

# Senate Education Committee

## August 24<sup>th</sup> Hearing



Matthew Barnes  
Executive Director, *FamiliesEmpowered*



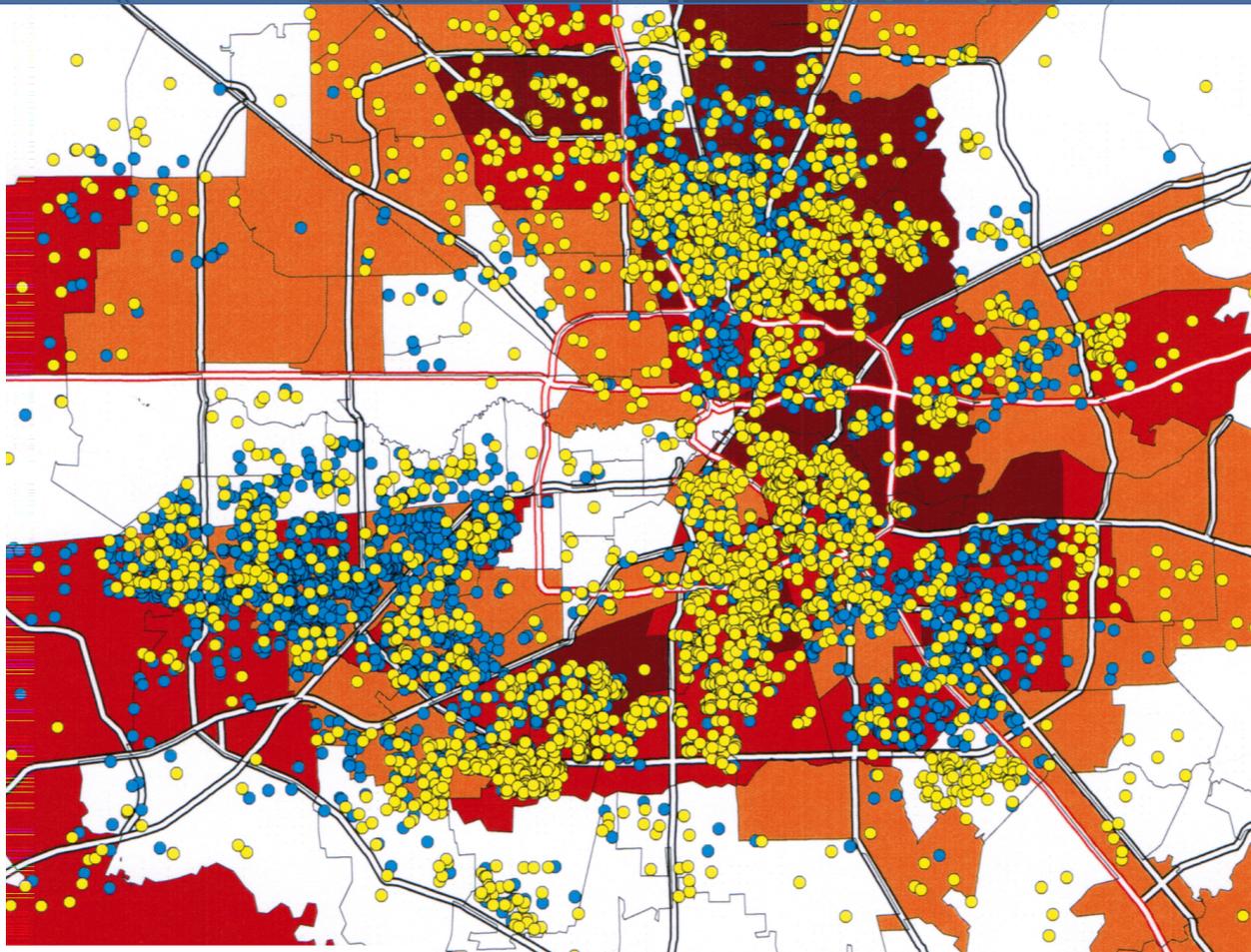
# Families *Empowered*

- We exist as a response to growing demand for high quality schools in Houston
- Our mission is to empower parents to engage in the “system of schools”
- We help connect parents to schools and schools to parents
  - Traditional District, Charter, Parochial, Independent



