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THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL CHARTER SCHOOL  
A MASTER'S THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY  
JUSTIN ROBB

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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BETHEL UNIVERSITY

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL CHARTER SCHOOLS

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APPROVED

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## Abstract

This literature review examines what characteristics make successful charter schools. Charter schools have been expanding throughout the United States for the last 20 years and this paper looks at the different factors that contribute to successful charter schools. This paper compares how low achieving students in urban environments perform in both public charter schools and traditional public schools. This paper explains the positive effect that comprehensive behavior policies, parent buy-in, teacher autonomy, teacher evaluations, leadership, tutoring, teacher feedback and high student expectations have on the overall success of the schools and students. This literature review also examines some of the negative components of charter schools and how to better serve all students.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### Introduction

Charter schools have been steadily growing throughout the country. What are the contributing factors that separate successful charter schools and underperforming schools? The last ten years have seen a boom in public charter schools, especially in the south because of failing public schools (Gleason, 2017). This author will focus on the most prevalent factors in the academic literature that contribute to public charter schools. Charter schools have been shown to both outperform and underperform public schools, but the real question that needs to be asked is why are some charter schools successful and others not (Williamson, 2020).

Charter schools have been the research and development branch of American education and this paper plans to outline what characteristics have shown to make charter schools successful. Charter schools have had to innovate primarily out of necessity. Charter schools need to show that on a smaller budget they can outperform other types of schools on a variety of metrics and academic results, as well as student and parent satisfaction (Cohodes, 2018).

Lawton (2009) gave more insight on whether there is more enthusiasm around public charters from students and parents in city school districts where traditional public schools have continued to underperform with low standardized test results and higher dropout rates (Lawton, 2009). This paper examines concepts regarding funding and other factors that center around curriculum used in different public charter schools and how those are working for students and teachers. One might imagine that teachers constrained to a dull, formulaic curriculum might have difficulty connecting with students. Charter schools that utilize more innovative teaching methods may serve the community and urban student populations more as well. Lastly, greater

teacher autonomy in charter schools might help or hurt the success of a given school (Lawton, 2009).

This paper examined whether factors like comprehensive behavior policies, parent buy-in, teacher autonomy, regular teacher evaluations and high dosage tutoring were effective in creating a successful charter school. If educational opportunities and future success for students in cities are truly a priority in America, then it is vitally important to answer the following question for the millions of urban students throughout America's cities. How do public charter schools in urban settings enhance success, learning, and satisfaction from families (Oyserman et al., 2007)?

### **Rationale**

The rationale for determining what factors contribute to successful charter schools is self-evident, meaning the goals of educators from both public and charter schools should be to constantly improve the educational outcomes of students within the institution. There is no clear data conclusively stating that in the aggregate, one type of school is statistically producing stronger academic outcomes from their students, but typically the case is that some charter schools within a public school district are able to raise the academic performance of their students within standardized tests (Dynarkski, 2015). It would be in the traditional public schools' best interest to find out what some of those charter schools are doing and if those models are working. Traditional public schools should be looking for ways to replicate their results and raise the performance within their own schools. This would eventually benefit traditional public schools as well by helping them keep students and funding that is leaving some failing public schools and choosing different options that might be a better academic fit for students (Oyserman et al., 2007).



The problem is that some charter schools do not have the accountability and transparency, so they suffer from too much autonomy and not enough guidance and evaluation from administrators who are trying to cultivate a shared mission or culture of strong academics within their school (Waters et al., 2014). This paper will look at both the positive and negative aspects of charter schools and how those schools are able to evolve education and help shed some light into the blind spots of traditional public schools. This paper examines what characteristics successful charter schools are focusing on in order to create a successful program both academically and behaviorally. Like them or not, charter schools are the research and development side of education in America and if they are finding success in approaching education in a different way than schools have in the past, then those schools should be replicated so all students have the opportunity for an equitable education.

## **Definitions of Terms**

### ***Charter School***

A charter school is like a public school in that it is free for students and receives funding from district taxpayers. Charter schools must be publicly accountable, for example, they rely on families choosing to enroll their children and they must have a written performance contract with the authorized public chartering agency. Charter schools typically have more autonomy and they are able to show more flexibility in the operations and management side of the school, however, different states define and fund charter schools in different ways (Williamson, 2020).

### ***Traditional Public School***

A traditional public school is established under the laws of the state and funded by public taxes. Traditional public schools are open and free to all children within the district where the school is located (Williamson, 2020).

### ***No Excuses Charter School***

No Excuses Charter Schools focus heavily on reading and math achievement, enforce high behavioral expectations through a formal discipline system, and substantially increase instruction time relative to traditional public schools (Angrist, 2013; Dobbie, 2013).

### ***Education Management Organization (EMO)***

This term describes a for-profit organization that manages charter schools. The applicant is often a nonprofit organization that has a contract with a for-profit organization (Peysers, 2012).

### ***Charter Management Organization (CMO)***

This term refers to applications that are affiliated with a nonprofit management organization. This includes applicants affiliated with an existing nonprofit management organization, applicants already operating at least one school at the time of submitting the application (either in or out of the state where they are applying), and applicants currently operating one school that describes a plan to create a management organization if approved (Peysers, 2012).

### **Statement of the Question or Topic**

The topic covered in this paper asks the question, what factors make a charter school successful? This paper looks at the academic research and focuses on several key factors that contribute to the success of charter schools. This includes the benefits of low achieving students in urban environments attending some charter schools over traditional public schools as well as behavior policies, parent buy-in, teacher autonomy, teacher evaluations, school leadership, student tutoring, and high expectations in student achievement and behavior. This paper analyzes what makes charter schools successful by focusing on these factors within education.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### Low Achieving Students in an Urban Environment

Charter schools do not always outperform traditional public schools; however, for low income students in urban settings, charter schools have shown to be more successful than some traditional public schools in low income, urban areas (Williamson, 2020). Williamson (2020) showed that Black and Hispanic students in New York City Charter schools academically outperformed their counterparts in public schools located in the same building. Williamson (2020) reported that:

In the KIPP schools, for example, the majority of students scored proficient or better in English in ten of the 14 grades meeting the criteria for comparison; in the conventional schools housed in the same buildings, a majority of the students achieved proficiency in only one of the 20 grades. (p. 47)

Charter schools that outperformed public schools were mostly in the same neighborhoods and they were serving similar students (Williamson, 2020). On the whole, most of the charter school students achieving proficiency or better on standardized tests were higher than that of the conventional public school students doing so. In most cases, the number of conventional public school students receiving the lowest classification on those same tests was higher than those of charter schools (Williamson, 2020). Charter schools can at times have more freedom to innovate than traditional public schools, so they are able to try new curricula, teaching strategies, or just choose to have a longer school day with more instruction time (Dynarski, 2015). They may have more autonomy than public schools, especially in the hiring and firing of staff. There can be more bureaucratic red tape associated with traditional public schools and this might explain why public schools oppose charter schools. Most charters do not have unions, but they do have

autonomy that might help them teach in ways that might be beneficial for student outcomes.

