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How Does the Relationship Between Charter Schools and Resident Districts Affect Student Achievement?

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HOW DOES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHARTER SCHOOLS AND RESIDENT DISTRICTS AFFECT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

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Abstract

School choice creates competition for students and resources. This competition can have different results in rural and urban settings. The experience is different in both the charter school and resident district, or traditional public school setting. On the other hand, at its core, education is also similar in both settings. This literature review examines the experience in both settings and its most important result, student achievement. By highlighting competition, achievement, enrollment, educator satisfaction, rural/urban issues, and resource allocation, the author finds that students achieve best in the setting that best suits their own needs. Students need small class sizes, with an appropriate student teacher ratio, satisfied well prepared teachers and a good school environment. The building students attend, and the mission of the building are not the essential components to achievement and future success, but rather meeting the needs of students. Policy makers need to build a greater understanding of the results of their choices, continued advocacy for our children is necessary.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Context

The first compulsory education law was enacted in 1642 in Massachusetts Bay before the colonies became the United States of America (Katz, 1975); this marked the beginning of what would become public education in the United States. Since that time, many laws and initiatives have been enacted to meet the needs of students. In 1992, the first charter school in the nation opened in St. Paul, Minnesota (Clark et al., 2015). Since then, charter schools have become a central component of current efforts to reform the public education system in the United States.

As charter schools open, much of their enrollment comes from students who leave or do not choose to attend their resident district. Charter schools can be public schools, as they are publicly financed, but they are not subject to all the regulations that govern traditional public schools (TPS). Traditional public schools are beholden to regulations involving staffing, curriculum, and budget decisions (Clark et al., 2015).

The existence of charter schools can have a significant impact on the resident district because of a potential loss of students and much of federal and state aid for these schools based on student numbers. Mann et al. (2016) suggested that the impact on funding from the resident district is significant. In addition, they addressed concerns about the fiscal impacts of charter schools on the budgets of small school districts and asserted that competing schools are taking valuable tax dollars from the resident district. Furthermore, Cook (2018) suggested that competition depresses appraised housing valuations, causing traditional public school districts to lose property tax revenue

resulting in a decline in overall spending. This raises concerns with school choice and the competition that arises in districts where charter schools and school competition now exist.

Theoretical Framework

Chapter two will first review the competition between charter and traditional schools, including enrollment differences. Then data on comparative student achievement, which highlights both academic achievement and post-secondary success, as well as the no excuses model, the pandemic division, and the lack of influence of authorizers are included. This is followed by an intentional review of the effect that educator satisfaction has on student success, including both the administrator and teacher level. Issues that differ between urban and rural settings are highlighted with an understanding of how policies affect rural settings differently than urban settings. Finally, the most contentious area of school choice is noted, the effect it has on resource allocation.

Rationale

In the small rural community in which the author has been a student, parent, staff member of both the charter and traditional public school, principal intern, and school board member, all education in the community (except for home school) was formerly overseen by the resident district and included three elementary schools and one middle school and high school. The three small elementary schools were spread throughout a large county. The district made the decision to consolidate to one elementary; however, two of the former district elementary schools have become charter schools. Ferrick-

Roman (2015) suggested that often, school closures are seen as a 'natural order' of events in communities with extreme economic struggles and challenges.

In 2002, in the author's home community, a small K-8 public charter school opened across the street from the public school. The creation of this small K-8 charter school created division and animosity within the community that still exists today. The author pondered the existence of both a resident district and a charter school and the experience of students in small rural communities. Does the division of resources create negative results, or does having school choice, and options for more personalized educational experiences create positive results? What are the risks and advantages to this model? How does it work in other communities? The author wanted to focus on the needs of the community, and most significantly meeting the needs of students.

Dynamics such as personal choice and the option to choose a location or style/methodology for an individual child is appealing to parents, families, and students. Harris (2015) determined that parents considered a variety of student, school, and community factors when making their school choice decisions, parents want the freedom to choose. However, from an administrative or governance standpoint, the division of resources and the needs or benefits to the common good outshine individual wants and needs.

The purpose of this study is to bring greater understanding to the quality of education when schools divide their resources between both a traditional public school (or the resident district) and a charter school. There is a need for further research. This study is essential to understanding the effects of charter schools in rural and urban

communities and how to better meet the needs of the many students who are affected by this relatively new step towards educational reform.

The author was inspired by the case study that exists in her own rural community and this experience is significant because it represents the reality of many rural communities which are typically underrepresented at the policy making level. This increased understanding can serve to enhance education for many rural communities.

Definition of Terms

Charter School "is an independent public school established to increase learning opportunities for all students. Charter schools contribute to the greater equity of public education by serving as schools of choice that provide quality student learning experience" (Hung et al., 2014, p. 20).

Resident District is the traditional public school that resides within the same district as the charter school.

Research Focus

Approximately thirty years of data is available on charter school competition, and boundaries for the literature review were necessary. The specific research question needed to be identified. So, the author transitioned from all the questions proposed to one research question: how does the relationship between charter schools and resident districts affect student achievement? Achievement is found to be a relative term and some of the most thought-provoking studies included the idea that while education tends to stress standardized testing to assess achievement, persistence, college attendance, and future earnings have also been analyzed. An attempt was made to focus on factors which could affect student achievement and all articles were analyzed within the theoretical

framework which comprised not just achievement, but also educator satisfaction, rural/urban issues, school competition, and the contentious concern of resource allocation. This lens provided boundaries for the review. Furthermore, this review of literature has the potential to inform legislators of the unique needs in rural schools and the impact decisions have on individual students.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Competition Between Charter and Traditional Schools

Holmes (2006) considers whether charter schools inspire improvement in TPS's with their sheer existence. He postulated that competition, and the threat of students leaving, would drive higher levels of achievement. Holmes (2006) considered this a positive effect of school choice. Holmes (2006) study was based out of North Carolina and examined the average student proficiency rate in the public-school setting. Each traditional public school included in the study must have had a charter school in a close geographic vicinity, which would draw students from the district; this included 1,307 TPSs in the state.

The results of the Holmes (2006) study demonstrated that the existence of even limited competition did improve the average proficiency rates of students at the TPS. Holmes (2006) admitted that his results may understate the true effect of charter school competition. In fact, he warned that "even a little bit of competition from charter schools can force schools to appear to be improving, but that policymakers need to take care to ensure that translates into real gains for the average student" (Holmes, 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, Holmes (2006) suggested their results may be "unambiguously positive" (p.3). He questioned the validity of the testing, suggesting low achieving students could be discouraged from testing, or that by focusing in on students just below the proficiency cutoff could be a strategy to bolster proficiency. Holmes was left questioning if gains in achievement had really impacted all students.

Misra et al. (2012) also considered the concept that market forces naturally lead to increased efficiencies and thus increased competition should have positive results. They proposed that examining unique school level data, instead of state, county or district data could better inform if competition really improved public school efficiency. Misra et al. (2012) questioned the consistency of previous studies in identifying specific output. The data set included 90 primary schools and 151 high schools in the state of Mississippi. Of the high schools, 88 percent were in rural areas. Each school had to be experiencing charter school competition. Misra et al. noted that standardized testing was different among grade levels and that efficiency should not be a comparison. They employed a multiple inputs-one output approach which differed from previous studies. Overall education performance was their measured output. The researchers studied teachers within the schools noting sex, educational attainment, and experience, which they found insignificant in primary schools, but significant in high schools. In studying interventions, Misra et al. (2012) noted that several interventions were found to improve performance, such as, "effective teaching, parental education, and reward programs" (p. 1188). Other significant factors that impact student achievement included free and reduced lunch enrollment, class size, demographic makeup, and teacher experience. Ultimately, higher degrees of competition did increase both public primary school and high school efficiency, as based on high stakes examinations.

