The feasibility of charter schools in the United States: a national study

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In the May 1996, U.S. Department of Education publication, *Community Update*, Education Secretary Richard Riley said, "I've seen many different success stories. Charter schools have the freedom to be innovative, but one important feature they share is how they can become a source of good ideas throughout a district" (p. 6).

The purpose of the present investigation was to do a feasibility study of charter schools in the United States. The states of Arizona, California, Minnesota, and New Mexico were the basis of the research. Most charter schools are free from laws and regulations governing public schools. However, charter schools are accountable for results affecting student achievement. Usually, a charter school's performance is reviewed three to five years after starting. If student achievement is good and results are successful, the charter school remains.

Most supporters view charter schools as a hopeful way to raise academic standards, empower educators, involve parents and communities, and expand choice and accountability in public education. One of the biggest challenges that has faced charter schools has been a lack of start-up funding. To partially solve this problem, the Department of Education provided $5.4 million in start-up grants for charter schools in 11 states, and President Clinton proposed a major expansion of the public charter schools program.

With this new charter school phenomenon occurring, considerable background is needed to understand the charter school movement and its relationship to the public schools. This investigation is designed to determine parental and staff satisfaction with charter schools versus public schools and to determine knowledge levels and perceptions of Iowa school superintendents toward charter schools. Iowa is a state without charter legislation. Is the charter school phenomenon feasible for all states, as well as Iowa, to consider as an option for today's students?
Several common themes regarding choice arise that need serious consideration. First, choice may contribute to student achievement. Second, there is no quick fix for what troubles America's schools. "What's needed is grassroots reform that lets schools 'break the mold,' try new ways of teaching and learning, and offer what students need" (Randall & Geiger, 1991, p. 59). Third, parents should be allowed to choose which quality school program best meets the needs of their children.

Proponents of choice believe there is improvement in their charter schools. They also document, through surveys, higher levels of satisfaction on the part of students, parents, and teachers. Greater satisfaction will result in higher levels of learning; test scores then can be higher (Randall & Geiger, 1991). Former Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, wrote "the charter-school idea has emerged as possibly the most promising innovation [yet]" (Bierlein, 1995, p. 15).

In 1985, Governor Perpich of Minnesota proposed eight points in his Access for Excellence Plan. Through charter school legislation, the state of Minnesota strives to meet the goals in Perpich's Access for Excellence Plan.

The first goal was for the state to assume responsibility for the basic foundation aid. Second, the Legislature would be asked to authorize the department of education to develop learner outcomes, the standards which measure what a student should know and be able to do at various levels of his or her education. Third, the Legislature would be asked to authorize the development of instruments to measure student outcomes at three grade levels. Fourth, the Legislature would be asked to establish a design competition for model programs in various disciplines. Fifth, the Legislature and State Board of Education would be asked to review current mandates and evaluate their importance and effectiveness. Sixth, the Legislature would be asked to increase state funds local districts for staff and program development. The seventh point in the Access for Excellence plan was choice and the eighth point was a management assistance program from the department of education to help local districts identify areas of need and make improvements. (Randall & Geiger, 1991, pp. 150–151)
Iowa Open Enrollment

Open enrollment became law in 1989 in the state of Iowa. The goal of the legislation was to provide parents with choice as to where their children would attend school. Students take their local tax dollars with them to the school in which they open enroll. Unfortunately, open enrollment has not been without its problems in Iowa.

A primary problem is the loss of state-aid and local tax dollars when a student leaves the district. A second problem occurred in Des Moines, Burlington, and Waterloo. These three districts wanted to maintain racial balance within their schools. "All three had policies to restrict an overly proportionate number of white students from transferring out of their districts" (Iowa Association of School Boards Update, 1994, p. 1). The Iowa Department of Education and an administrative law judge told all three districts that their open enrollment policies were too strict.

"The Exira Community School District filed suit in 1991, claiming that the open enrollment was unconstitutional. The district court judge dismissed the argument noting that "local property taxes are not collected for the purpose of supporting a local school, but for the purpose of educating the resident students of a school district" (Iowa Association of School Boards Update, 1994, p. 1). The Iowa Supreme Court upheld the district court decision.