# Finding #1: Large and Growing Demand for Choice

KIPP Houston and YES Prep Wait List Families



# Finding #1: Large and Growing Demand for Choice

- KIPP/ YES Prep Wait Lists:
  - 2010: 8,000 students
  - 2011: 12,000 students
  - 2012: 16,000 students (est)
- There is also high demand for choice with HISD magnet schools
- Parents contacting FamiliesEmpowered
- High levels of parent frustration

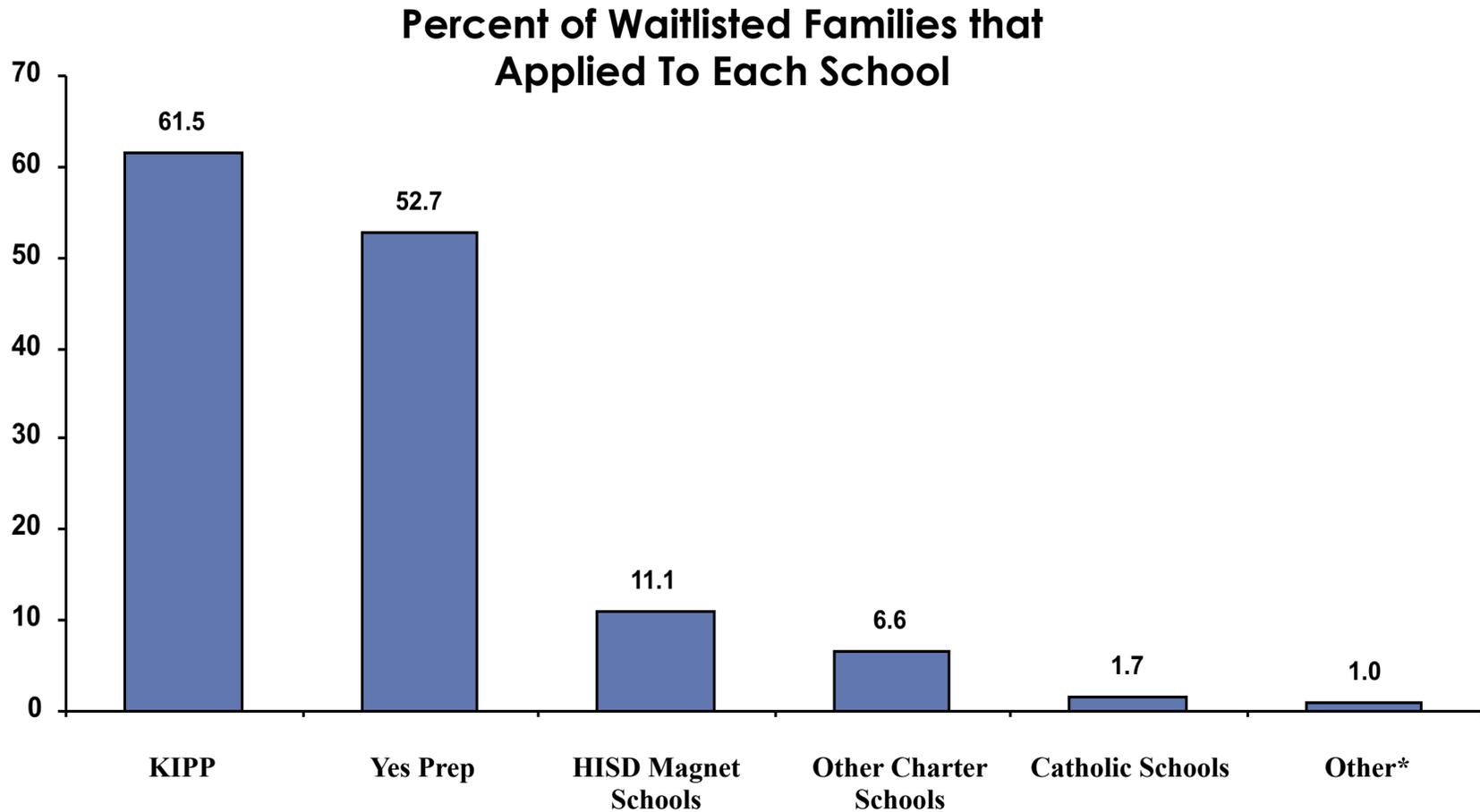