Renzulli and Evans (2005) connected the charter school movement with the school choice movement of the 1990s and the increase in charter schools as a result of the school choice movement. These researchers questioned whether there could be future consequences for racial segregation as a result of these movements and if the educational

arena witnesses racial competition and inequality. The authors specifically noted that because of the freedom of charter schools to avoid the bureaucracy inflicted on traditional public schools, these schools can defy many traditional limitations, including geographical boundaries.

The data was collected in the 1999–2000 school year using the population of 1,100 charter schools. It included standardized test scores as well as a variety of existing well reputed data. Renzulli and Evans (2005) included racial competition theory in their study, which they suggest is typically overlooked and provides the gap in research which deems their work necessary. The Renzulli and Evans article examined white enrollment in charter schools and its possible consequences for racial segregation. They suggested that relatively even distributions of white and nonwhite students within districts and corresponding competitive pressures spur white charter school enrollment and brings the concept full circle with the suggestion of a "return to school segregation" (p. 388). These researchers noted the potential for segregation that extends beyond race and includes disproportionate distribution of students based on other factors, such as socio-economic status, special education needs, and English language learners. Ultimately, because of school choice, Renzulli and Evans raised concerns that charter schools have the potential to become elitist institutions.

Traditional public-school districts operate under a standard of open enrollment restricted by district geographical boundaries. In contrast, charter school enrollment does not operate under any geographical boundaries. Renzulli and Evans (2005) noted that residential mobility allows whites to avoid nonwhites in their schools. Their findings support the concept that school choice allows charter schools the potential for white

flight, or for white students to leave because of the minority student presence. In their findings it was made clear that, statistically speaking, white parents seek out schools which are demographically populated by white students. Surprisingly, they found that academic quality does not affect white enrollment. Quality of teachers, safety, and resources were noted as reasons for school selection by white families.

Enrollment Differences

Winters (2015) addressed special education. Due to the lottery system of enrollment at charter schools, critics express concern that groups can be under or over-represented due to school selection. TPS's open enrollment policy does not allow for a sense of exclusivity within enrollment. While both TPSs and charter schools are obligated to meet the needs of students who qualify for special education services. Winters (2015) expressed that there is indeed a reason for concern. Special education students numbered 11.2% at TPS and a disproportionate 8.2% in the charter setting. Winters sought to deepen the understanding of this phenomenon. Were IEP recognition and diagnosis being appropriately addressed in each setting? Winters' study was focused on New York City and Denver elementary schools. He accessed longitudinal data through the departments of education in both cities. Winters (2015) noted that available data was richer in Denver because their special education departments included a trail of paperwork that was largely accessible to Winters. Data suggested that students with disabilities were somewhat less likely to apply to charter schools. Winters found that the gap, while very real, had explanations that were not disturbing, with the key drivers being rates with which students are classified as qualifying for SPED services, and rates with which students without need for such services move from one sector to the other. A

student may be diagnosed in one sector, and through attrition (by choice) move to the other sector and not need to recertify. The Winters study was able to map enrollment and follow individual students as they transferred from one school to another. Winters confirmed the suspicion that the gap is due to enrollment and tracking of diagnosis, not because charter schools are driving SPED students away or offer an exclusive environment. Charter school enrollment was found to be impacted by parent choice, not discriminatory policies. Further research was needed, and Winters was still intrigued by the data.

Winters (2015b) undertook additional research to further understand the special education enrollment anomalies. After discovering the richness of the data in Denver in the earlier study, the researcher immersed themselves further into the Denver data. The guiding questions remained the same, whether the special education enrollment gap existed between charter schools and TPS, and if a better understanding of this inconsistency in special education numbers could be explained. The Denver data allowed Winters to track students as they progressed over a six-year timeframe. Winters noted a 1.8% gap in SPED enrollment existed in kindergarten, but that broadened to 4.7 % by the fifth grade. Results showed that by the sixth students with disabilities are less likely to enroll in charter schools. They are simply less likely to apply. This difference only grows from kindergarten to the eighth grade. The researcher was unable to identify why charter schools are less appealing to special education parents and students. It could be a reluctance to change course if special education has begun at the early years in the TPS setting. Or possibly because special education students with early interventions arrive at a point where they no longer require the services. The impact of the gap is driven primarily

by non-disabled students, as the parents of these students are more likely to enroll them in charter schools. The difference between the two studies was the deeper analysis and tracking of students, but the results were similar, 46% of the difference in special education enrollment was due to classification differences across sectors, and 54% of the growing gap throughout the elementary and middle school years was due to student mobility across sectors. There is competition over enrollment in part because funding follows the student to whichever school they attend. SPED enrollment is significant not just due to perceptions, but also because of the increased funding formula that exists for qualifying SPED students. Students are not only the clientele of the school, but also a valuable resource.

Comparative Student Achievement

The first charter school in the nation opened in Minnesota in 1992. Since then, charter schools have become a central component of current efforts to reform the public education system in the United States (Clark et al., 2015). As charter schools open, much of their enrollment comes from students who leave or do not choose to attend the resident district. Charter schools are often public schools which are publicly financed; however, they have greater freedom from the many regulations that govern traditional public schools. Many of these regulations involve staffing, curriculum, and budget (Clark et al., 2015).

Academic Achievement

The guiding question of Clark et al.'s (2015) research is whether charter schools improve student achievement. Many charter schools cap enrollment and acceptance is often based on a lottery system. Clark et al. addressed increased understanding of student

achievement through a lottery-based study of the impacts of 33 broadly-varied charter middle schools at 29 sites across 13 states. However, most of the research sites were based within the state of Pennsylvania.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of the lottery system on student enrollment, and thus how it affects student achievement. It is common practice for charter schools to use a lottery system to select students as they cap student enrollment. This is where the researchers noted a gap in existing research. Clark et al. included not only brick and mortar schools, but also the growing body of cyber or online schools, which added to the dynamic of the research. While the schools included in the research demonstrated a variety of demographics including race and socioeconomic backgrounds, in the urban and rural settings as well as online. Each school in the study had to be a middle school with entry between grades four and seven, must have been operating as a charter school for at least two years (to avoid schools still in the developmental stages), and must have more applicants than it could accept (thus the lottery-based study). The variation allowed Clark et al. to examine how variables in differing settings, impact student achievement. To understand the impact of the lottery-based system on achievement, test scores from students admitted to these charters were thoroughly analyzed.

Clark et al. (2015) reported that there is no evidence to support that attending charter schools had a positive impact on students' academic achievement. Furthermore, negative impacts on student reading and math scores were noted for students attending charter schools. These impacts varied significantly across charter school settings, and it was noted that students who were previously low achieving and/or disadvantaged had

significant positive results in achievement. In contrast, high achieving students from higher socioeconomic status families in more advantaged situations had a large negative result in achievement. It must be noted that the school sample was not nationally representative, so results could vary nationwide. A strength of the study is the consistent results which imply that treatment and control groups were well balanced and provided a baseline for the impact evaluation.

A broader picture of student achievement in charter school settings as opposed to traditional public school (or resident district) settings can be achieved by expanding research beyond the middle school years. Hung et at. (2015) used a case study at the secondary level (high school) to build an understanding of student achievement and to find correlations between instructional practices, learning activities, student motivation, and at-risk variables. The authors were concerned about controversial reports on the academic performance of charter schools. Hung et al. (2014) felt the need to address what they consider to be inadequate information on instructional practices, as well as the student learning experiences of students who attend secondary charter schools. Like Clark et al. (2015), Hung et al. (2014) also intended to build an understanding of the impact charter schools have on student achievement.