In a position statement as a result of a study done by the Iowa Department of Education in 1994, the State Board of Education announced, "It is the position of the Iowa State Board of Education that the introduction of a Charter Schools concept at this time would offer limited benefit to school improvement efforts in which many districts are now engaged" (AASA Leadership News, 1997, p. 1). Iowa is identified as one of the nation's states with the most aggressive interdistrict choice plans.
Privatization in Schools

In the 1950s, efforts began to privately manage public schools. "The present push in this direction has its origins in the mid-1980s" (McLaughlin, 1995, p. 7). There are probably two key events that were the catalyst for the present push. "First, the Reagan administration set the tone for encouraging private companies to contract for services traditionally provided by the public sector. Second, the enormous wealth created by the rising stock market and boom industries of health care and technology led to an explosion of venture capital available to new arenas such as public education" (McLaughlin, 1995, p. 10).

Privatization in America’s schools had already begun in the areas of food management, transportation, and maintenance of building and grounds. Private industries such as the Marriott and Aramark are managing food service. Laidlaw is one of the major management companies for bussing and transportation. Service Master is the leading contracted company for building maintenance.

Contracted services for providing education followed shortly thereafter. In 1991, Christopher Whittle announced that his Edison Project would reinvent schooling in this country. However, two years after it had begun, he focused on managing public schools and not on creating a network of private, for-profit schools. The private sector’s approach to education is not going to go away. Educational leaders would be wise to take this approach seriously and be encouraged to provide a quality education to American students as a result of competition.

Parents are no longer satisfied with the quality of education their children receive in America’s public schools. Approximately half a million children are presently being homeschooled. Parents want alternative means to provide the best education they can for their children. Former Massachusetts Governor William Weld says, "Charters can bring real innovation into the classroom and challenge other public schools to raise their standards" (Wallis, 1994, p. 54).
5

Charter Schools

California’s Yvonne Chan has demonstrated just how successful and innovative a charter school can be. Principal Yvonne Chan was one of the first to apply for a waiver in 1992, when California enacted a charter-school law. Chan’s school, Vaughn Next Century, began with a budget of $4.6 million. Chan totally revamped the way the money was spent and was able to put a $1.2 million surplus back into the school. "Teachers at Vaughn work longer hours than they did before the school went charter, but they are paid more and given more authority. Every faculty member serves on one of eight parent-teacher committees that meet weekly and, essentially, run the school. "We don’t want people who just clock in and out," says Chan. "This is not business as usual" (Wallis, 1994, pp. 54-55).

In the 1980s, the voucher movement became popular. "Voucher advocates want to break up the ‘public-education monopoly’ by letting parents spend their allotment of public-school dollars as they wish—even on private or parochial schools. Charters are a kinder, gentler, more politically palatable way to provide parents with some measure of choice, albeit within the public system" (Wallis, 1994, p. 57).

As of January 1997, The Center for Education Reform’s National Charter School Directory identified 480 operating charter schools in 16 states plus the District of Columbia. Nine more states have charter legislation but do not have charter schools in operation. As of spring, 1997, there were 105,127 American students educated during the 1996-97 school year in a charter school.

Opposition to Charter Schools

However, charter laws are not without their share of controversy. No charter bill has passed a state legislature without a fight. The conventional public schools lose money when
charter schools emerge. Where the student and his/her parents choose to send the student is where the money goes. Charters allow parents and administrators to hire teachers with their own expectations and not those of a union contract. Not surprisingly, teacher unions also are opposed to charters.

The teacher groups have been, and will probably continue to be the most effective group opposing school choice. "The teacher unions have been highly successful in turning to their advantage the public's dissatisfaction with the way its children are learning—or not learning. One of the chief functions of the public sector unions is to insulate the membership from competition" (Jones & Ambrosie, 1995, p. 28).

There are some general features of the debate over choice in education. "By encouraging parents to take an active hand in the selection of their children's school, all choice programs claim to set a series of salutary educational changes into motion" (Hlebowitsh, 1995, p. 4).