Unions can protect traditional public school teachers from being fired, even if they are not able to motivate their students to meet grade level standards.

Low income, urban students in some incidences were shown to perform better in charter schools as noted in Dynarski (2015). Thousands of students have been tracked from hundreds of schools across the country comparing students who remained in their district assigned to public school and those who were able to choose a charter school. Whether a student stays in a district or leaves, state education databases record their test scores, grades, and college attendance (Dynarski, 2015). Though a consistent pattern shows in urban areas that low income, non-white students are able to improve their student achievement greatly in charter schools of their choosing, outside of urban areas in more homogeneous suburban or rural areas, charter schools have shown to do no better or sometimes worse than their public school counterparts (Dynarski, 2015).

Gleason (2017) highlighted the fact that charter schools started in Minnesota and the growth of the charter school sector has been rapid during the last several decades. This does not necessarily mean that all charter schools have had an outstanding track record, but the perception of many charters as being excellent alternatives to public schools has been enough to garner large growth in the educational model. The article also highlighted that charter schools would serve an important purpose in showing education leaders what works and what does not work. Gleason quoted Barack Obama saying charter schools “that are successful can provide effective approaches for the broader public education system.” (Gleason, 2017, p.47). The reasons for greater academic success according to Gleason were the amount of instruction time (longer school days), curriculum and instructional approach, approaches to regulation of student

behavior, quality of teachers and school leadership, and characteristics of student peers in the school.

Students who are low achieving when they enter charter schools may benefit more from the charter school, so one might expect to see larger impacts from charter schools serving larger proportion of low-achieving students (Gleason, 2017). The article also noted that the location of the charter school, i.e. the neighborhood, had the potential to positively affect the school's ability to hire capable teachers or students to focus on their school work during non-school hours.

Cohodes (2018) asserted that impactful charter schools in urban areas have a substantial impact on low income students. These are schools that generally adhere to a "no excuses" philosophy, which emphasizes high expectations for both academics and behavior. Even though in the aggregate of all public and charter schools in America, there is not a clear trend showing one type of school is yielding better or worse results when it comes to academic performance, there are small subsets throughout the charter world that concluded that some low income, minority students in urban areas have shown some real progress in academic performance compared to their previous traditional public schools. Cohodes stated:

In some cases, these charter schools have quite large effects, such that attending one for three years produces test-score gains that are equivalent to the size of the US black-white achievement gap. In Boston and New York, where there are enough historical lottery data to track students for longer periods, such charter schools increase enrollment in four-year colleges and reduce teen pregnancy and incarceration. (p. 6)

The issues that charter schools with a large population of first generation students face is that the faculty and staff tend to be predominantly white women who come to the teaching profession with their own inborn cultural biases and expectations (Walls, 2021). Critics have

argued that the teaching relationships between white women and immigrant students of color are often centered in the way a white, middle-class mother would care for a child and they might not be attuned to the way students from different ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds understand and learn (Walls, 2021).

In some cases, teachers may be culturally neglectful of their students and their communities. Teachers teach their students in a way that feels right in their own culture, but having such an ethnocentric perspective on teaching students from vastly different cultural backgrounds can be counterproductive to the students' ability to learn concepts in the classroom (Walls, 2021). Recent evidence has shown that teachers who engage in culturally responsive or culturally sustaining approaches to student education, which focuses on interpersonal relationships, are better equipped to serve their student populations (Walls, 2021). Teachers traditionally care about their student body, but all too often the way they show their care for students in an ethnocentric teacher-student relationship can alienate students rather than make them feel included in the classroom (Walls, 2021).

### **Comprehensive Behavior Policy**

The no excuses charter school model certainly lives up to its name. The term, "no excuses" comes from the concept that schools should never make any excuses or exceptions for student failure in the classroom (Golann & Torres, 2020). In order to meet these unbendable, black and white results, many no excuses charter schools share similar practices in rigor and student expectations. These schools typically have students complete a longer school day and their teachers undergo intense professional development ensuring data driven instruction and after school tutoring. The most controversial aspect of these types of schools is their highly structured disciplinary approaches, which pride themselves in being much more strict than

traditional public schools. They believe these high student standards create the order and structure necessary to create better results in academic outcomes for students (Golann & Torres, 2020). Although proponents of these no excuses charter schools believed the tough love approach ultimately benefits students and helps them create a strong work ethic, critics argued that these approaches can have a demoralizing effect on students' well-being and potentially reinforce racist ideologies by using methods that would not be acceptable for White, middle-class students (Golann & Torres, 2020).

In some cases, charter schools are doing what many believed could not be done; they are narrowing and even closing the achievement gap between White and Black students in high-poverty, urban cities (Golann & Torres, 2020). When it comes to behavior modification, no excuses charter schools typically rely on positive and negative consequences to enforce the students' behavior. It is an old school carrots and sticks method of rewarding the good behavior and punishing the bad. Students with exceptional character or behavior might be rewarded with scholar dollars all the way up to field trips. Students breaking rules in the school will be punished with detentions or suspension and even minor behavior issues are dealt with quickly. No excuses charters do sweat the small stuff because they do not have time to waste on students not learning (Golann & Torres, 2020). It is also important to note that according to Golam and Torres, 75% of teachers found it very important to emphasize student discipline as a way to promote student success.

Another contributing factor to successful schools according to Gleason (2016) was a fully comprehensive behavior policy. Why are some charter schools able to outperform other charters and traditional public schools? What is the secret ingredient to their success? In the aggregate, most charters are similar to public schools, but some charter schools outperform other charters in

similar urban settings. Gleason (2016) found that factors such as longer school days, stronger behavioral policies and a mission that includes boosting student achievement made significant gains in student academic achievement of both charter schools and traditional public schools. Other factors such as more tutoring hours, more coaching and feedback for teachers, and policies promoting the use of data to guide teachers' instruction are positively associated with higher academic achievement (Gleason, 2016). Schools that hold students to high behavioral expectations tend to see more students living up to those standards and expectations. Schools that do not put much emphasis on students following school policies, see more undesired outcomes, which can affect student achievement and student safety. This would include consistent behavior standards, discipline policies like zero tolerance, especially for potentially dangerous behaviors. Parent and student responsibility agreements were also crucial in schools presenting a clear picture for families regarding what behavior was acceptable and what was not. It is clear that emphasis on achieving higher academic outcomes tends to have higher academic outcomes (Gleason, 2016).