The guiding question of this research was whether charter schools impact student learning and achievement. A strength of the study is the triangulation of research. It included a case study conducted at an open enrollment school in central Texas with a greater than 80% graduation rate. Interviews were conducted with administrators, teachers, and students, as well as observations of classrooms and social behaviors. The focus of the study was achievement as it relates to reading and math, which allowed for

additional analysis of standardized test scores. To be included in the study, schools had to be large enough to have many student applicants who were both accepted and rejected. The researchers used inductive analysis and noted an empirical relationship to come to their conclusion, even though Maxwell (2013) noted that the concept of validity can be controversial.

Hung et al. (2014) noted the possibility that some skills, such as perseverance, are not measurable by test scores. Researchers found that charter high schools are associated with higher graduation and attendance rates, as well as a higher likelihood of attending college. Positive effects were found on both educational attainment and earnings. A connection between motivation and learning was clear. Motivating factors included flexible structure, rewards, support systems, positive student teacher relationships, positive reinforcement, and academic progress. There was a need for research which studies more than just test scores.

Much like Clark et al. (2015), Hung et al. found that impacts on student achievement were more positive for students who began at a lower achieving baseline than those who began at a higher achieving baseline. Furthermore, Hung et al. found that the positive impact of these charter schools was more notable within urban settings compared to non-urban settings but noted the limitation that these results only pertained to a particular set of charter and non-charter schools in the study. Selection bias was also noted by the authors, as students often choose to leave schools for a variety of reasons which may include more arbitrary factors like extracurriculars, relocation, family needs, and much more. A difference Hung et al. noted about charter schools *as* compared to

traditional public schools is a focus on mission-based practices in order to meet individual student needs.

Post Secondary Achievement

Sass et al. (2016) made the effort to build a deeper understanding of the effect of charter school attendance on long-term attainment and earnings, a view of achievement that looks beyond widely available standardized test results as a mark of success, Sass et al. (2016) noted the existence of 6,800 charters schools in 40 states students, which served almost three million students. They evaluated data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), which tracked college attendance, as well as the Florida Department of Education using master school identification files for K-12 schools and Non-Public Master Files (for private schools). The study included a comparison of literature to understand the effects of achievement on graduation rates from high school and college as well as labor outcomes. They also used longitudinal data from the state of Florida to build an understanding of college persistence and future earnings. Florida was one of the few states where appropriate data existed at the time. Sass et al. (2016) noted problems with tracking data from so many sources and following future student successes. Sample students must have attended a charter school in eighth grade into high school. Data could only be tracked up to 12 years after attendance in eighth grade.

Sass et. al (2016) aspired to capture the full impact of attending charter schools and believed their results were more important than test scores for the students who attended charter schools. The researchers found that charter high school attendance was linked to greater high school graduation rates, college enrollment, higher college graduation rates, and higher earnings. Certain types of schools including KIPP

(Knowledge is Power Program, a college preparatory style) schools and no excuses models serving underserved urban populations showed greater impact on these results.

The No Excuses Model

Clark et al. (2015) noted the existence of cyber (or online based) charter schools, Hung et al. (2014) noted the focus of charter schools on individual student needs, and Bingham (2017) brought these concepts together in her work on personalized learning in particular as it appears in a high technology charter school. With the increase of technology comes increased access to information for and about the students. By using frequent and varied student data, feedback can be immediate, and data is available to improve support for each student. There is a significant trend towards personalized learning in current curricular movements in education, altering the structure and design of school in order to meet individual student needs and thus improve achievement. Bingham defined personalized learning (PL) as an educational model, "intended to tailor instruction to students' strengths, needs, and interests through the use of interactive digital resources and frequent and varied use of student data" (p. 3). Bingham noted limited existing research and aimed to close the gap in literature on personalized learning models by engaging in a qualitative, single institution case study of Binary High School (BHS), a personalized learning-based school. Bingham utilized purposive sampling (selecting BHS because it exhibited desired characteristics as a blended PL school) and critical case sampling (BHS permitted logical generalizations to similar sites). BHS is in an urban area and primarily serves students of color. While this does create the most significant lack of scope in the study as the lens is cast on one specific school, it also

allows a deeper knowledge of one school and the experiences of administration, staff, and students, which is enlightening.

Bingham (2017) had three questions guiding her research. First, how does a high-tech personalized learning charter school develop as an organization from its inception through its first several years of operation? Second, why does it evolve as it does? Third, what are the implications of this school's development and evolution for other schools implementing a personalized learning school model? In her case study, Bingham (2017) used Activity Theory, which "assumes that cultural, historical, and social factors influence learning and change" (p. 7), to build an understanding of the evolution of Binary High School and its mission to successfully implement personalized learning. The case study sought to build an in depth understanding over time and included interviews, observations, and data collection and analysis, a clear triangulation of methods.

Because of the long period of time (2012-2015) Bingham (2017) used to study BHS, she was able to observe the process of moving towards a personalized learning curriculum and increased student autonomy which, as noted by the observations of the first year, is not automatic. There was instability in the early years and a reliance on digital devices exacerbated teacher difficulties. Struggles with student motivation and classroom management in the first year complicated the process as the school made strides towards increased student autonomy. In year two there was an overhaul of school design with the establishment of lecture days and studio days, as well as a movement towards the no excuses model and an increase in discipline and structure. In year two, as this extreme increase in disciple was achieved, a disconnect between school vision and classroom practice became evident. Staff agreed to reconceptualize the rules, the tools,

and the division of labor. This included a move towards mastery-based grading to ensure students understood each concept. The organizational nature of the school became reactive to the classroom realities. Once students became aware of the stricter discipline, classroom structure improved, and the school was able to move away from the strict no excuses model. Although it took years, the experience allowed the staff and leadership to finally move the school towards achieving its vision and better meeting the needs of individual students with its personalized learning model. As school design and instructional practice improved over the first three years, the school was able to more fully implement what they had envisioned from the beginning. Once the process truly came to fruition, as anticipated, advances were made in student achievement.

While the Bingham (2017) study highlighted a transition towards the no excuses charter school model as an intervention used in some charter schools, Ellison and Iqtadar (2020) noted that market choices are a means for political and economic empowerment, especially for marginalized students and communities. They focused on urban areas with broad demographics and the widely regarded public debate of the effectiveness of the no excuses policy. Policy makers continue to emphasize the achievement gap, and the concept that schools must do whatever it takes to close this achievement gap. The no excuses model has been promoted as a method for increasing student achievement.

Findings were presented from a qualitative research synthesis (QRS) which analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted the results of existing literature on the no excuses charter school model within urban settings (Ellison & Iqtador, 2020). In addition to existing literature, primary data sources, teacher and student interviews, and observational data were used. They also employed social reproduction theory to build an

understanding of the process of educational inequality. The study includes a successful triangulation of data and relies on solid existing data. The authors noted a scarcity of existing qualitative literature to examine.

While Ellison and Iqtador (2020) listed three research questions, at its core, the study asked whether the increased discipline of the no excuses model lends itself to an increase in standardized test scores. The first question was, what pedagogical, curricular, and disciplinary practices are employed in "no excuses" charter schools? The results proved that, by "employing highly structured instructional practices reliant on direct teaching, curricular practices developed from a narrow interpretation of the state standards, and a singular focus on the production of test scores" (p. 929). Ultimately, the research demonstrated that all pedagogical-curricular and disciplinary practices in this model are based around the production of assessment scores. In the second question, researchers asked how situated actors experience, make sense of, and negotiate the "no excuses" model. Many teachers were left questioning the no excuses approach due to the top-down decision making, rigidity, and excessive structure (lines were even painted on the floor so students would walk in silent single file lines along them). Teachers were expected to minimize distractions and maximize instructional time. The model shifted educators' professional beliefs about education and professionalism. Training practices were developed exclusively around the no excuses model, and hiring practices became aligned to select candidates who were amenable to the no excuses model to the exclusion of standard best practices.