First, there is the view that the current system of schooling will be infused with an attractive assortment of school programs. In essence, the claim is that choice will "break the back" of an entrenched system of schooling that has been marked by widespread curriculum uniformity and staleness. Second, supporters of choice claim to provide new decision-making authority to the underclass, giving this neglected population a means of access to better schools. (Hlebowitsh, 1995, pp. 4–5)

Some opponents to privatization and charter schools see the private and charter schools as forgetting or ignoring the public school philosophy. Tax-funded private schools may take the best students and leave the public schools with the poor and/or problem children. Opponents fear that privatization will ultimately cause a division in the nation by creating more segregation due to class and race. "The debate over school choice revolves around a dualism that frames the main purpose of the school to be either in the best interests of the individual and the family, or the best interests of the society" (Hlebowitsh, 1995, p. 6).
Dewey once observed that in a democracy, the purpose of the school is to provide an enlarging experience that transcends the parochial lines of the home and community. Within the concept of parental choice, the purpose of the school is to provide what the individual family wants and needs for their children’s education, not social democratic needs or society’s needs. Choice programs that encourage a wide spectrum of specialty schools and choice programs that make the socio-civic tradition of public schools optional, represent a serious threat to the core purpose of public education. Some opponents believe that we’ve never really tried democratic education (Hlebowitsh, 1995; Kozol, 1992). “We haven’t yet given equal, wonderful, innovative, humane schools—at the level of our finest schools—to all our children. I do not agree to ‘break the bonds’ of democratic education. I think we should try it first, see how it might work” (Kozol, 1992, p. 92).

Supporters of Charter Schools

Most charter schools continue to strive for the democratic beliefs of the United States. Most do not charge any tuition and do not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, or national origin, gender or socio-economic status. Technically, because the charter school receives tax dollars, it is in most respects still a public school. The charter school then becomes a public school choice.

"Charter schools enhance educational choice options. Charter schools permit true decentralization" (Bierlein, 1995, p. 14). Charters are autonomous and thus are free to try creative instructional practices, different philosophical approaches to education, and various diverse and alternative assessment practices. Most traditional schools do not offer a great variety in these areas, and when they try, are met with great resistance to any type of nontraditional change. Charter schools can go beyond what traditional site-based managed schools can do. Because of the autonomy of a charter, schools can make their own decisions that are truly
building based and they are held solely accountable for those decisions. "Charter schools enable
local school boards to become true policy boards" (Bierlein, 1995, p. 14). Many school boards
try to micro-manage their schools. Though school boards can "purchase" or approve a charter,
the board itself is limited to setting broad policies and not making administrative decisions under
charter laws (Saks, 1998).

Four key areas dealing with charter schools have emerged as states wrestle with charter
legislation. First, many states want to exclude private individuals or schools from obtaining
charters or sponsorship options. Second, many states want only the local board to sponsor
charters, not state boards or universities. Third, legal and fiscal autonomy is a significant issue
that states are struggling with—many states want charter schools to remain part of the district and
not become autonomous entities. Finally, employee requirements/protection is an issue of
concern—many states want to require certification and maintain district-level bargaining and
tenure provisions (Bierlein, 1995).

During the 1995–96 school year, there were 200 charter schools approved in the United
States (Bierlein, 1995). No two of those charters were totally alike. Because charters are fairly
new, there is no real formal data or studies to indicate the success of such schools. However,
some general trends appear to exist. First, charter schools are serving numerous "at-risk" students
(Finn, Manno, and Bierlein, 1996). Minnesota's City Academy reports that within its first two
years, nearly 75 percent of its initial group of students (all former dropouts) had already
completed all graduation requirements. Second, unique learning environments are being created
in response to teacher and parent desires. Boards of education are now being pressured to give
sound proposals real consideration. The Community Involved Charter School, a college
preparatory school in Colorado, is now serving some of the more than 1,000 students who had
previously been on a waiting list for a similar program in the area. Third, unique community
and/or business partnerships are being formed. One example of such a partnership is the Skills for Tomorrow Charter School, a vocational/technical school in Minnesota being run with support from the Teamsters Union. Fourth, unique opportunities for teachers have also surfaced. In Minnesota's New Country Charter School, a group of certified teachers have formed a cooperative and are contracting out their teaching services to the school (Bierlein, 1995). Ripple effects across the broader system are becoming visible. Charter schools are intended to not only serve the students within their walls, but to help initiate other changes.

