

Parents happy with their children's schooling: IPS poll

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Close to three-quarters (73.6 per cent) of parents said they could enrol their child in a school of their choice. More than three in four respondents did not undertake activities such as volunteering to secure a school for their child.

However, about 28 per cent of parents said they had experienced challenges in enrolling their child in a school of their choice. Of this group, more than half said there were too many applications to the school. More than 30 per cent also felt places for children with no alumni links were limited and there were few "good" schools nearby.

Dr Mathews said the overall findings are a reflection of the gradual shift in parents' mindsets. "Many of us as parents grew up in a system that placed a lot of emphasis on examinations and grades, so that pattern is still prominent in our mind."

But parents today are also concerned about their children's character and socio-emotional development, he added.

Almost all parents - 94 per cent - listed teacher quality and an emphasis on character building as important reasons for picking a school. Factors such as a competitive environment, affiliation with a good secondary school and parents' alma mater were ranked lower.

At least 97 per cent indicated that the features of a good school included having teachers who cared about the socio-emotional development of students, and providing opportunities for students from different family backgrounds.

Slightly fewer - about 73 per cent - said a record of high Primary School Leaving Examination scores made for a good school, and only 24 per cent considered having a huge amount of homework as important.

In response to queries, the Ministry of Education said it is "heartened" that parents "have confidence in our education system, and are increasingly supportive of schools' efforts to provide a holistic education for their children".

"We are encouraged that they themselves are putting more emphasis on character development, and considering broader factors when choosing schools for their children," said a spokesman.

Dr Mathews said parents' attitudes play an important role in their children's education, especially in primary school.

"If a parent thinks that the school is bad, there's a high chance the kid will also think the school is bad. If parents think the school will not help the child, you can be sure that the child will believe so too."