The analysis demonstrated that the no excuses model resulted in high educator turnover rates. Students experienced rote learning practices and a highly structured and

constrained regime with excessive disciplinary practices enforced. Alarmingly, educators who worked within the no excuses model often regarded the experience as a springboard towards educational leadership. The final question focused on what the answers to the previous two questions could inform on "the desirability of the "no excuses" model as a policy intervention to politically and economically empower marginalized student populations and urban communities" (p 921).

According to Ellison and Iqtador (2020), the no excuses model meets the needs of a very specific set of students, often in urban settings with high levels of racial diversity and low socioeconomic status. There are individual students who thrive within these overly structured settings. Evidence suggests that the no excuses model contributes to student segregation. Students at affluent schools were able to have more engagement and contribution to the classroom, and collaboration with their teachers and peers with creative activities involving critical thinking. In contrast, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experienced and environment of strict disciplinary regimes, and "mechanical activities focused on rote learning" (p. 920). Ellison and Iqtador also found that there is an under-representation of special needs students and English language learners within the no excuses model. Furthermore, students fall short in ambitious goals for higher education. Ellison and Iqtador call for further research on thse specific students and why this setting meets their needs, as well as more data on graduation rates, college attendance, and the life trajectory of these students. The Ellison and Iqtador (2020) study put the no excuses model under serious scrutiny and found the model lacking.

The apparent blunder that is the no excuses model calls to question one of the most significant concerns of recent times and its connection to student achievement, the pandemic. Henderson (2021) brings to the forefront the effects of school closures on student achievement, including the differences between traditional public schools and charter schools, and the continued concern of student wellbeing. Henderson intended to discover how the initial pandemic experience varied across social groups as well as the nation's district, charter, and private schools.

The Pandemic

Henderson utilized the data from the Education Next survey, which was conducted from May 14 to May 20, 2020. Triangulation of data was not evident in the study. The Education Next survey included a nationally representative selection of 663 teachers, 811 parents who self-identified as black and 913 parents who self-identified as Hispanic. Background and demographic data were available on survey respondents but not on the students. Parents answered questions about their experiences during the Spring 2020 school closings. Questions for teachers aligned with the questions asked of parents. Henderson used this data to "compare what parents reported receiving to what teachers said they delivered" (p 1). Results were based on perceptions of survey respondents. Responses were generally consistent, however there were some exceptions. It was presumed that advantaged students who had families with "more time, flexibility, and resources to offset the reduction in formal instruction" (Henderson, 2020, p. 3) would be shielded from some of the impact of school closures. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students of color, and previously disadvantaged students were expected to experience greater negative impact during school closures.

The results of the survey noted that an overwhelming majority of respondents, both parents and teachers, observed the negative effects of school closures, notable learning loss, and a significant decline in student well-being across all participants and school sectors. Henderson (2020) noted that while disruptions occurred in all sectors, "there are several indications that charter schools and private schools were better able to adapt to the new learning environment than was the district sector" (p 4). Henderson noted that children in charter schools were reported to receive new content, have daily required assignments, and meet with their teacher and class more frequently. Charter school parents reported being more satisfied with instruction. More research is needed to justify these findings.

While there was a strong response rate and wide variety within the sample, the pandemic provided only a limited window and time period. Clearly, the pandemic had a consistent negative impact on student academic achievement. This experience must be used to inform the new paradigm of education as is being lived post-pandemic.

Authorizers

Another perspective that can be considered regarding student outcomes is the unique operational relationship charter schools have with their authorizers, could this component affect student achievement? Carlson (2012) examined this issue with a study in Minnesota where the researchers felt demonstrated a broadly representative relationship with authorizers at over 150 separate charter schools in Minnesota. Carlson suggested more research is needed in the operations of charter schools which could affect student outcomes. Because the first charter school opened in St. Paul, Minnesota, the location is deeply embedded in the history of the movement and the author noted

Minnesota “mirrors the evolution of the national environment almost perfectly” (Carlson, 2012, p. 5). Carlson specifically examined the relationships with four types of authorizers, school districts, non-profit organizations, post-secondary institutions, and the Minnesota Department of Education. Carlson’s (2012) findings demonstrated that the type of institution that authorizes a charter school does not have a statistically significant link to student outcomes, furthermore, while charter schools reported higher levels of student achievement in math and reading test scores, this was not significantly linked to relationships with authorizers. Authorizers do, however, affect charter school independence.

Charter Schools by nature have a higher level of school autonomy than a standard public school, therefore, Clark (2009) suggested there is a preponderance of autonomy and self-guided decision making that is one of the significant differences between charter schools and TPSs. This is a result of school choice reforms and the subsequent charter school movement. The Clark (2009) evaluated the performance and competitive impacts of school autonomy. Clark employed an empirical framework using a data set from the Annual School Census which covers all English state funded secondary schools. Clark also used student level data from national student surveys. Clark (2009) found large achievement gains at schools in which principals were given decision making power, rather than school boards. The data is compelling. It is, however, based on a then recent British Reform in which schools were able to opt out of local control (school boards) and instead be quasi-independent or grant maintained. Schools that converted to grant-maintained status showed significant gains in student achievement. The problem with this study is whether it is applicable and relevant this is in the United States education system.

This paper studied results of a British reform that allowed public high schools to opt out of local authority control and become autonomous schools funded directly by the central government.

Educator Satisfaction

The satisfaction of educators, both administrators and teachers, also proved to be influential on student achievement. The contentment of everyone within the organization affects school culture and the student experience.

Administrators

Sun and Ni (2016) explored the principal turnover disparity between charter and TPS settings, a costly and ineffective endeavor unless based on the departure of a low performing principal. Sun and Ni questioned whether a relationship could be made between turnover in these two settings. The study utilized existing nationally representative SASS and PFS data from the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education. The sample included 90,410 TPSs and 3,850 charter schools, all whose principals were included in the survey. The study investigated "four categories of explanatory variables: principal characteristics, principal leadership practices, school contexts, and working conditions" (Sun and Ni, 2016, p 148), which explained over half of the turnover gap. Three factors were found to be significantly informative of charter school principal turnover rates: compensation, principal leadership quality, and difficulty in dismissing incompetent, or poor performing teachers. Schools with high teacher turnover rates were more likely to experience high principal turnover rates. Charter school principals were found to differ greatly in professional characteristics. On average they were less experienced, less prepared, and less likely to

hold graduate degrees. In the end, turnover rates were found to be statistically significant between charter and TPS principals. Turnover rates at charter schools are more notable and compare most equally to the high turnover rates of principals in high poverty public schools.

Thomas and Lacey (2016) also sought to build an understanding of charter school leaders. They questioned how charter school leaders who serve as founders and administrators describe their experiences as academic and business leaders. This study was a phenomenological study of the leadership experiences of the charter school founders who were also administrators in Florida. The research was based on personal interviews and content analysis from the interviews. The study specifically interviewed administrators who were also charter school founders. Researchers also used purposeful sampling to select information rich cases. Their criterion was that participants must be charter school members, be the founder of a freestanding charter school, serve as administrator or board member, and have no prior relationship with the researchers. Thomas and Lacey (2016), attempted to represent multiple geographical regions throughout the state of Florida. The researchers discussed their bias towards school choice and their need as researchers to set aside their biases. This admission served to raise the validity of the study.

Thomas and Lacey (2016) emphasized the importance of leadership, both in leading and managing, on the overall success of the organization. Incompetent leadership was capable of extreme destruction. Their study was meant to share the experiences of a variety of leadership. They found that creativity, determination and dedication were among qualities needed in leadership. Much insight was gained on the possibilities that

come with experience and skill level, and an ability to secure finances to operate the system. Recruiting students and hiring qualified teachers were found to be essential in the operation of the schools. In spite of challenges, obstacles, and barriers, leadership who were creative, determined, and dedicated were able to feel success in achieving their vision for their schools. Successful leaders learned to delegate, share the responsibilities, and introduce new educational opportunities, innovative instruction, and diversified curriculum to meet individual student needs.