In a review of more than 100 studies and articles, it was concluded that although choice works in education, it has not been used broadly because 1) all but limited-scale adoptions of choice would require structural changes in school organizations, 2) of the deep-seated assumption that there must be a right answer to questions of educational practice, 3) documentation of successful programs of choice is scarce (Raywid, 1989). The two theoretical advantages of choice are the freedom to choose a child’s education and the ability to cause organizational improvement (Jones & Ambrosie, 1995).

Operations of Charter Schools

In most cases, the state is responsible for establishing the results of the charter school, the assessment methods, and for implementing the assessment methods. This is usually outlined in the charter application, but it is not addressed in some states. It is usually the responsibility of the board overseeing the charter school to define and implement the educational program. In some states this is the local school board, in others it is the state board of education, and still in others it is an independent board. In most states supporting charters, parents, teachers, school districts, not-for-profit businesses, for-profit businesses, and institutions of higher learning may apply for a charter. Local school districts, the state, or a combination of both are given the authority to grant
a charter. Most states do provide for an appeal process. Most charters appear to be granted for
three to five years. Funding for most charters is through state and local aid following the student.
Some states provide start-up dollars. Charter schools are not allowed to charge tuition. Most
states do not allow charters to set their own admission standards.

The local school board, an independent board, or the state board of education generally
provides governance and oversight for individual charters. Many charters are exempt from
regulations of discrimination and are free to discriminate. However, some are required to have
comparable racial proportions to the entire home district. Facilities for charters vary from existing
public school buildings, public buildings, private work sites, storefronts, to homes and garages.
The home public school district is generally expected to provide transportation for those students
within the district to the charter.

Teacher licensure is generally required of all teachers teaching within a charter. However,
states vary on whether teacher association contracts are recognized or not (Iowa DE Policy Study
94-1, 1994).

The concept of school choice is one that evolves naturally out of a democratic society. For
citizens to exercise their free will is a democratic expectation. Therefore, it is arguable that
exercising free will through school choice is not something that can be questioned. However, one
must also consider the basic philosophy on which the American public school system has been
founded—a free and equal education for all. "Part of this mission is to build the common ground
for a common discourse and common understandings in a pluralistic democracy. The public
school, in this sense, is obligated to the public good, and therefore must abide by a rounded
perspective on what is appropriate for the education of all United States youth" (Hlebowitsh,
1995, p. 2).
The number of public school districts steadily decreased from a high of roughly 130,000 in 1920 to approximately 85,000 that exist today (Jenkins & Dow, 1996; Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997). With this shift has come parental dissatisfaction with the schools. In 1992, 70 percent of people sampled favored vouchers; 61 percent favored taking some money from public schools and giving it to parents for use at public, private or parochial schools of their choice; and 54 percent indicated that they have sufficient information about community schools to make an informed choice for their children. The total sample was 1,239 (Kealley, 1992).

Problems with Charter Schools

In a study by the Hudson Institute published in 1996, entitled Charter Schools in Action, What Have We Learned?, the authors identify a number of problems. A major start-up problem identified is that kids with problems are the typical clients in a charter school. "More than half the charter schools in our sample encountered unexpectedly difficult challenges from the students who enrolled in them. In almost one-quarter of the schools, these challenges were grave enough to cause significant concern and often some retooling" (Finn, Manno, & Bierlein, 1996, p. 30). A second major problem is that most charter schools receive significantly less funding than their public school counterparts. However, these schools are expected to demonstrate better student results or go out of business, while regular public schools and districts are not held to the same performance standard. "It is, perhaps, not surprising that fiscal issues are often the greatest concerns facing charter schools, especially at the outset" (Finn, Manno, & Bierlein, 1996, p. 33). Fiscal problems frequently include initial funding, capital funding, operating funds, cash flow concerns, and school-funding formulas.