One of the main reasons charter schools with a comprehensive discipline policy or no excuse charters are so popular among teachers, students, and families could be that those high expectations regarding student performance and behavior are intentionally trying to prepare students for college and other forms of higher education (Cheng et al., 2015). No excuses charter schools actually embrace a college going culture, which is very beneficial for students who might be the first in their family to do so. No excuses charter schools also feature strict behavior codes, extended instructional time, and targeted tutoring for lower performing students (Cheng et al., 2015).



The results according to Cheng (2015) corroborated the idea that charter schools that hold students accountable, both academically and behaviorally, give way to a net positive academic performance from students. No excuses charter schools showed positive results on both student math and reading achievement. Those findings from the overall sample of random assignment studies on charter schools largely confirmed the findings of a 2011 meta-analysis by Betts and Tang on charter school effects, showing that no excuses charters were consistently higher in math and ELA than public charters without the emphasis on behavioral and academic accountability (Cheng et al., 2015).

### **Parent Buy-In**

The question of what makes charter schools successful is not and should not always be focused on multiple choice standardized tests alone. It is a complicated question and success can be defined in a variety of ways. Traditional test scores alone are not always the best indicator of a student's success after middle school and high school. They do not always fill in the whole picture as to what factors will make students successful in their secondary education or in the job market. Graduation and retention rates are other indicators of success for both charter and traditional schools. Student productivity in extracurriculars, college-prep work and advanced coursework are also critical factors. It is also important to not overlook student civic-mindedness, values, and passion that they bring to their own education. These qualities are generally cultivated from charter schools that demonstrate the following: safety, high quality teachers, smaller class sizes, exposure to content, time on task, instructional support, attendance, participation in sports, and parent satisfaction (Lawton, 2009).

Many of the same factors become touchstones to successful charters. In the Nelson and Miron (2005) study, they tested the following nine factors they thought would lead to high levels

of student success across the board. Those factors were perceived accountability, teacher human capital (experience, degrees, and pupil-teacher ratio), teacher autonomy, teacher academic focus, interactions between teacher skill and curriculum, attitudinal congruence, staff and student retention, parental involvement, and support from community and business leaders. The researchers used surveys among 37 of Pennsylvania's 77 charter schools at the time and found that many factors like teacher accountability, experience, attitudinal congruence, and student retention contributed to school success. However, the percentage of teachers with master's degrees, teachers' perception of classroom autonomy, teacher academic focus, teacher retention, parent involvement, and community involvement had little to no effect (Lawton, 2009).

It turns out that states that have more stringent approaches to allowing new charter schools had higher educational outcomes compared to states where there was more freedom, less stringent approval processes, or less oversight (Lawton, 2009). So the success of charter schools can be centered on offering a unique teaching method or outside the box teaching techniques, but charter schools who innovate too far away from strict regulations may actually underperform in some cases.

Students scored better on standardized math and reading tests during the first two years of traditional public school but from years three to five, students at charter schools made stronger gains than their public school peers (Clark & Burt, 2019). Although the attention in charter schools is not always on perfecting educational techniques, there might be more of a net positive in the fostering of a culture of learning, academic achievement, and success that over time seems to lead to higher test scores. Over a longer period of time, charter schools tend to raise student test scores, but this takes time and students over the course of a few years can buy into the school system and start to increase their grades (Clark & Burt, 2019).

Although charter schools have been able to function at a lower cost and create some added competition, it is hard to quantify exactly how charter schools innovate the education system. What is clear is the fact that families across the nation are choosing an alternative to district appointed public schools. There is not clear evidence that all or the majority of charter schools are doing anything that is a radical departure from their traditional school counterparts, but the fact that they exist and are growing each and every year shows that parents and students are voting with their feet and choosing other alternatives that might be a better fit, which may lead to more competition and hopefully innovation within the field (Clark & Burt, 2019).

According to Clark and Burt (2019), charter schools' main appeal for many parents and students in urban school districts seems to stem from dissatisfaction rather than positive data showing marked improvement. They are seeking intangible differences that are difficult to measure in a standardized test such as higher expectations for students, both academically and behaviorally and smaller class sizes that might produce greater opportunities for teacher assistance and support. Some parents choose what they perceive to be a more supportive environment that is committed to a differentiated type of instruction that will not leave their child behind (Clark & Burt, 2019).

The continued desire for school choice by parents seemed to come from their ability to make a choice for themselves and to feel a sense of autonomy in their child's future (Clark & Burt, 2019). The reasons that parents indicated they wanted to move their children to charter schools over the public school they were assigned to include the following: quality education, safety concerns, discipline concerns, class sizes, individual attention, and parent-teacher communication (Clark & Burt, 2019).

Bolen (2021) showed that charter schools are less likely than traditional public schools to use bureaucratic structures like parent-teacher organizations and more likely to use nontraditional and less convoluted methods like parent workshops and contracts to build involvement between parents and the schools children attend. Just the fact that parents are able to choose where their children are able to attend school means that they may be more invested both in the school and in their child's education. The act of choosing something typically correlates with more investment rather than something that is randomly assigned. The act of choosing a school requires considerable effort on the parents' side and thus translates into higher buy-in and involvement (Bolen et al., 2021). Parents that choose schools do so based on a perceived similarity between the school's culture and their own values, so high levels of choice and commitment to an institution lead parents who choose their children's schools to undertake higher levels of private and public good parental involvement (Bolen et al., 2021; Golann & Torres, 2020).

According to Golann and Torres (2020), the long waiting lists for urban charter schools demonstrate that there is certainly strong demand for the no excuses type charter schools, which do not represent all charter schools, but a select few. Some parents prefer strict schools because of growing fears of the lack of safety in some public urban schools. Both proponents and their detractors agree that no excuses charter schools create a calm and orderly learning environment for students (Golann & Torres, 2020). Parents may not necessarily enroll children in a charter school because of its strong discipline standards, but rather because the district school is underperforming academically and parents feel they have no other choice (Golann & Torres, 2020).

According to Oyserman (2007), having increased parental involvement has clear links to better academic performance for students. It was clear that low parental involvement did negatively affect student achievement. When parents were more invested in their children's academic goals, students began to see school as a safe and valued place and see the connection between their grades and their future. This parental buy-in can also help with students' participation in school and their willingness to continue to be invested in their own education in the future (Oyserman et al., 2007).