Gawlik (2015) also studied school leadership but from a different perspective. This researcher contemplated the charter school leaders' influence on the understanding and conception of accountability policy and how that understanding translates into practice. Gawlik specifically questioned how leaders make sense of the organizational influences that affect their practice, especially when implementing accountability reforms targeted at student learning and achievement. Data for the study was collected in two Detroit elementary charter schools over the course of 18 months. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data. The two schools participating in the study were elementary schools with populations of 300 or more students, in high poverty areas, with diverse cultures (most notably Hispanic and African American). Gawlik felt the length of the study lends itself towards building a deep understanding of both accountability and sense making.

Gawlik (2015) studied how leaders interpret and adapt policy. Gawlik found that leaders were instrumental in facilitating this process because of their influence on teachers through shared sense making and by working to foster a collaborative culture

and move towards collaborative instructional styles. The study provides implications about the influence school leadership has on interpretation and enactment of policies and the way in which they can be interpreted in the classroom. While a bit subjective, Gawlik's (2015) interpretations of individual's worldviews influencing their interpretations (or misinterpretations) and actions are significant. Additionally, due to the charter school movement allowing for more flexibility in education, charter school leaders can create great change and influence in the schools they oversee. Leaders at resident districts have more red tape and rules to follow, while the existence of charter schools calls for innovation in education. This has a significant impact on school environments and the experience of the educators within these schools.

Teachers

Leaders have been proven to have significant impact within educational organizations, including the teacher experience. Wiener and Torres (2016) focused on teachers' professional identities and implied that modern teachers may be less inclined to adhere to traditional conceptualizations of career, including the belief that teaching is a long-term career. Furthermore, teaching is generally low status and young teachers may view teaching as an exploratory endeavor. Wiener and Torres (2016) worried that Education as an industry, and the teaching profession itself, may also be in flux. Wiener's research investigated how charter school teachers formulate professional identity in contrast to those in traditional public schools by interviewing nineteen new and novice charter school teachers to investigate their professional identity. Wiener and Torres stated that charter school teachers seek institutional fit due to perceived support, order, and like-minded peers. Charter school culture was often perceived as more desirable than TPSs,

because of their desire to reform, or they had perceptions against TPS from their own highly-fraught student experience. They reported that in the United States, over a third of charter school teachers are under the age of thirty and have three or fewer years of teaching experience compared to roughly a fifth of teachers in traditional public schools. Furthermore, research on the preparation of alternate route teachers both in the U.S. and abroad suggests that alternatively certified teachers are more critical of traditional teacher preparation methods and are conditioned in their prestigious undergraduate institutions to be more outspoken, critical thinkers than typical teacher candidates. Wiener and Torres (2015) concluded that much of charter school teachers' early identity was articulated in terms of what they wished not to be, a desire for autonomy. Unfortunately, nineteen novice teachers seem too few to credit this work as significantly informative.

Another perspective is brought forth by Stuit and Smith (2012), who discussed teacher turnover rates in both public and charter school settings. This study relied on existing national survey data to examine whether teachers are more likely to abandon the charter setting or the traditional public-school setting. After, testing whether the turnover gap is explained by different distributions of factors that are empirically and theoretically linked to turnover risk. The article found that the turnover rate of charter school teachers was twice as high as traditional public school teachers. Stuit and Smith (2012) implied that a large part of the turnover gap is explained by systematic differences in the characteristics of charter and TPS teachers. Furthermore, Stuit and Smith (2012) suggested charter school teachers are more likely to have attended a selective college and to have an undergraduate major in an area other than education.

Stuit and Smith (2012) concluded that stronger academic credentials may put charter school teachers at greater risk of both attrition and mobility because they are more marketable outside of K-12 education (Stuit and Smith, 2012). In fact, charter school teachers were less likely to be certified in the area in which they taught. TPS teachers were much more likely to be unionized. Charter school teachers were more likely to work part time, which also attributed to turnover. They more commonly noted compensation or job security as a reason for leaving. Charter school teachers also were twice as likely to note staffing actions of the school were their reason for leaving. Ironically, Stuit and Smith did not note significant differences in the working conditions of either school setting, but noted differences in self-reported perceptions of teachers, and differences in demographic characteristics and professional attributes. Unfortunately, teacher turnover in any setting is very expensive. Ultimately, teacher turnover rates were found to be higher in the charter school sector.

Oberfield (2016) addressed teacher autonomy and accountability in both TPS and charter school settings. Oberfield reiterated that the creation of charter schools exchanged an increase in autonomy, or a loosening in regulation, for an increase in accountability. This was done to meet the needs of more students. Oberfield (2016) noted that "rules and regulations imposed by centrally controlled bureaucracies were impeding school and teacher autonomy and accountability" (p 303) and questioned what effect the differences in regulations between TPS and charter school had on the perception of the teachers within each setting. Oberfield wondered if teachers actually had more autonomy in charter schools and were held more accountable than in TPS, which Oberfield (2016) identified as a gap in existing research.

Oberfield (2016) utilized the nationally representative teacher data including the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) from the U.S. Department of Education. Four areas of interest were drawn from the survey, teachers' perceptions of red tape, management, autonomy, and accountability. For all intents and purposes, the variable examined as red tape by Oberfield, was paperwork. The study findings supported criticisms with the red tape of TPS, and suggested there is little evidence that the desired effect is achieved, and may factor into the perception that TPS teachers have less autonomy. Teacher autonomy was directly linked to job satisfaction and TPS teachers felt autonomy was lacking. The study results demonstrated that charter school teachers did experience more autonomy. While the Oberfield data did not support the concept of increased accountability, it did support one key difference, the reality that charter schools offer increased flexibility and innovation which may affect student learning.

Ni (2012) also relied on the SASS to interpret the working conditions of teachers in charter schools and TPSs. Ni (2012) sought to understand if different working conditions exist in charter schools. These features include competition, autonomy, and school and teacher characteristics. 43,000 teachers from 28 states were asked the same questions about perceptions, training, resources and teacher assignments.

The Ni (20120 study found that teacher perception in charter and TPS settings were similar in the context of leadership, community and collegiality, professional development, and appropriate instructional supplies. Professional development was directly linked to teacher satisfaction. In contrast to the Oberfield (2016) study, Ni (2012) found perceptions of teacher autonomy were also similar in both settings, but they did not result in changes that are connected to student achievement. Teachers' perceptions of

working conditions were also not found to be significantly different. Like the Stuit and Smith (2012) study, Ni found that charter school teachers were younger, less experienced, less educated, and were paid lower salaries. The findings also demonstrated that many charter schools are, demographically speaking, educating high income white students. Charter school teachers perceived that they had more individual impact in school wide decision making. Interestingly, district-granted charter schools were perceived to provide more supportive working environments than other authorizers. Ni noted that caution should be exercised in interpretations as the surveys were self-reporting and could include bias. Ni also noted that "the analysis missed several domains of teacher working conditions such as physical facilities and appropriateness of teacher assignment" (p. 21). Ni reinforces the Gawlik (2015) finding that state policy has influence over working conditions due to administrative support and oversight, Ni notes this is more significant in the charter setting. Ni also noted differences in urban and rural settings.

Harris (2006) focused on the basic and universal factor of teachers' compensation. Harris sought to compare wages and benefits in charter and TPS settings. Harris analyzed variables within quantitative data using both the SASS and NCES surveys to extrapolate data specific to Michigan. Harris utilized a triangulation of data which included a literature review, analysis of existing data, and school surveys. The sample included 723 full time TPS teachers and 469 full-time charter school teachers. The focus included not just salaries, but also working conditions, perceptions of employment conditions, and characteristics associated with teacher quality, and characteristics of schools, and districts.

