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Glendowyn L.H. Thames
Trinity College

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I examine the relationship between school choice and parental involvement. I contend that parental involvement not only matters in school choice, but is a major factor influencing the high academic performance experienced by these students. A parents' role in school choice is critically important. All parents must play an active role and be active participants in order for public school choice to be equitable and accomplish the desired result of increased student achievement for all children from different racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Further, I contend, while school choice is a viable option for some the majority of those who benefit are middle and upper class families. Low-income families are further marginalized by the unintended consequences of school choice policies. This is true particularly in urban districts. There are five overarching themes I will explore which ultimately reveal the importance of parental involvement in the school choice process. They are as follows: the relationship between school choice and parental involvement; the typical profile of a school choice parent; the impact school choice has on children and families who are not equipped to be active participants in the school choice process; the unintended consequences public school choice has on local school districts; and finally the role parental choice behavior plays. I will examine districts across the country which, have long-standing school choice policies with a special emphasis on Hartford Public Schools located in the State of Connecticut.