Charter schools in most states also face regulatory and political hurdles and problems (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997; Loveless & Jasin, 1998). "Charter schools in most states
continue to be burdened by myriad rules and procedures. Many of these restrictions are responses to political pressure from partisans of the education status quo, such as state and local school boards, unions, and community groups" (Finn, Manno, & Bierlein, 1996, p. 37).

According to the Hudson Institute study, governance and staffing is another problem area. Three of the thirty-five schools studied had grounds for serious concern in the governance area, and another ten had less pressing concerns. The typical governance problem encountered in the research stemmed from conflict between board and staff; some involved a disagreement of board and teachers against administrators, and in one or two instances the board and administration were aligned against the teachers and parents (Finn, Manno, & Bierlein, 1996).

**Business Criticism of Public Schools**

Lester Thurow, author of *The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe, and America*, writes:

A country that wants to win starts by closely studying the competition. International benchmarking reveals two decades of subpar American productivity growth. Consider the fifteen-thousand-plus independently elected local school boards that run America's schools—the ultimate in Jeffersonian local democracy. If an educational system that allows thousands of independent local school boards to run schools was a good one, one might reasonably expect that at least one of those fifteen thousand school systems could turn out high school graduates whose achievement scores could match those of Europe and Japan. None can. Something is wrong with the system itself. (Thurow, 1992, pp. 261-262)

According to Thurow, the American education system has got to improve. Thurow argues that America is not competitive in turning out skilled workers, in part due to the education system.

America's high school dropout rate is 29 percent compared to Japan's rate of six percent and Germany's nine percent. Thurow believes that the goal of America's high schools should be to make them work for the students so they stay in school. The salaries of teachers would need to
be brought up to a level comparable with school teachers in Germany or Japan. Along with higher salaries, Thurow recommends lengthening the school day, as well as the school year.

"Parents will have to push harder. Communities would agree to quit using schools as a dumping ground where they assign social problems that cannot be solved elsewhere" (Thurow, 1992, pp. 278–279).

"Looking backward, future historians will see the twentieth century as a century of niche competition and the twenty-first century as a century of head-to-head competition. In broad terms there are now three relatively equal contenders—Japan; the European community, centered around its most powerful country, Germany; and the United States" (Thurow, 1992, pp. 28–29).

It is time for the United States to strengthen its power, and it can do that by changing its education system. Perhaps the battle to change public education per se is too distant. Charter schools can be the step in the right direction for educational change.

**Overseas Charter Schools**

America could learn much from other countries where charters exist. "More than one thousand charter schools exist in Great Britain; New Zealand has revised its national school system using a charter model; charter schools will soon open in Canada; and more will emerge in the United States" (Jenkins & Dow, 1996, p. 227).

In contrast to initiatives in the U.S., Britain's charter schools, which are known as grant-maintained schools, already have considerable history, having been authorized by Parliament's Education Reform Act in 1988 (Wohlstetter & Anderson, 1994). Britain has provided financial incentives such as the transitional grant and the special purpose grant. These grants provide seed money for the transition between approval of the charter to inception. There is precedent in the U.S. for such grants (Wohlstetter & Anderson, 1994).
"Another strategy for success adopted by the British government is the provision of specific support from external consultants" (Wohlstetter & Anderson, 1994, p. 488). The British government, to provide information, guidance, and advice, established an organization known as the Grant-Maintained Schools' Center.

At this time, no grant-maintained schools in Britain have been closed. Supporters of education reform believe that true reform is systemic and ongoing. With the charter school plan, the focus is on changing the system. American charter advocates would be well served to study the British model of grant-maintained schools and learn from their mistakes and successes.

Standards for Quality Schools

Donald M. Chalker and Richard M. Haynes, *World Class Schools*, identify nine areas where standards should be defined. Chalker and Haynes's nine world class standards include defining a world class standard for 1) educational expenditure, 2) time on task, 3) class size, 4) teachers, 5) students, 6) curriculum, 7) assessing student achievement, 8) school governance, and 9) parents, home, and community. These nine areas should be the criteria necessary for determining a quality school.