Harris (2006) found that charter school teachers were paid 33% less than TPS teachers. Like previous studies, Harris found that charter school teachers were generally younger, less experienced, less likely to be certified, and less educated. Harris suggested that these factors contributed to lower salaries at charter schools. Charter teachers were also more likely to be members of minority groups. TPS typically operate under union contracts and charters are less likely to, so charter administrators had more freedom in individual compensation. Interestingly, charter school teachers of color were found to be paid more than their white counterparts. Charter schools with more minority students were found to pay more than charter schools that were largely attended by white students. Charter schools had more liberty to provide less common financial incentives, while TPS administrators had more limited options. The quality of Michigan charter teachers was found to be lower than Michigan TPS teachers. Harris noted a need for an increase in overall charter school salaries. Harris claimed that 90% of Americans believe that the teacher is the single most important factor in improving student achievement. He asserts that existing research and the federal government support this statement. No Child Left Behind called for all core subject teachers to be highly qualified (Harris, 2006). Compensation is directly linked to procuring highly qualified teachers and should be treated with priority.

Roch and Sai (2017) took a deep look at teacher job satisfaction as compared between charter schools and TPSs. They also note differences between charter schools operated by for profit and nonprofit entities, citing that for profits organizations now manage about 36% of charter schools. They noted that while charter schools experienced greater autonomy, this could mean leaders often have greater autonomy in hiring

decisions. This autonomy can also be felt as limited external support and an overburdening of leadership. The researchers rely on a nationally representative dataset. They employed empirical tests using hierarchical linear modeling.

Roch and Sai (2017) found that teachers are generally less satisfied when they feel greater, or unachievable demands are placed on them. They cited lack of unions in charter schools, as well as lower salaries as significant factors in the reduced satisfaction felt by charter school teachers. Lower student teacher ratio, and collegiality amongst faculty showed positive results. High turnover was representative of a problematic educational environment. Schools that represented poor and minority students were also less satisfying. It was concluded that charter schoolteachers were less satisfied than TS teachers. There were differences noted between for profit and non-profit charters. Roch and Sai (2017) recommended working towards an environment that satisfies and retains teaching staff.

Rural/Urban Issues

Bryant (2010) brought forth concerns for the various struggles faced by rural students. Bryant feared the government viewed schools as monolithic and static entities, which is a disastrous tendency. Bryant claimed that rural schools are in some of the hardest hit economic areas in the U.S. He worried about the achievement gap for students in high poverty rural areas, especially since needs in rural areas are unique. Bryant offers a literature review which focused on rural districts in North Carolina and Appalachia. Bryant's work was a call to action. Bryant (2010) stated that according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) "35 percent of rural students live below the poverty level and 38 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs" (p 55).

Bryant (2010) found that urban bias exists in public education policy. He found the choice movement to add another layer of impact on already struggling rural school districts, where homeschooling was already more prevalent. With the addition of school choice, struggling districts were faced with the competition of charters schools and online charters. Resources were scarce before school competition was added to the list of struggles. Bryant (2010) postulated that the educational and social impacts of school choice impact rural schools in ways that the urban environment does not feel. Longer commutes in rural districts mean a greater need for resources and geographical struggles for families. Property tax-based funding impacts rural districts differently. Rural schools also face more challenges in serving the needs of SPED populations with fewer resources. Financial opportunities differ in rural areas. Bryant (2010) believes that steps could be taken to mitigate some of these concerns and called for the U.S. department of education to "devote time, funds, and manpower to rural schools and their issues" (p. 57) including dramatic changes to school funding formulas. Reforms need to be put in place to meet the needs of rural schools.

While the focus is often on urban school settings as they are more populated and often better represented by policy makers, the needs of students in rural settings also need to be met. Not all policies and practices translate clearly and effectively from urban settings to rural settings. The Mann et al. (2016) study returns to the no excuses model but adds a significant intention towards urban and rural settings. Mann et al. reported that by the 2011-12 academic year Pennsylvania (where the study took place) had reported some of the largest charter school enrollment across the country at approximately 6%, a rate at which the impact on funding from the resident district is significant. The article

discussed the spread of public-school dollars from the resident district to the public charter school, and concerns that technically they are public schools, which allows them to receive funding from some taxes to cover their costs (Mann et al., 2016). Mann et al. also addressed concerns about the fiscal impacts of charter schools on the budgets of small school districts. This is more staggering to rural TPS as they simply do not have the population to allow school choice and competing charter schools to exist without negative impact to the resources of the rural public school district. Mann et al. noted that it is not just brick and mortar schools, but also cyber charter schools that disrupt numbers in rural settings. Although cyber schools offer more options to rural students, cyber charter schools are underperforming TPS, and still taking valuable tax dollars from the resident district.

Mann et al. (2016) employed a study based on enrollment data available through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which included more than 1.5 million student records over four years. They also included data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to compare geographic local codes, which are based on proximity to urbanized areas. The data included demographic data such as free and reduced lunch and minority populations. Mann et al. used these students' enrollment patterns to inform their discussion on the topic. They compared enrollment data from charter schools to the resident districts from which they belong to understand the overall impact of school choice. It appears that much of the same data informed both the Mann et al. (2016) and the Clark (2015) articles. Shockingly, cyber charter schools accounted for 30% of all charter school enrollment in Pennsylvania at the time. Mann et al. noted unique trends to rural districts which were not demonstrated in urban settings. There is also a

"disproportionate social, civic, and economic role that public schools play in rural communities" (Mann et al., 2016, p. 26). These schools often are some of the largest employers in the community, encourage community involvement, and strengthen community identity. Mann et al. worried that the existence of school competition may disturb this relationship. The Mann et al. analysis found that the application of federal and state policy, particularly in regard to charter schools, does not translate well. The nature of rural communities is simply different from the urban settings that are so well represented by policy makers. Particularly in the case of cyber charter school, students are likely being provided an inferior educational option with lower levels of achievement. There is mixed evidence about the possibility that brick-and-mortar charter schools outperform TPS, and further research is needed in this area. Because of the impact student mobility rates to charter schools have on rural districts, Mann et al. suggested a need for a change in the fiscal policy, which sends the entire per pupil expenditure with the student who moves out of the rural school. Rural schools are not equipped to mitigate the financial impact this causes.

Angrist and Walters (2013) referenced a growing body of evidence that suggests urban charter schools have the potential to generate impressive achievement gains, especially for minority students living in high-poverty areas. This group of researchers highlighted a series of studies that use admissions lotteries to understand the impact of charter attendance in Boston and at a Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) school in Lynn, Massachusetts, which serves middle and high school students. The sample was comprised of seventeen middle schools and six high schools, including "nine urban

middle schools, eight nonurban middle schools, four urban high schools and two non-urban high schools" (Angrist & Walters, 2013, p 4)

Angrist and Walters claimed that "interest in charter schools is growing rapidly in school districts outside central cities but results for more diverse sets of charter schools are also more mixed" (Angrist & Walters, 2013., p. 2). The article linked school-level charter impacts to school inputs and practices. The conclusion drawn was that "urban charter schools generate impressive achievement gains, while nonurban charters are largely ineffective and appear to reduce achievement for some" Angrist & Walters, 2013, p 24). Angrist and Walters shared data concurrent with other reports that teachers within the charter setting were often younger and less likely to be licensed, while the student to staff ratio was often smaller in urban settings. The highest impact in achievement was made in high minority urban settings at mission-based charter schools. This suggested that some students with unmet needs were well served by their charter school. The data suggests that much of the individual support lacking at high population urban schools is being met in the rural setting and changes from a TPS to a charter setting are not as significant or impactful.