### **Teacher Autonomy**

The charter schools that proclaim their differences from traditional public schools seem to use their distinct autonomy as a way to dissuade prospective students from even joining the school at all. These charter schools might create a “negative sell” for some parents as they explain the strict dress code concerning the required school uniforms, two-plus hours of homework with the parent checking on the student’s progress, and long school days with increased rigor in the school’s instruction (Knaak & Knaak, 2013). According to Knaak (2013), if parents still find the school appealing, then they can come back the following week and pick up an application.

The concept of autonomy is often a strong selling point for charter schools. They have the power to remove disagreeable board members and invite new members at the will of the board’s majority and they can fire teachers who they feel are not serving the students correctly without the red tape of teacher’s unions and other protective measures (Knaak & Knaak, 2013).

According to Stillings (2006):

Murphy and Shiffman define as the “three-pronged” approach to charter school accountability: (1) responsibility to government through contract (or charter), (2)

responsibility to parents through “direct democracy and the market,” and (3) responsibility to the community through “voluntary association.” (p. 134)

In this approach, schools are both decentralized and accountable. Schools answer to various constituents when it comes to academic, fiscal, and managerial performance (Stillings, 2006). Parents that value curriculum innovation continually take the chance on charter schools, right or wrong, in hopes that their own values will align closer with potentially more unique educational methods than standard government run public schools.

Gross (2011) examined the potential pros and cons of autonomy in education and how charter schools can increase success by cutting bureaucratic red tape and learning about the demographics of the students who the school serves in order to be successful. Gross (2011) indicated that schools that can create a mission, budget, and teacher accountability can create a successful educational system. In some cases, increasing autonomy can foster better service to diverse, urban populations, especially those students who are low-income. This autonomy can also be applied to the way teachers and leaders within schools are brought together (Gross, 2011).

Schools should not innovate or change just for the sake of change, but rather because there is a missing ingredient in the students' recipe for success. It could be that school days need to be longer or tutoring must be mandatory for failing students. More autonomy can sometimes be just what the school needs to reach students who are not finding academic success in a traditional school format. What this looks like specifically depends on the needs of the student body (Gross, 2011).

Another important determining factor in charter school success is operational autonomy, which allows teachers to have more control over determining what educational approaches might

prove most successful given their particular student population and needs. One example of this within the article are no excuses charter schools, which emphasize and maintain student discipline, high academic expectations, and focus on traditional reading and math skills, increased instructional time, and selective teacher hiring (Gleason, 2017).

### **Teacher Evaluation and Feedback**

According to Dobbie and Fryer (2013), teachers are much like students; teachers need constant feedback to let them know things are working or that they need to revise the work and fix issues that are holding them back. Teachers may not like being constantly evaluated, but the data shows that more feedback from administrators leads to higher educational outcomes. Innovation can be difficult and teachers could benefit from an extra set of ears and eyes to shine a light onto blindspots. It is easy to view things in education myopically and teams of people looking at the same problem have a better chance of figuring out the answers than individuals. Dobbie and Fryer's (2013) work showed that the more feedback teachers receive, the better the students test scores tend to be. This was certainly the case with Dobbie and Fryer's (2013) findings showing that:

High achieving schools have more intensive human capital policies than other schools.

The typical teacher at a high-achieving elementary school receives feedback 15.89 times per semester, compared to 10.23 times at other charter schools. The typical teacher at a high-achieving middle school receives feedback 16.50 times per semester, over twice as much as teachers at other charter schools. Teachers at high-achieving schools also work longer hours than teachers at other charter schools, an additional 2.77 hours per week at the elementary level and 4.12 hours per week at the middle school level. (p.35)

Charter schools have the potential to positively impact and improve student achievement. Improvements like school leadership, student accountability, and parental involvement and buy-in have shown to increase the success of charter schools and those same factors could be used by public schools to turn failing schools into successful ones. Fryer (2012) showed some of the reasons that some charter schools are figuring out how to be successful. Charter schools have been a huge innovation in American schools in the last 20 years but not all charter schools have lived up to the hype surrounding them.

Evidence gathered from New York charters showed educational factors that are the most important indicators of success for charters are: focusing on human capital, using data to drive instruction, providing high-dosage tutoring, extending time on task, and creating a culture of high expectations (Fryer, 2012). Even though charter education in the aggregate across the country is not a silver bullet or panacea for success, some charters are experiencing great success and they should be studied and analyzed so that success can benefit other schools across the country (Fryer, 2012).

The Fryer (2012) showed that more than small classroom sizes or whether or not teachers have master's degrees, a bigger contributing factor toward student achievement and success was how invested the school was in training and nurturing the talent they had on staff, such as increased feedback from administrators and professional development on topics such as instructional rigor. The administrators need to be open to new ideas that would improve student learning outcomes (Fryer, 2012). Increased teacher feedback would benefit both public and charter schools.

Lavigne (2014) argued that teacher accountability has been an important tool in continuing to increase the quality of schools around the country, but there are consequences to



high stakes teacher evaluations that continually keep teachers on the hot seat for their jobs.

Lavigne found that teachers with a high rate of success with students typically stayed at the job for longer periods of time, but in lower income schools, teachers with a high rate of success in their students test results tended to eventually leave to other schools. High teacher turnover may negatively affect student achievement. So whether underperforming teachers are fired and replaced or high performing teachers are leaving low performing schools, the more turnover there is, especially in reading and math, the more that is likely to negatively affect student outcomes (Lavigne, 2014).

According to Feeney (2007), teacher feedback is an essential component of any effective assessment plan and without objective and regular feedback, teachers are less likely to achieve their goals of high outcome in student performance. Feeney (2007) argued that teacher evaluation instruments often depend on a simplistic rating scale ranging from “needs improvement” to “satisfactory.” If there is not a clear performance standard set, the feedback is not likely to be effective or useful to the teacher. If feedback is not specific, it can be very shallow and sometimes harmful to the teacher who might be trying their best to improve in some tangible way. Most teachers basically want to know how they are doing and a simple “satisfactory” rating serves as ambiguous, empty praise. The teacher has no new understanding of the performance standard. These types of evaluation standards will not succeed in motivating teachers to improve the quality of their instruction or inspire them to strive for excellence (Feeney, 2007). Therefore, feedback needs to be specific, meaningful, and measurable in order to function as a useful tool for self-reflection.