The present investigation intends to determine from a survey designed to address the nine standards and parental and staff satisfaction with charter schools versus public schools. This research will also seek to determine the level of knowledge regarding charter schools and the perceptions toward charter schools of Iowa school superintendents.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the viability of charter schools in the United States in the late 1990s. The study also sought to determine the level of knowledge and openness
towards charter schools of school superintendents in a state which has heretofore not launched charters; Iowa. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What really prompted the charter school movement in the United States?
- How are charter schools formed?
- What is the satisfaction level of parents of students attending a charter school and staff versus their satisfaction level toward public schools?
- To what degree are Iowa school superintendents knowledgeable of and/or open to charter schools?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages and strengths/weaknesses of existing charter schools of which potential patrons should be aware?
- How effectively are charter schools addressing the standards areas as identified in the publication *World Class Schools*?

**Purposes of the Study**

There were a variety of purposes to this study. This study should answer the questions of what prompted the charter school movement in the United States and how charter schools are formed. In addition, the following subpurposes have been determined.

1. The researcher sought to determine the level of satisfaction parents and staff have toward charter schools versus public schools, as well as determine the knowledge level and perceptions of Iowa school superintendents toward the charter school movement.
2. One of the purposes of the study was to inform potential patrons who might choose to enroll their children in a charter school of the advantages/strengths and disadvantages/weaknesses of existing charter schools.
3. Finally, an additional purpose of this study was to identify how effectively charter schools are addressing the standards areas as identified in the publication *World Class Schools*.

**Hypothesis of the Study**

The research hypothesis for the study is indicated by the following:

1. The satisfaction level of parents of students attending a charter school and staff working in a charter school is significantly higher toward charter schools than their satisfaction level toward public schools.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Trace the history of education prompting the charter school movement in the United States.
2. Explain the formation of charter schools.
3. Determine the level of satisfaction of parents of students attending charter schools.
4. Determine the level of satisfaction of staff working in a charter school.
5. Determine Iowa School superintendents' knowledge and perceptions regarding the charter school movement.
6. Determine the advantages and disadvantages of existing charter schools.
7. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing charter schools.
8. Determine how effectively charter schools are addressing nationally identified standards.
Delimitations or Scope of Investigation

The scope of this study was limited to charter schools. No private schools were investigated unless they fell under their state’s charter legislation. In order to get a large enough sample of charter school survey respondents, the study looked at both elementary and secondary level charter schools. Survey respondents included parents of children attending a charter school, teachers working within a charter school, and administrators of charter schools. The study did not include any charter schools outside of the United States. The study centered on schools in the states of Arizona, California, Minnesota, and New Mexico. These states were selected because they are the states with the most and fewest charter schools operating and they are states where the legislation has been in place the longest. Data sources include returned surveys from Arizona, California, Minnesota, and New Mexico.

An additional data source was returned surveys from Iowa school district superintendents. All Iowa school superintendents were queried to determine their knowledge of the charter school movement and their perceptions toward charter schools. Information from Iowa school superintendents was sought as Iowa is a state with no charter school legislation, and thus, no charter schools. Iowa school superintendents may be typical of many superintendents across the Midwest, and, therefore, much can be learned from them regarding their perceptions of charter schools.

Outline of Procedure

The design of the study was to seek to determine the degree of success of charter schools as indicated by parents of students attending a charter school, teachers working in a charter school, and administrators of charter schools. It was also the intention of the researchers to determine knowledge and perceptions of Iowa superintendents toward the charter movement. An extensive
review of the literature was conducted to give the reader a solid background of the history of choice and its impact on the present charter school situation in the United States.

The process for the review of literature began with the researcher conducting searches through SCHOLAR and ERIC databases. Appropriate literature was selected. This was followed by a search of bibliographies to identify factual information regarding school choice and the concept of charter schools. The Iowa Department of Education was contacted for their policy and position statement regarding Iowa schools and charters.