Schafer and Khan (2017) call out the concerns faced by districts in the rise of homeschooling, flex schooling, and online schooling, which included four percent of the population of the U.S. or more than two million students by 2012. This brings forth a new concern, students can be enrolled part time in person and be enrolled part time online. Home schooling and flex schooling are more prevalent in rural areas. In urban settings there tend to be a wider variety of school choice options available to parents and families. Flex schooling does not always constitute the loss of an entire full-time student, but it is

still a loss. Occasionally, schools allow these students to use their resources (maybe a computer in the library or student resource room) to accommodate this. Schafer and Khan conceded that this includes a wide range of educational structures. Schafer and Khan believed that this required a deeper look at family structure.

Schafer and Khan (2017) developed a conceptual framework which included family economy. Then they used existing data from the National Household Education Survey: Parent and Family Involvement 2012 (NHES-PFI 2012), as well as past surveys which were thought to include more than 1.5 million homeschoolers. They sought to examine the role that family, child, and locational factors affected school choice. They used comparative (chi-square) tests to explore the distribution of families into each approach. They divided findings into three categories: enrollment, flex school, and home school (noting that 96 percent of all parents chose to enroll in a school). Eighty percent of home-schooled students lived in two parent families as compared to 70 % of enrolled students and 65 % of flex schooled students. Very few homeschoolers and flex schoolers had two working parents. Twenty percent of flex schoolers' parents reported an annual income of under $20,000 per year and 80% of homeschool parents reported incomes of over $40,000 per year. Seventy-five percent of homeschool parents are homeowners. Schafer and Khan (2017) reported that the results support that "family structure, income, background, and residential factors influence the decision to homeschool or flex school" (p. 534). They call for further research, particularly with concern for rural conditions in the U.S. and the struggles faced by rural school in light of school choice.

Bridgeforth et al. (2021) suggested deeper research into the effect of school choice on rural districts was needed, particularly at the family level, that why families opt

into alternative choices needs to be understood. Bridgeforth et al. noted that the school choice movement targets students in densely populated urban areas. Solutions are crafted in state capitals which are far removed from the realities of rural districts. Their research would be used to inform policy and practice, as they believed more attention should be paid to school choice laws. They created a literature review with a focus on rural education and school choice. The sample included 40 articles spanning over 29 years.

Bridgeforth et al. (2021) found the arguments presented by the research to be vastly similar, which included "educational equity, parental choice, local control, and framing school choice through the lens of neoliberalism" (p 5). They also noted concern beyond charter school competition, citing "cyber, virtual, and distance learning" (p.7) as choices which demand further research. Bridgeforth et al. noted 20 percent of U.S. students (over 9 million students) are in rural districts. Rural schools struggle to hire and retain qualified teachers. Rural schools are often faced with high levels of poverty which is linked to low achievement. On the other hand, rural schools were found to meet the needs of individual students well. Rural communities were cited as often close knit with deep connections. Bridgeforth et al. believed this research would aid in providing more "equitable experiences and outcomes for rural students and their families" (p 7). They called for all social issues including socio-political histories, diversity, social-emotional learning, impacts of the recent pandemic, as well as broadened understandings of rural issues to inform educational reform and policy making.

Resource Allocation

Arsen and Ni (2012) approach charter school competition from the perspective of resource allocation. Operating revenue is directly connected to enrollment. Arsen and Ni

sought to examine the budgetary responses that exist as a result of school choice and charter school competition. They did this by examining how districts make changes as a result of competition, and how the resulting change of spending affects instructional and noninstructional practices. Arsen and Ni employed an empirical study to examine 13 years of panel data in Michigan. Data was acquired through the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). They specifically targeted enrollment size, per pupil funding, property wealth per pupil, percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. After examining the data, Arsen and Ni (2012) found that contrary to expectation, charter school competition does not significantly impact the resource allocation of TPSs, it just reduced total available funding. Regarding instructional and non-instructional strategies, significant changes were not noted. Arsen and Ni (2012) noted, however, that more meaningful changes were induced in instructional approached than this empirical approach was able to assess. The unfortunate reality was found that with less funding, infrastructure costs (keeping lights on, heat going, building maintenance, etc.…) remained the same. The expectation was that schools would increase spending on instructional strategies, but with the cost of staff, most notably teachers, being one of the most significant costs within a school, the simplest way to cut expenses is to cut staff, which counter-intuitively results in cuts in instructional activities. Thus, the idea that competition would result in funding spent towards instructional strategies is a fallacy.

Cook (2018) postulated that charters are meant to allow school choice and thus compete for enrollment. Charters are also meant to be "innovative laboratories for educational practices" (Cook, 2018, p. 1). This, however, also represents a strain on

district resources. Cook explored the funding mechanisms regarding the influence of on TPSs, specifically investigating whether charter competition affects collectively bargained teacher compensation. The Cook (2018) study takes place in Ohio, a highly unionized state. Ohio also had the "second largest online charter presence in the nation" (Cook, 2018, p 2), over 30,000 students. Cook examined data from NCES, as well as additional district level surveys, which included student enrollment, teacher employment data, and expenditure and revenue information. This included access to data on district funds which transferred to charter schools in each year of the survey. Unfortunately, they were unable to separate data from digital and brick and mortar charter schools, which could have been helpful.

Cook (2018) found that the most significant competitions were based on students, not teachers. Furthermore, charter school competition has little or no impact on collectively bargained units. The existence of charter schools does impact the overall teaching force, it also decreases the entry level teacher salary. Competition also depresses appraised housing values (taxes) resulting in a loss of potential property tax revenues and thus decreasing overall funding. The resource allocation decisions on limited funding appeared to be very telling of school values. Unfortunately, this most often meant less funding spent on instruction. As noted in other studies, infrastructure expenses did not decline, so loss of funding most impacted instructional opportunities. The impact of charters was found to be more significant in rural areas than in urban areas.

Wohlsetter et al. (2004) brought forth a more positive, solution minded, perspective on resource allocation, the concept of using collaboration to improve service delivery. These cross sectoral alliances included three economic sectors, non-profit, for

profit, and public. Wohlsetter et al. (2004) wondered to what extent organizations in these three sectors were involved in collaborating with charter schools, and whether charter schools received benefits from partnering with organizations in other sectors. The study relied on a qualitative approach to this research analyzing data to access information about both charter schools and TPSs. Data collection included interviews with state level experts. Respondents represented 35 state departments and 31 resource centers.

Wohlsetter et al (2004) found that charter schools seemed to be capitalizing on these opportunities to access funding and solve issues within their schools. Benefits from these alliances included not just financial, but also political and organizational benefits. Partnerships were deemed good public relations strategies. They found that cross-sectoral alliances support the enhancement of high-quality educational services and meeting individual student needs.

Chapter III: Discussion and Conclusion

Summary

The focus of this literary review is to build an understanding of the impact of school choice and charter school competition and the resulting effect on student achievement. The review began by addressing competition. Significant themes arose which included the speculation that competition could raise efficiency of public schools because competition is inherently good and improves market quality; however, researchers questioned this logic, and in the case of education it simply is not that straightforward (Holmes et al., 2006; Misra et al., 2012; Renzulli & Evans, 2005). Small gains in achievement were proven, but the most significant factors for students continue to be class size, student make up or demographics, teacher experience, and school culture. While competition results in increased financial efficiency, the loss of student enrollment in the traditional public school results in struggle. Both public and charter schools compete for the same students. Renzulli and Evans (2005) highlighted their concern for demographic make-up and the possibility for charter schools to become elitist institutions which increase student segregation. This introduced the Winters (2015) and Winters (2015b) studies on the impact of enrollment on student body makeup, with a spotlight on special education enrollment. TPSs practice open enrollment, charter schools, however, place caps on enrollment which can result in the perception that they choose their students. Standard practice is to enroll based on a lottery, which can result in pulling names of students who have applied out of a hat. In this way, student demographics at charter schools can seem skewed.

