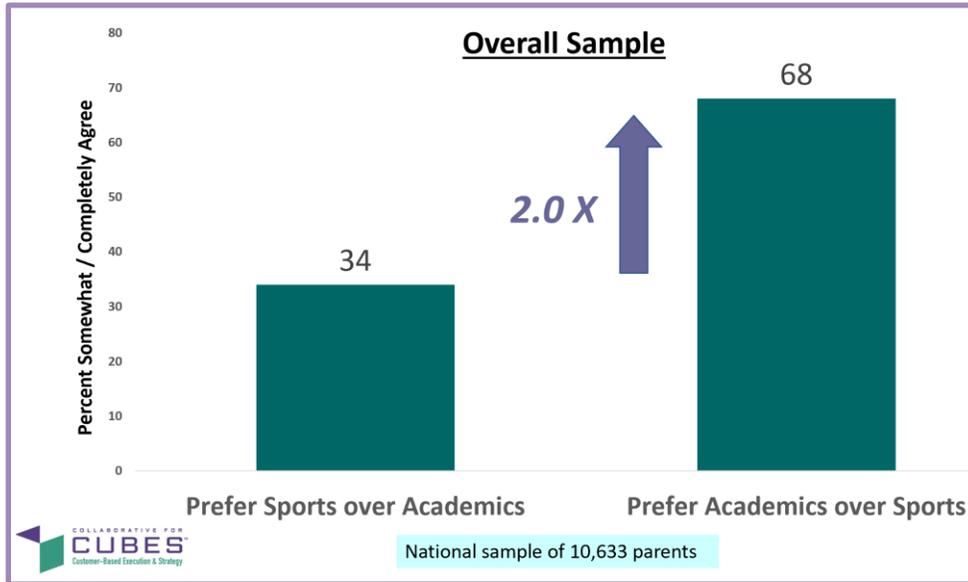
Prefer Sports over Academics: *I prefer a school that has a strong sports-program even if it is weak in academics*

Prefer Academics over Sports: *I prefer a school that has strong academics even if it has a weak sports-program*

Results

Parents are 2.0 times more likely to agree they prefer stronger academics over stronger sports.

Figure 1: Overall Results



These results hold for different subgroups. In general, parents are 1.7 to 2.8 times more likely to prefer a school that has stronger academics (but weak sports) over a school that has stronger sports (but weak academics).

Figure 2: Whether Student is Eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch

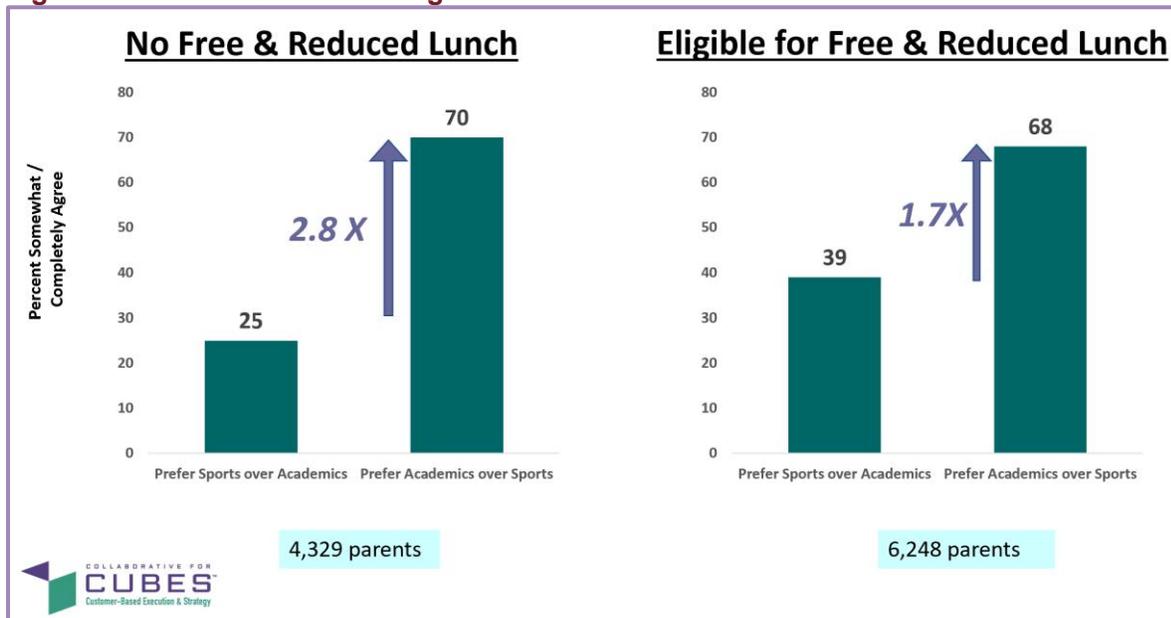
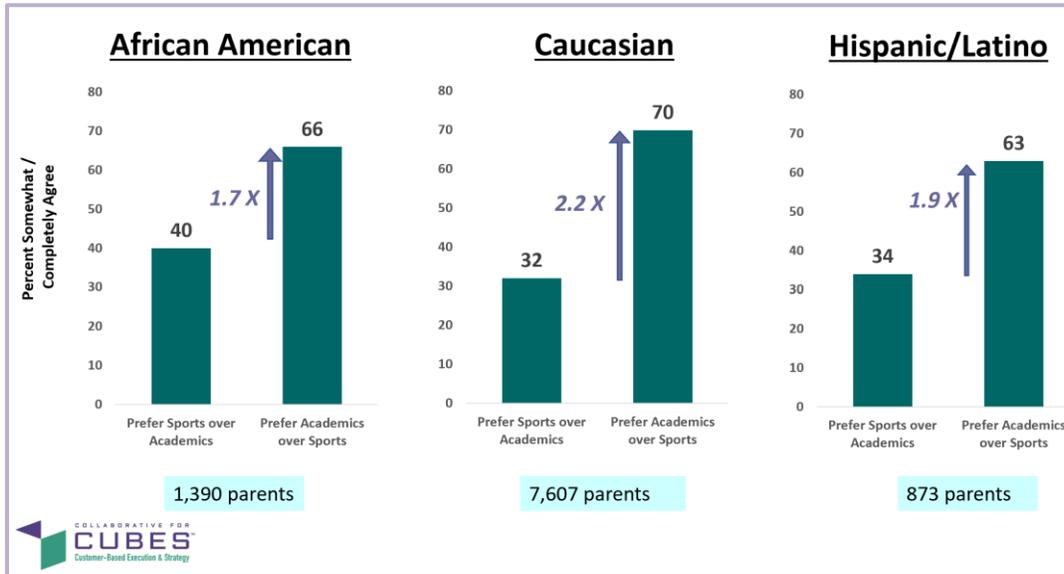


Figure 3: Race/Ethnicity



Parents’ preference for schools with stronger academics is consistently strong among African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic/Latino parents.

Shaping School District Strategy: What’s Next?

Physical activity has a small positive association with academic achievement. However, school leaders should not see sports as a substitute for strong academics.

The vast—but silent--majority of parents prefers a school with strong academics even if sports are weak! To succeed school leaders must keep the main thing the main thing. And the main thing is strong academics.

Author Bio

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Suggested Citation

Mittal, Vikas (2022), “Sports or academics: Sharpen your district’s focus with the right strategic choice,” *STRATONOMICS® Insight Series*, December, 1-5.
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