Data driven instruction has also been shown to be a game changer in increasing student success in public charter schools. It allows teachers and students to track their progress and

ensure that students are progressing in a positive timeline. These data driven assessments can be very beneficial for tutoring purposes and driving student goals. Fryer (2012) asserted that schools should conduct assessments of their students every four to six weeks. Creating time for students to meet with their teachers and discuss their goals increases the likelihood of meeting those goals. Also, having student data available for teachers to review and plan interventions can greatly improve the likelihood of higher student achievement (Fryer, 2012).

### **Strong Leadership and Quality Teachers**

Gawlik (2017) looked at how charter schools functioned in regards to leadership, teaching, and learning and examined how principals in specific charter schools enact instructional leadership. He looked at the major barriers and obstacles that schools face and concluded that successful charter schools developed a strong school mission, managed curriculum and instruction, and promoted a positive school climate and culture (Gawlik, 2017).

Peyser (2012) sought to understand whether charter schools are a solid investment for communities and families. Charter schools have been around for 20 years and the presence of charter schools is being felt around the country. The article stated that school cultures based on explicitly high expectations for both academic achievement and student behavior have created charters that outperform local districts. This has been most evident for low-income students (Peyser, 2012).

Peyser (2012) showed that Charter Management Organizations (CMO) attempted to answer the question: are they really the return on investment that they purport to be? CMOs are not-for-profit organizations that manage their schools directly, meaning they are under a contract to a school board or governing body and have the ability to make hiring and firing decisions within the schools. Eighty percent of the students that attend these charter schools are low-

income students, so if they are able to raise the academic performance of those students, then this model may prove to be a promising alternative to urban public schools (Peyser, 2012).

Peyser (2012) has already shown when comparing certain types of charter schools with public schools, that performance varied greatly from school to school. Fifteen percent of CMO charter schools were performing significantly higher than traditional public schools, 20% were modestly higher and 20% were performing the same. The remaining schools were performing worse than traditional public schools (Peyser, 2012).

Two other factors that contributed to charter school success were recruiting and developing talent and utilizing student performance data, which tended to outperform other CMOs. Slower growth as a school also increased schoolwide performance (Peyser, 2012). All in all, some school performance could be chalked up to stronger school management and excitement generated within the program. These are intangible factors that are difficult to measure and replicate, but undeniable in their effectiveness.

### **High Dosage Tutoring**

More tutoring per pupil was also a leading indicator of successful charter schools. Based on beginning of year assessments, students who are lower performing need to be connected with tutoring from intervention specialists, so they can catch up with their grade level peers. This strategy was implemented at the charter school where this author taught and it proved to be incredibly beneficial for students who transferred in from other schools and were struggling and being left behind academically in larger public schools without the resources that might be available at a charter school. Struggling students would benefit greatly from more remediation time in the school day and quality access to tutors (Fryer, 2012).

Giving students a chance to meet with tutors three to four times a week greatly increases student academic performance at charter schools and gives students a chance to get help when struggling with assignments so they do not fall further behind. It is no wonder that high dosage tutoring is such an important part of charter school success. According to Dobbie and Fryer (2013):

While almost all charter schools in our sample offer some sort of tutoring, high achieving charter schools in our sample are far more likely to offer high-dosage tutoring. Twenty-seven percent of high achieving elementary schools offer high dosage tutoring compared to 18 percent of low-achieving schools. Twenty percent of high achieving middle schools offer high-dosage tutoring, while none of the low achieving schools do (p. 36)

Another factor that has shown to be beneficial to the success of some charter schools is extended time working on a given task. This simply means more hours in the day dedicated to instructional time and making sure comprehension is happening. This is something that charter schools have an advantage over public schools because there is the ability to adapt the calendar year and school day to fit with the needs of the student body that a larger public school cannot adapt so easily (Fryer, 2012).

According to Cohodes (2018), high quality tutoring is a gamechanger in schools. In both public and charter schools, the data shows that extensive tutoring has big impacts on student test scores, especially in math. An experiment in Chicago provided tutoring to 3,000 low income students in high school and found statistically significant positive impacts on math achievement in both test scores and grades. These were students from urban charter schools and the methods were very similar to those of no excuses charter schools. When tutoring was implemented during the school day in a small group format in schools that had access to tutors who had received

extensive training, the results were shown to raise low income, students of color academic performance and make valuable gains to close the achievement gap in education (Cohodes, 2018).

According to Nelson-Royes (2011), student improvements occurred when students were given the opportunity for after-school tutoring. The researchers of this study suggested that more funding should be directed towards the programs that use data driven strategies in after-school tutoring programs (Nelson-Royes, 2011). Nelson-Royes (2011) argued that the more funding after-school programs offering tutoring receive, the higher inner city reading skills will become. In light of this data, No Child Left Behind reauthorized learning centers in the 2000's and increased their emphasis on promoting academic tutoring in high poverty, inner city schools (Nelson-Royes, 2011).

### **High Expectations in Student Achievement and Behavior**

Students rise to the expectations of their teachers and without those expectations, the educational house of cards within a school comes crashing down. This idea is backed up by Dobbie and Fryer (2013) stating “High-achieving charter schools are more likely to have higher academic and behavioral expectations compared to other charter schools and are more likely to have school wide disciplinary policies” (Dobbie & Fryer, 2013, p. 37).

Fryer (2012) showed that increasing student achievement is accomplished by the establishment of high expectations. The charter school in which this author is a part of implements this within the first week of school just like Fryer suggested. The goal of the first week of school is to show students that their teachers have high expectations of not only their academic achievement, but also their behavior in the hallways and classroom. Students create posters throughout the room and school showing that they are onboard with the high expectations

given from the teachers and they understand that those broader expectations will be contributing factors in their individual success as a student.

The research of academic scholars like Almond (2012) states that black students are falling behind white students in American public education and the urban public school system is not able to narrow the achievement gap between white and black students. For this reason, some black parents are looking for alternatives to the traditional public school system to make sure their children are not falling behind. Traditional public schools may want to consider emulating what certain charter schools are doing in order to effectively educate all of their students. Black families seem to choose charter schools not necessarily because of proven higher test outcomes, but rather perceived benefits like smaller class sizes, more passionate teacher support, more individual attention, and supportive staff (Almond, 2012).

Almond (2012) noted that in California, black students are achieving higher results in charter schools in reading, but when looking at the entire country, there is not a clear consensus showing that charter schools as a whole conclusively achieve greater test results than traditional public schools for black students. However, in Massachusetts, a study was done showing Boston charter schools outperform public schools from the 2001-2002 academic year through 2006-2007. In that same study, middle school students far outperformed their peers in traditional public schools (Almond, 2012).