Many of the selected articles addressed achievement specifically, but from varying perspectives. One of the most common ways to make connections on achievement is by examining standardized test scores, Clark (2015) as well as Ellison and Iqtador (2022) examined achievement in this way and find varying results based on charter school missions, school locations, and methods practiced. As a whole, underserved urban populations were found to be better served in more specified charter school settings (Ellison & Iqtador, 2022; Ni, 2012; Oberfield, 2016; Sass et al., 2016; Weiner & Torres, 2015; Sass et al., 2016; Hung et al., 2014). These researchers found that while test scores may vary between charter school and TPSs, there are other factors which are not well represented by examining only standardized test scores. These researchers asserted that graduation rates, persistence, and earnings in careers are also measures of achievement, and in these areas, charter schools appeared to perform more favorably.

Other factors were brought into the discussion of achievement. Clark et al. (2015) noted the existence of online charter schools, which generally score lower but provide more options for families and compete for students. Hung et al. (2014) noted the focus of charter schools on individual student needs, and Bingham (2017) brought these concepts together in her work on personalized learning as it appears in a high technology charter school; this also began the research specific to the no excuses model. Again, findings demonstrated that each model had a niche which resulted in higher achievement for some students, but not all. Some studies looked specifically at achievement from unique perspectives and were outliers from the norm. Carlson (2012) researched the idea that charter school authorizers could affect student achievement and found that they do not

have a significant impact on achievement. Henderson (2021) compared charter school and public schools from a pandemic school closure perspective which was inconclusive, based on a very specific timeframe, and called for more research on how the pandemic response of competing schools affected student achievement. Clark (2009) focused on school autonomy, which explains some of the niche areas where certain schools met a specific group of students' needs and found that some schools where principals with increased autonomy from the school board had higher levels of student achievement.

Clark (2009) focused on educators, specifically administration. Educators have been found to have a high impact on the student experience, which included but is not always solely driven by achievement. School choice allows educators to choose whether to work in the charter or TPS environment. Three researchers focused on the administrators. The leadership of the school drives the success (or failure) of the organization (Gawlik, 2015; Sun & Ni, 2016; Thomas & Lacey, 2106). These researchers examined different aspects of leaders including turnover, how leaders drive school decision making, and differences in both the charter and TPS settings experienced by leaders. Ironically, many of the experiences of leaders in both charter and TPS settings were paralleled by the experience of teachers.

Teachers have a very real impact on students and their ability to feel supported and achieve their potential. Teachers, by and large, were more experienced, more highly educated, and better paid in the public-school setting (Harris, 2006; Ni, 2012; Oberfield, 2016; Roch & Sai, 2017; Stuit & Smith, 2012; Wiener & Torres, 2016). Many of the factors that contributed to teacher satisfaction, such as autonomy, pay, school climate, professional development, and individual support, existed regardless of whether they

taught in a charter of TPS setting. Major factors that were unique based on the setting included union support, which was only available in the TPS setting, and perceptions of school mission and vision, which seemed to be a draw to the charter school environment.

It became clear that school choice had different impacts in urban and rural settings. Rural areas tend to have a preponderance of poverty, a limited number of students available to enroll, and challenges that are not equivalent to the experience in urban settings (Angrist & Walters, 2013; Bridgeforth et al., 2021; Bryant, 2010; Mann et al., 2016; Schafer & Khan, 2017). TPSs enroll exclusively from their district, while enrollment at charter schools does not rely on any specific boundary. Online charter schools also represent a larger struggle for rural schools. In urban settings school choice can be balanced between students, and charter schools often serve a population that was underserved elsewhere. However, in rural schools, there are few students and charter schools add to the resource allocation that is already being spread too thin.

Resource allocation is the primary reason that school choice and charter school competition can no longer be friendly competition, as Holmes (2006) suggested. This competition can become adversarial. There is a budgetary response at TPSs due to competition and a struggle to acquire resources at charter schools (Arsen & Ni, 2012; Cook, 2018; Wohlsetter et al., 2004). The resources can be financial, but human capital, or the struggle to draw in staff and students, is a very real concern. Overall, this is negative. There simply is not enough funding to cover instructional activities, teacher salaries, and costs which improve student achievement after spending on building maintenance and many other fixed costs. This competition for finite resources is ugly and sad. Wohlsetter et al. (2004) brought a problem-solving mentality to their research and

suggested building partnerships to support both TPSs and charter schools. Charter schools have been found to be more effective in these partnerships. Partnerships should be more widely sought after in TPS settings.

Limitations of the Research

In choosing an area where there is already an existing gap in research, the potential for a literature review has limitations, but the gathering of research to build an understanding in an area of need is worth undergoing challenges. Existing articles did not always fit perfectly into the narrative the author attempted to create. The author attempted to eliminate articles which were too old. While the goal was to choose studies published within the last decade, the oldest article was from 2004**.** This suggests a span in publication of nearly two decades. Most of the articles, however, were not more than 10 years old to maintain relevancy. The author eliminated dissertations and books and selected only research articles.

Implications for Future Research

Further research is needed, particularly on the impact of school choice in underrepresented rural districts. Because of the underrepresentation of rural districts, this is likely the area where the most notable impact could be made to improve the student experience. There is a gap in the existing literature even after over 30 years of charter school existence. More dedication to researching the struggles, and not just the opportunities, that exist with school choice and school competition is crucial.

Professional Application

This literature review has the potential to inform legislators of the unique needs in rural schools and the impact that decisions have on so many students in need. It is

apparent that the factors that meet student needs and result in increased achievement are not predominantly based on the building a student learns in or a specific school mission. Students need safe environments, an appropriate student teacher ratio, and support from satisfied, well prepared, and appropriately- supported teachers. Demographic makeup and socio-economic status of students is universally impactful. Student needs must be met at home first, but schools are the next line of support for children. The pandemic highlighted the many ways in which schools support students. Schools have become something so much more than they once were and families are not structured in the same way they once were. Schools need to continue to grow and meet the ever-changing societal need they fill. School choice helps meet those needs. Charter schools exist as locations in which the structure of education can grow and evolve with less limitations. This is a beautiful opportunity to work towards meeting the needs of students.

The impact of school choice is relevant to meeting student needs and supporting them to success. Students and families appreciate school choice. They appreciate selecting an environment where their child can find the path towards their brightest potential future. Taking away that choice is not a valid option. The resolution to the struggles schools face in running an organization which drives students to higher levels of achievement is largely based on the choices of policymakers and the limited funding provided to schools. Children and education are not always the priority of policymakers. Policymakers, the decision makers in the nation, are rarely experts in the field of education. This synopsis of existing research could help them to understand the impact their educational decisions have on the nation's children and the future of the world.

In small towns like where the author lives, animosity over school choice is deeply rooted. Children are occasionally treated as commodities necessary to run a school, when with greater access to resources, the focus instead could be on providing more opportunities for students and preparing them for our world- an everchanging place where we struggle to predict what future needs will be.

Conclusion

The existence of school choice and charter schools has improved achievement for some students; however, the factors that meet student needs and result in increased achievement are not predominantly based on the building in which a student learns or its specific school mission. Rather, it has been shown that class size, teacher satisfaction, and administrative support all have a major impact on student achievement. Students need safe environments, an appropriate student teacher ratio, and support from satisfied, well prepared, and appropriately supported teachers. Demographic makeup and the socio-economic status of students also remain significant predictors of student achievement. Meeting the needs of our children and building opportunities for their future success is essential. Though school choice is a beginning towards improvement, the American education system must reform to meet future needs.

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