## Photos from Recent School Expos



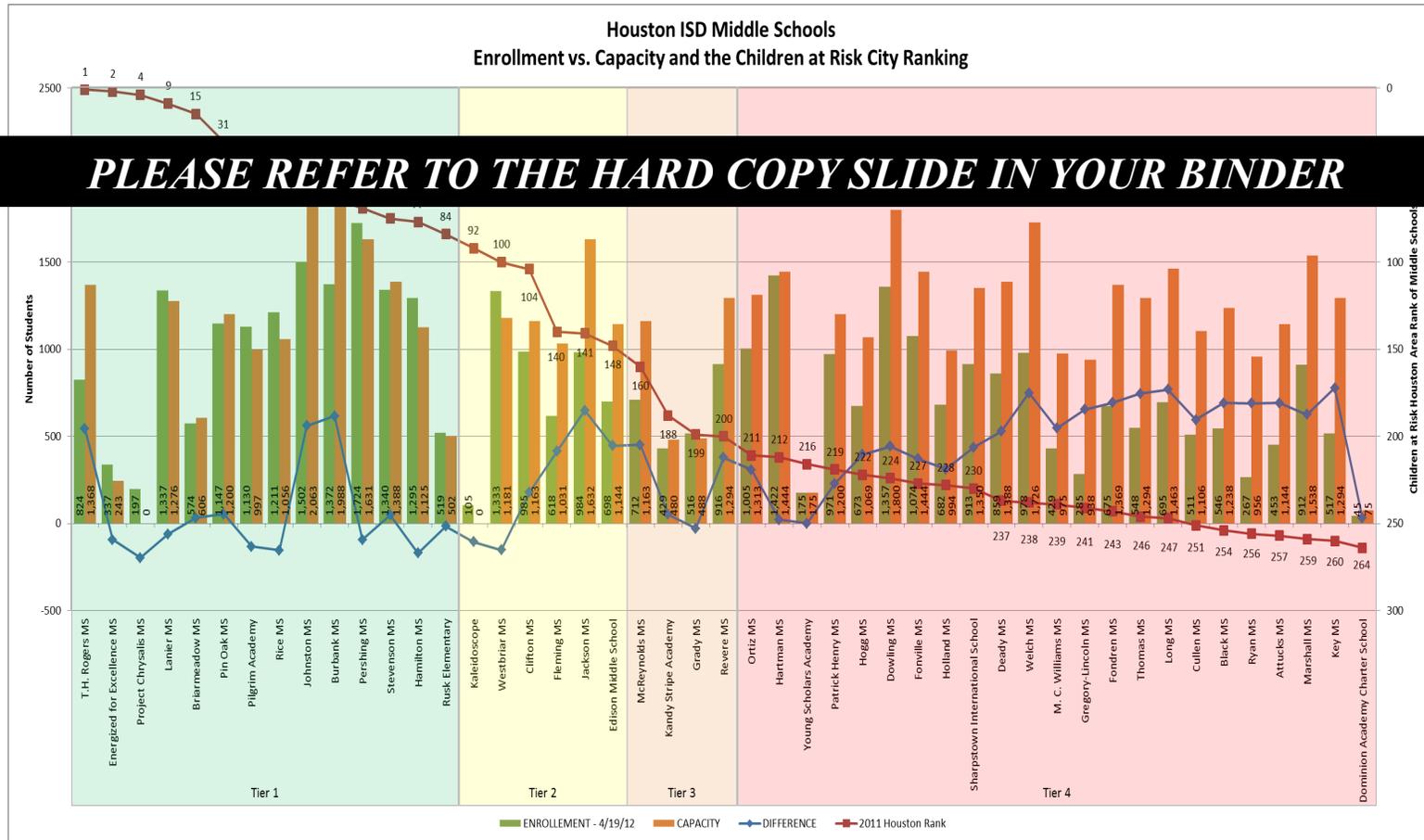
# What is Driving Demand?

- Survey Question: “What could be improved in current school?”
- 37.2% Academic Quality and Instruction
  - “not challenged”, “no homework”, “too easy”
- 17.8% Don’t Know/Not Sure
- 14.8% School Personnel
- 10.4% Security/Safety/Discipline
  - “bullying”, “lack of control”, “staff not responsive”
- 9.2% Parent Relationships
  - “improved communication with parents”