The successful charter schools that serve large proportions of black students do have similar characteristics, according to Almond (2012). Those charter schools had very different school cultures and practices compared to traditional public schools. The commonalities included a defined mission statement that emphasized academics, a culture of high expectations, a college bound atmosphere, a focus on standardized tests, and a longer school day (Almond, 2012).

These accountability measures were also observed by Cohodes (2018) when research in Massachusetts showed that the no excuses approach was found to be effective in raising student's academic achievement. This data was linked with specific practices associated with high accountability charter schools like stronger emphasis on discipline, uniforms, and student participation.

According to Golann and Torres (2020), some students might find strong accountability and behavior measures extreme or unfair. There is also growing concern that strong accountability charter schools like no excuses schools might be more likely to suspend or expel students using exclusionary discipline tactics, which can lead to negative mental and academic consequences for the students involved (Golann & Torres, 2020).

A trend that is worth discussing is the rise of black male students being suspended in no excuses charter schools, who are then more likely to leave the school altogether after strict punishments. Especially worrisome is that in 30 KIPP schools, 40% of black male students left the schools between grades six and eight (Golann & Torres, 2020). So according to Golann and Torres (2020), the rates of student attrition for black males is not better at charters, and in some cases, might be worse than at public schools.

### **Negative Components of Charter Schools**

Although charter schools have been shown to be highly effective for certain learners on many levels, including academics and school behavior, charters are not without critics. There are critics who explain that there is some unfairness in expecting parents and students to have the knowledge to make the correct "choice" on which charter school will be best for students and families goals. This is clearly stated by Eastman et al. (2016), "The charter school movement of the last two decades is indicative of an ideological shift in public education reform from an

emphasis on protecting and extending civil rights to protecting and extending consumer choice” (p. 62).

This argument is predicated on the idea that education should not have any corporate or financial component because this may create a unfair advantage for marginalized groups of people who are not able to see clearly which educational opportunities best fit their families and in essence leave poor, marginalized families further behind in inequitable free markets (Eastman et al., 2016). Herein lies the passionate debate on whether or not families have the knowledge and discernment to have an active role in selecting their children's education. It can also be argued that limiting a parent's choice to the education they believe is best for the children is condescending at best and potentially detrimental to their children's potential academic success. Eastman et al. (2016), however, posited that the ability for parents and students to make those decisions is too difficult a process and they might not understand what they are actually choosing. By choosing a charter school with fancy new buildings and amenities, parents may not consider if the school curriculum is truly preparing their children for a solid future (Eastman et al., 2016).

Eastman et al. (2016) was critical of Bush and Obama administration logic, which favored deregulation of public education as a mechanism to increase competition among different types of charter schools and public schools. Eastman et al. (2016) soundly rejected the notion that competition between public schools and charters creates results in education that can be seen as more innovative or flexible for student needs, thus seeing this type of educational reform as “Euphemisms for the rollback of the twentieth century’s most important efforts at achieving equity and social justice in public schools” (p. 62).



Rather than seeing charter school competition as a force to create competition, thus stronger overall results and a high-quality alternative to those schools which cannot compete, Eastman et al. (2016) witnessed charter schools as institutions that have increased both racial and socioeconomic segregation, while consistently undeserving English Language Learner students and students with disabilities. The critique of charter schools stems from a frustration with how “neoliberalism” chips away at civil rights protections through consumer choice-based reforms like charter schools. A critique ultimately on capitalism and choice, Eastman et al. (2016), claimed that these tools of oppression within education are not far from the exploitation of workers who do not own the means of production in a capitalist society. Eastman et al. continued by quoting Marx and explaining that “Capitalism is fundamentally a set of social relations that would cease to exist without exploitation” (p. 62). Eastman et al.’s critique of charter schools stemmed from the similarity they bear to free market capitalism, which they ultimately viewed as a system of exploitation, especially in the realm of school choice.

Hammel and Fischer (2014) also argued that charter schools are not always the best and most fair option for students. They explained that there are some unavoidable gaps in services that have been created by charter schools. Some of the specific issues they noticed with charter schools compared to public schools are unclear state guidelines, potentially exclusionary acceptance practices, school performance measures that emphasize typical performance in science and language, and lack of effective guidance have led to concerns regarding the equity of services for students with special needs (Hammel & Fischer, 2014).

Hammel and Fischer (2014) explained that solutions to these issues might include charter schools being required to outline their plan to address these needs, especially when it comes to special education and the arts within their school. One issue with charter schools is that they are

not always easy for parents to navigate the application process. Some charter schools argued that they were not specifically designed to be able to teach all students with special needs. Those schools are required to accept those students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Hammel & Fischer, 2014).

Hammel and Fischer (2014) also stated that some charter schools may have unfair influence on who may or may not be included in their schools and certain arts curriculum that may or may not align with their mission. Schools aligned with the Race to the Top initiative or charters dubbed with the moniker “high-performing” also tend to be the most competitive for grant funding, which incentivizes more money coming into the institution based on student standardized testing results rather than the arts services that the school offers (Hammel & Fischer, 2014). This would make it harder for students who excelled in the arts to find these opportunities and programs available to them at certain charter schools, which prioritize standardized testing over some music, theater, arts and extracurricular activities.

Some charter schools have been accused of an abundance of autonomy at the cost of being accountable to the basic academic requirements for all students. Charter schools were designed from the philosophy that schools could make more academic progress by offering more flexibility around how they educate their students. However, a New Orleans representative from the Recovery School District observed, “The state does not require an outline of curriculum, hours of operation, staffing, or textbooks when applying for charter” (p. 44).

The autonomy that charter schools tout might come at a cost to individual students and certain educational freedoms could arrive at minimal educational standards. The issues that would deem a poor performing charter school inoperable can only be identified after the school has enrolled students and unsuccessfully provided an appropriate learning environment for them

(Hammel & Fischer, 2014). Taking the best students from public schools and bringing them to charter schools is problematic according to Hammel & Fischer. Fierros (2005) also outlined some of the difficulties that charter schools have when it comes to providing an equitable education to special education students. Fierros argued that charter schools, which are trying to increase funding by finding innovative ways to improve standardized testing results, are also not providing the necessary resources and services for special education students. Fierros (2005) suggested that charter schools need to focus on the proper placement of students of color with special needs in schools. This includes creating preventive intervention programs for students dealing with learning and behavioral difficulties. This also includes creating more formative and summative assessment instruments and for charter schools to consider their student body's racial and ethnic backgrounds. Fierros (2005) articulated that raising the standards for teacher training programs would create more culturally responsive classrooms and help teachers create collaborative approaches to address the serious needs of students in special education.

