

# What's Behind the Exodus of Black Students from Public Schools?

For a number of years, public education has been of utmost importance to those in the black community. This is partially because black access to equal public education was a hard-won victory procured by the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision.

But lately, black families appear to be questioning whether public schooling is the proper education model for their children. This is evident in the rising number of black families [choosing to homeschool](#) their children and in the [large numbers](#) of African Americans who support choice options such as vouchers and [charters](#).

The most recent evidence of the distrust black families have toward public schools can be seen in Minneapolis. According to [The Star Tribune](#), the district has experienced a heavy exodus in recent years, much of it driven by black families:

*“But now one-third of Minneapolis’ school-age children go to charter schools or public schools in other districts, a trend that raises long-term questions about the district’s financial future. Black student flight accounts for more than half of all kids leaving the district, out of proportion with the 43 percent of the school age population they represent.”*



Why is this drain taking place? *The Star Tribune* mentions three reasons.

## 1. Poor Environment

According to many black parents, the environments offered by their district public schools are not the type of atmosphere in which they want their children to be. Many are scared by the [fights and behavior issues](#) they see and hear about in public schools. Many black families are also headed by single parents, and as such, see the value of putting their children in a smaller, family-like environment which will fill a void in “nurturing.”

## 2. Dismal Academics

Although the alternative schools to which black families are sending their children are not always high-achieving in the academics department, they often outrank the district schools they left behind:

*“On average, math scores for black students are 10 percentage points higher in the schools that Minneapolis black students are leaving for, than for black students staying in the district.”*

Clearly, black parents are recognizing that choosing the best possible option, even if that option isn’t the most stellar, is better than leaving their children in a far less rigorous environment.

## 3. Ignored Parents

Perhaps one of the most interesting reasons cited for the flight from Minneapolis Public Schools is the fact that parents feel they are treated as an after-thought and left in the dark as to how their children are doing:

*“Lynda Nwonye is a downtown Minneapolis mom whose son is a fifth-grader at Best Academy, a charter school on the North Side. She moved him there because of her grievances over communication and other things with Minneapolis Public Schools, and said she won’t come back.”*

*'The thing that I really like about his school is they give you an overabundance of information,' she said."*

These three reasons for the black flight from Minneapolis Public Schools are revealing, particularly when viewed in light of school finances.

According to the Minneapolis [budget for FY 2017](#), the district spends almost \$24,000 per student. Because many of the alternative schools to which black parents are sending their children are charter schools, the children automatically receive a cut in the tax funding spent on their education. As a 2014 research report [explains](#), Minneapolis charter schools receive 34 percent less funding than their district counterparts. Based on current spending levels, parents that choose to send their student to a Minneapolis charter school take an automatic cut of over \$8,000 in funding.

Clearly, black parents are recognizing that it is more valuable to provide their children with a better, safer education which they can actively monitor, rather than one which is amply funded, but doesn't meet the aforementioned desires.

And as more parents march with their feet and choose alternatives, one can only wonder: Are the days of traditional public schools numbered? Is it time to rethink how we educate American children?