# Finding #2: Parents Uninformed about Available Choices



# Finding #3: Limited Space at Quality Schools

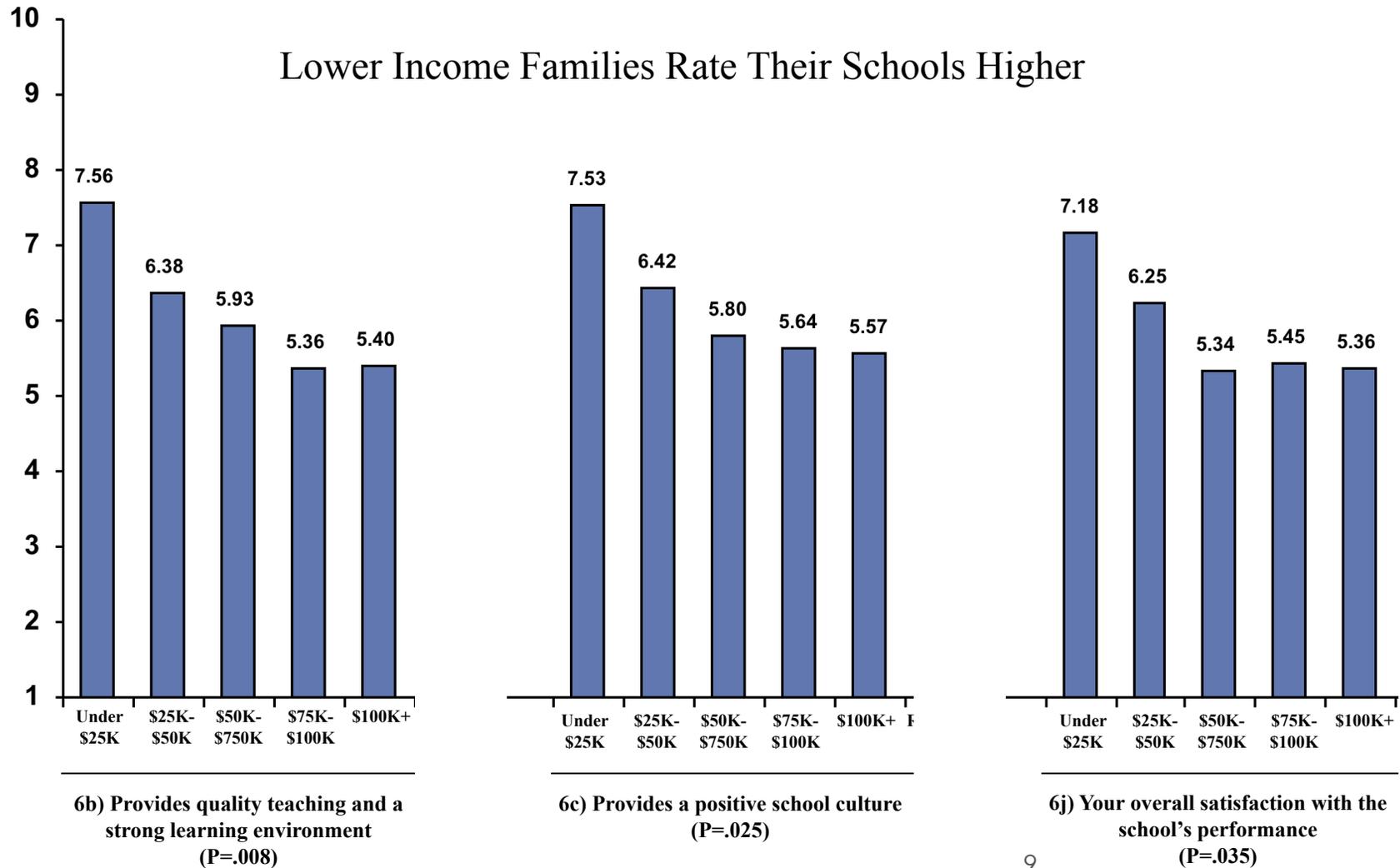


# Finding #4: Informed Parents Choose

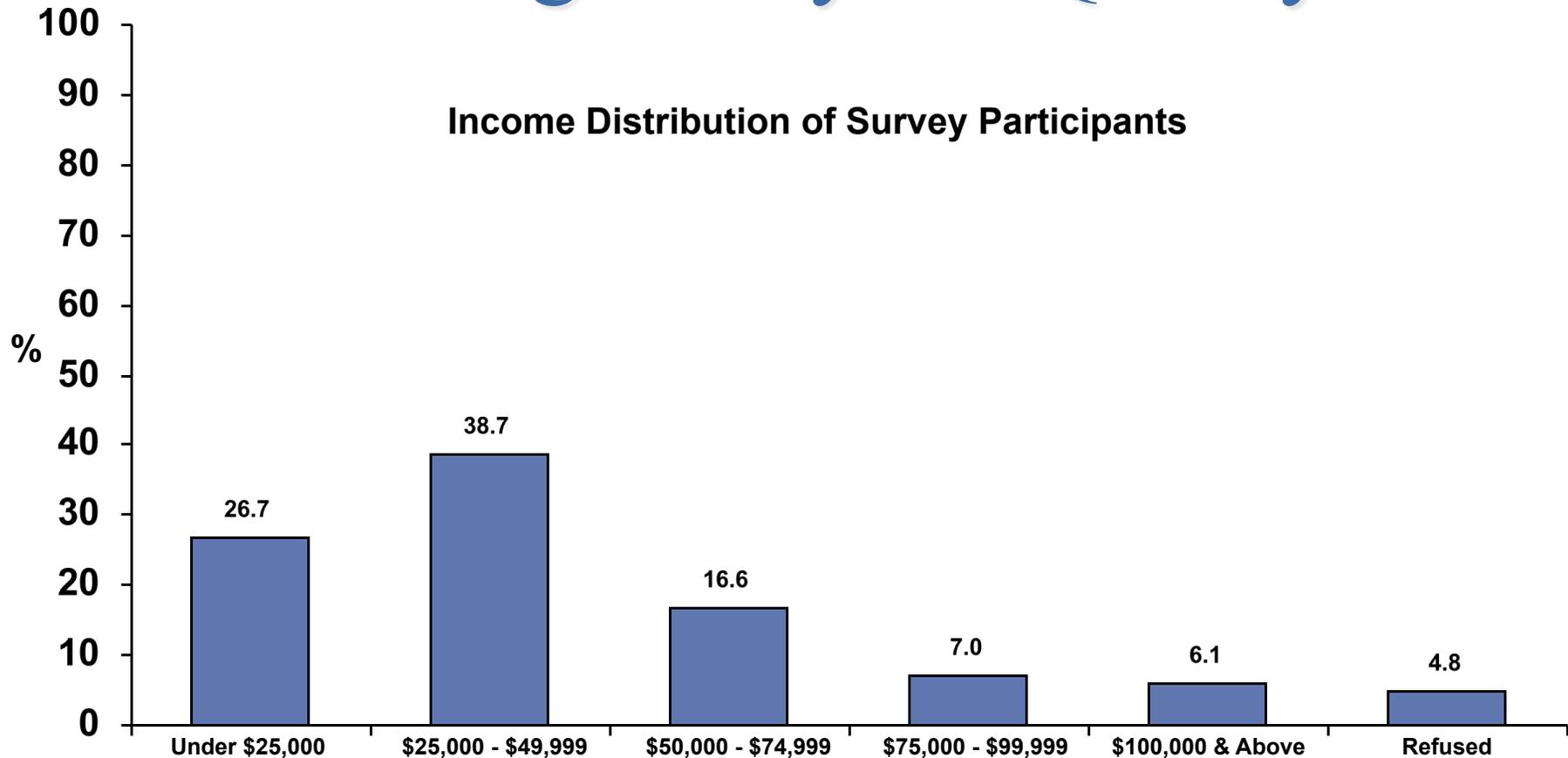
- Brookings Institute Education Policy Director States National Figures:
  - 25% of parents moved to a neighborhood because of the school quality
  - 11% of parents pay for private schools
  - 6% attend charter or home schools
  - 15% attend parent-selected public schools (i.e. magnets)
- Parents largely unsupported in choosing their school
- Low-income, minority, & immigrants are least likely to choose... but this is changing.