Another concern regarding charter schools are the accountability measures enforced in online schools as compared to in person public schools. According to Waters et al. (2014), some online charter schools are still plagued by a lack of oversight and accountability. There have been some instances of improper use of public funds, failing grades, and disturbingly high dropout rates compared to traditional public schools in their area. Accountability is difficult when it is impossible to fully monitor online learners in private residences. Through investigations and audits, some online charter schools have been fined over issues concerning the lack of accountability and oversight over what is actually being taught and how that curriculum is being implemented in an online method (Waters et al., 2014).

There were several factors that this researcher found that contributed to the success of charter schools. When looking at low achieving students in urban environments, in some cases, charter schools in low income, urban environments actually outperformed traditional public schools when both schools were located in the same building (Williamson, 2020). In one case, urban students who remained in the district and were assigned traditional public schools versus those who were able to choose a competitive local charter school, showed on average, better academic performance in the charter schools (Dynarski, 2015). Cohodes (2018) found that when low income, urban students attended a charter school for three plus years, the students produced test-score gains that increased from the previous year.

When looking at comprehensive behavior policies, there was a positive correlation from low income, urban students who attend no excuses public charter schools that have a strong emphasis on student achievement, discipline, and accountability and in some cases those schools are doing what was not thought possible, narrowing the achievement gap between white and black students in urban cities (Golann & Torres, 2020).

Clark and Burt (2019) found the main appeal for parents in urban school districts may come from dissatisfaction with the child's school policies rather than marked positive data showing high school wide standardized test results. Families are looking for educational opportunities that cannot always be measured on standardized tests like higher expectations, both academically and behaviorally. Other perks include smaller class sizes and what they perceive to be a more safe and supportive environment that is committed to a different type of education instruction (Clark & Burt, 2019).

Teacher autonomy did not always lead to greater academic outcomes for students, however, teaching appropriate curriculum that is differentiated toward the community of learners

at a given school focused on students' comprehension, often did show academic success (Gross, 2011). What showed more promise in creating successful educational outcomes for students than teacher autonomy across the board was consistent teacher evaluations from administrators. Collecting data from assessments and allowing that information to drive instructional decisions and consistent feedback from administrators led to higher educational outcomes (Dobbie & Fryer, 2013).

The success of a charter school was also linked to the intangible effects of strong leadership and buy-in from the teachers. Gawlik (2017) looked at how charter schools functioned in regards to leadership, teaching, and learning and examined how administrators in specific charter schools enact instructional leadership. Gawlik looked at the major barriers and obstacles that schools face and concluded that successful charter schools developed a strong school mission, managed curriculum and instruction, and promoted a positive school climate and culture. Part of a strong mission and indicator of school success was high dosage tutoring within charter schools. The more tutoring that students who needed assistance were getting, the more likely the school is going to raise student test scores (Nelson-Royes, 2011).

### **Chapter III: Discussion and Conclusion**

This final chapter will furnish a summary of the academic literature on what factors constitute a successful charter school. It is a synopsis of literature and it will also label the professional applications and some of the limitations of the research. This chapter will also discuss the implications of future research and conclude with a summary of what factors create successful charter schools.

#### **Summary of Literature**

The literature review seeks to understand what sets successful charter schools apart from both unsuccessful traditional public schools and other charter schools to find the common factors of schools that consistently produced academic, behavioral, and family satisfaction success. This paper examines the literature and finds factors that consistently lead to success in charter schools. This paper also focuses on the negative aspects of charter schools and highlights some of the blind spots those schools have and how successful schools can learn from mistakes made.

The first factor was regarding lower achievement students in urban school districts and how transferring to charter schools had the potential to greatly increase their chances of success in reading and math. In some cases, charter schools in low income, urban environments actually outperformed public schools when both schools were located in the same building (Williamson, 2020). The data from the academic literature from thousands of students tracked from hundreds of schools across the country that compared low income, urban students who either remained in their district and assigned traditional public school and those who were able to choose a competitive local charter school, showed that urban students performed better academically in the charter schools on average (Dynarski, 2015). Though a consistent pattern

shows in urban areas that low income, non-white students are sometimes able to improve their student achievement greatly in charter schools of their choosing, outside of urban areas in more homogeneous suburban or rural areas, charter schools have shown to do no better or sometimes worse than their public schools counterparts (Dynarski, 2015).

The findings of this paper show that there was a significant trend in low income, urban students finding success in no excuses charter schools that had high expectations for their students, both academically and behaviorally (Cohodes, 2018). Cohodes found that when low income, urban students attended a charter school for three plus years, the students produced test-score gains that were the equivalent to the size of the US black-white achievement gap. Low income, urban students have been showing great progress in academic achievement in charter schools compared to their previous traditional public schools.

This researcher found a positive correlation to school success was comprehensive behavior policies. Even though there is no clear evidence that charter schools always outperform public schools and the data is pretty mixed on exactly which type of school is benefiting students the most, there is a positive correlation from low income, urban students who attend no excuses public charter schools that have a strong emphasis on student achievement, discipline, and accountability and in some cases those schools are doing what was not thought possible: narrowing the achievement gap between white and black students in urban cities (Golann & Torres, 2020).

Another contributing factor for charter school success was obtaining strong parent buy-in to the program. All schools need students in the seats to pay to keep the lights on and although there is not clear evidence that charter schools as a whole are not achieving greater academic success than public schools, parents across the nation are voting with their feet and according to

Clark and Burt (2019), the main appeal for parents in urban school districts might stem more from dissatisfaction rather than marked positive data showing high school wide standardized test results. Parents are seeking things that can not always be measured on standardized tests like higher expectations, both academically and behaviorally. Other perks include smaller class sizes and what they perceive to be a more safe and supportive environment that is committed to a different type of education instruction (Clark & Burt, 2019).

The next positive trait regarding charter school success is teacher autonomy. There are pros and cons to teacher autonomy that exist in the schools all across America. Some charter schools are finding increased success by cutting the red tape that might constrict a typical public school and using their autonomy to truly innovate education and teach appropriate curriculum that is differentiated toward the community of learners at a given school in order for the students to find academic success (Gross, 2011). Schools that have some say in how they create their own mission, budget, and teacher accountability can create a successful education system and increasing autonomy can create better services to diverse, urban populations by allowing teachers more freedom to teach in potentially more innovative ways (Gross, 2011).

This researcher found that school success revolves around evaluating teachers and giving them the proper guidance they need to know that their instructional practices are working. Dobbie and Fryer concluded that teachers need constant feedback to let them know that they are on the right track. This feedback allows teachers to see their blindspots and fix instruction to make it more effective. Even though teachers may not like being constantly evaluated, the data shows that more feedback from administrators leads to higher educational outcomes (Dobbie & Fryer, 2013).



Another contributing factor to school success is strong leadership and quality teachers. Success for both public schools and charter schools varies widely from school to school and one tricky to measure intangible factor that contributes to many schools' successes are the strong leadership from the administration and the innovative teachers on the ground finding ways to reach their students in relevant ways. Gawlik (2017) looked at how charter schools functioned in regards to leadership, teaching, and learning and examined how administrators in specific charter schools enact instructional leadership. He looked at the major barriers and obstacles that schools face and concluded that successful charter schools developed a strong school mission, managed curriculum and instruction, and promoted a positive school climate and culture (Gawlik, 2017). The climate and culture that Gawlik referred to comes directly from the administration and staff who work together to create an educational experience that students and parents choose to attend.

The next contributing factor to charter school success includes high dosage tutoring. The more tutoring struggling students receive and the more time within a school day for students to get access to high dosage tutoring, the more likely the school is going to raise student test scores (Nelson-Royes, 2011). Charter schools that are able to control the length of the school day and prioritize funding toward tutoring, not only raise the academic performance of the school, but keep lower achieving students from dropping out altogether.

The final contributing factor to charter school success involves schools having high expectations for their students. Students rise to the expectations of their teachers and without those expectations, the educational house of cards within a school comes crashing down. This idea is backed up by Dobbie and Fryer (2013) in which they explained the following: "High-achieving charter schools are more likely to have higher academic and behavioral expectations

compared to other charter schools and are more likely to have school wide discipline policies” (p. 37).

Critiques of charter schools have been that some of these schools skim the best and brightest students from already struggling public schools and ultimately the money that was going to the failing public school gets allocated to a charter school, which does not help the public school get better. Although charter schools are meant to create competition between themselves and public schools raising the academic achievement in both, they have been criticized for cutting classes like the arts in favor of common core rigorous curriculum that is primarily focused on students doing well on standardized tests rather than receiving a well-rounded education. Charter schools have been accused of not having the support in place for special education students and leaving that responsibility to the public schools (Fierros, 2005).

### **Professional Application**

This paper discussed the characteristics that lead to successful charter schools. Characteristics like high expectations, strong behavior policy, a strong leadership team that placed an emphasis on evaluation of teachers performance, high dosage tutoring for struggling students, and teacher autonomy was shown to benefit school success (Gleason, 2017). Why do some charter schools succeed when others do not? Even though for the most part, charter schools as a whole do not perform better or worse than public schools, some have shown great performance, especially in urban settings. Gleason (2017) found that factors such as longer school days, stronger behavioral policies, and a mission that includes boosting student achievement made significant gains in student academic achievement. Other factors such as more tutoring hours, more coaching and feedback for teachers, and policies promoting the use

of data to guide teachers instruction are positively associated with higher academic achievement (Gleason, 2017).

Evidence gathered from New York charters show that educational factors that are the most important indicators of success for charters are focusing on human capital, using data to drive instruction, providing high-dosage tutoring, extended time on task, and creating a culture of high expectations. Even though charter education in the aggregate across the country is not a silver bullet or panacea for success, some charters are experiencing great success and they should be studied and analyzed so that their success can benefit other schools across the country (Fryer, 2012).

### **Limitations of the Research**

The limitations of the literature review included varying levels of what success means to different groups of people. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students all have different views of what constitutes the success or failure of a school. This paper typically focused on academic results from standardized tests because it is the easiest way to measure a student's success, but it is by no means a truly exhaustive metric to determine for certain whether a student or school will have success in the future. Other variables that are harder to quantify are student well-being and satisfaction as well as parent well-being and satisfaction. Also, students excelling in more subject classes like the arts and humanities are harder to measure than performance in math and reading on a standardized test.

This paper focused on the factors or traits that continually showed positive school performance in academic testing, but also what factors lead the institution as a whole to successful outcomes like strong parents buy-in, school culture, and student behavior. The subjective nature of what constitutes success will always be a limitation when trying to

measure anything, but in focusing on traits that kept showing up in the research, this researcher was able to focus on specific factors that contributed to charter school success. Of course all charter schools vary from state to state throughout the country and different states have different criteria for their charter schools to follow.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Since charter schools seem to show no sign of slowing down, more research needs to be done detailing the benefits of competition between public schools and public charter schools. Many public schools may feel their best students and resources are being siphoned out of those schools and unless there are legitimate receipts showing that the added competition is improving both traditional public school and charter school student educational outcomes, there will be continued fighting and hostility between the two types of schools.

Aside from standardized testing results, it would be illuminating to see some long term studies on the effectiveness of both types of schools. How does the long term financial, mental, and emotional well-being of students reflect the type of schooling that they participated in? What could those long term results tell us about how schools should be educating students, what they should be emphasizing, and what is working and what isn't?

### **Conclusion**

This literature review sought to find what characteristics were truly effective in creating successful charter schools. The list was not limited to the items this author focused on, but ultimately the majority of the literature seemed to focus on these criteria. This author planned to use the information researched here to inform the educational strategies within this author's school. The goal was to present this information to this author's school in the hopes of

successfully implementing some of the traits discussed above that have been proven to lead to successful charter schools.

The academic literature showed that students from high poverty, urban schools performed better academically in the charter schools on average as they did in their designated public schools (Dynarkski, 2015) and students from low income families in urban settings were more likely to succeed academically in no excuse charter schools that emphasized academic achievement, discipline, and accountability (Golann & Torres, 2020). Charter schools that saw a unique benefit to creating an environment of teaching autonomy within their schools also saw improvement in student achievement and higher satisfaction among teachers (Gross, 2011).

By creating an educational environment that includes high expectations for students, high dosage tutoring, and a comprehensive behavior policy, this author's school will hopefully begin to resemble some of the charter schools of distinction across America. Increasing student tutoring and enforcing strong behavior policies created dynamic educational outcomes within schools that focused on these factors (Dobbie & Fryer, 2013; Nelson-Royes, 2011). By making sure teachers have evaluations with clear action steps that are able to guide instruction and autonomy to reach students with curriculum that is culturally appropriate for the student population, teachers can teach students in creative ways and use feedback to show that instruction is working.

Charter schools may not be a magic bullet in solving the problems faced in education, but some are focusing on a shared mission to improve student test scores and if they are able to improve some educational outcomes, especially for students from low-income, urban settings, then hopefully whatever breakthroughs these charter schools are able to discover can be

replicated throughout the entire educational landscape giving all different types of learners the chance to be academically successful.

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