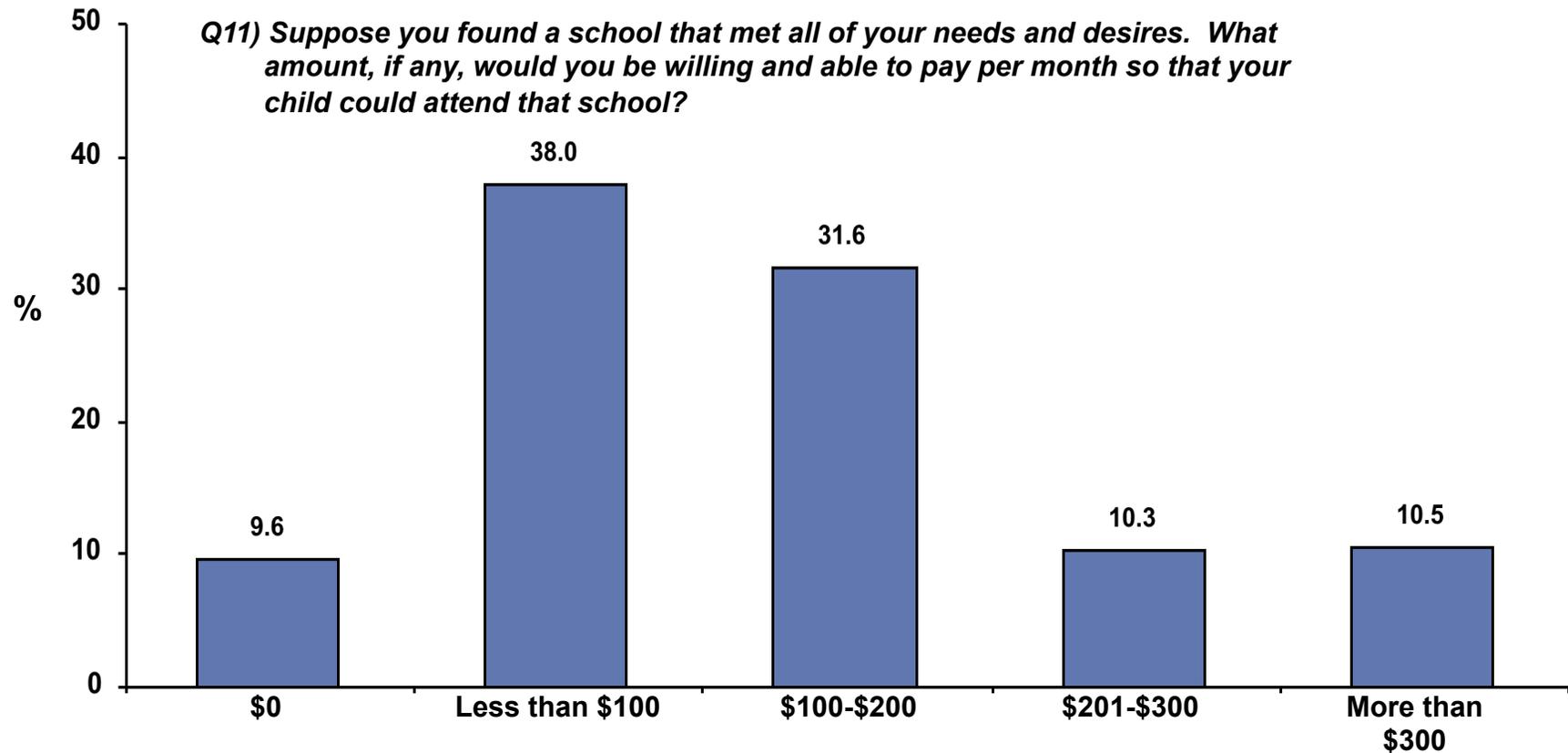
# Finding #5: Perception Differences by Income



# Finding #6: Many Parents Willing to Pay for Quality



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**Percent of Respondents in Each Monthly Payment Category**

# How We Help

- Connect parents to schools & schools to parents by:
  - Large group events
  - Small group events
  - Trainings for parents, parent groups, and school leaders
- Lower the barriers to choice
  - Information
  - Guidance
  - Resources



# Examples

- Theo – Parent of Rising Kindergartener:
  - Knew his daughter was “smart” and should be in a “better” kindergarten but didn’t know any options existed
- How We Helped:
  - Theo attend FamiliesEmpowered School Expo in Nov 2011, he learned about several school options, and applied to 3 schools
  - Child accepted into River Oaks Elementary in fall of 2012
- Jasmine – Rising 10<sup>th</sup> Grader:
  - Student did not feel challenged. She “wanted more for herself.”
- How We Helped:
  - Counseling provided to child/mentor about options that met her interests
  - Jasmine applied and was accepted into Young Women’s College Prep Academy (HISD School)



# Review and Conclusion:

- Demand is high and growing
- Most families unaware of options or how to choose
- Shortage of high quality alternatives
- Informed parents actively “shop” for their schools
- Many parents willing to pay for quality option
- Parents are expressing high interest in the support we are offering