In the late spring of 1997, state departments of education were contacted to identify current legislation regarding charter schools in their states and to identify lists of schools that are charters. Every attempt was made to identify both elementary and secondary schools. The July 1997 Center for Education Reform Directory was ordered as soon as it was available in print.

The Center on Teacher Evaluation at Western Michigan University was contacted to obtain the Joint Commission Standards on program Evaluation. World Class Schools, New Standards for Education, by Donald M. Chalker and Richard M. Haynes will be used to identify standards for a quality school. The National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Study of School Evaluation were contacted for survey instruments. Both organizations’ surveys were carefully studied to determine items that aligned with the nine standards identified by Chalker and Haynes.

In September 1997, a questionnaire was created to be given to parents of students attending a charter school, teachers working in a charter school, and administrators of charter schools. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify their degree of satisfaction with charter schools, the amount of success of charter schools and other relevant information. A second questionnaire was also created in September 1997. The purpose of this questionnaire was to measure the perceptions
of Iowa school superintendents regarding their knowledge and openness toward the charter school movement. Both questionnaires were sent out to potential respondents in October 1997.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is growing dissatisfaction with the public schools in this country (Vanourek, Manno, Finn, Jr., & Bierlein, 1997). Many parents, as well as educators, do not feel that the education institution is effectively meeting the needs of all students. Many educators and politicians, such as Maryland Governor William Donald Schaefer, believe that it is time to see how public schools will perform against private schools and parochial schools (Ellis & Fouts, 1994). "The charter school movement is a bridge, or a transition, to a total system change that started sometime after the country settled down from World War II and the Korean War" (Lieber, 1997, p. 14). Much of the literature indicates that many writers, due to their political beliefs and ties, take a strong stance for charter schools.

The Need for Charter Schools

Much charter school legislation has developed as a compromise between those who want a voucher system and those who want no change. An example of the compromise might be legislation in the state of Arizona. Arizona charter school laws were "patterned after similar legislation in other states, the law created charter schools—public schools that are privately operated with the aid of state funds and with the requirement that they accept all students" (Fischer, 1997, p. 10).

Educational choice is the most challenging of all current restructuring efforts. It challenges the American public school institution and its bureaucracy. American dissatisfaction with public schools is no secret. "The 21st annual Gallup Poll released by Phi Delta Kappa International in August 1989 indicated that Americans wanted ‘tradition-shattering changes’ in schools" (Fiske, 1989, p. 27). A more recent poll taken in 1995 resulted in 70 percent of Americans polled
favoring the government allotting a certain amount of money to American parents to send their children to the public, private or parochial school of their choice. Sixty percent of those polled favored the government providing funds to all families for the education of their children at the schools of their choice, regardless of the family income. Fifty-four percent of those polled indicated that they believe they have sufficient information about the schools available to them to make the best choice for their children. Eighty-four percent of the respondents indicated that the public schools did not have high enough standards for educating their children (NASSP Breaking Ranks, 1996).

However, in a 1996 poll released by the Phi Delta Kappa educational society, about 60 percent of those polled did not feel that students should be able to attend a private school at public expense (The Arizona Republic, 1996). The June 1993 issue of Phi Delta Kappan in an article by Lamar Alexander states, "Last year, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching reported that 28 percent of the parents surveyed responded positively when they were asked if they would like to send their child to some other school... public or private, inside or outside of your district" (Alexander, 1993, p. 765).

With the traditional public education arrangement, parents and students must learn how to "fit in" to the school's philosophy. With the option of choice, the schools must now learn to meet the individual needs of students and parents. The role of the educators must be to meet the needs of the clients they serve—the students. Many charter schools have been formed to advance an educational vision for student success that the charter school's founder had (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997).

The newly created charter schools tend to be the smallest. Sixty percent of all charter schools have fewer than 200 students (Schneider, 1997). The students, teachers, and principals are there because they want to be. Some people believe that if we give any regular public school
these same conditions, then we have laid the foundation for major gains in student achievement, lower dropout rates, and higher parental satisfaction.

As Paul T. Hill says in "Reinventing Urban Public Education," "Tragically, 'the enemy is us.' If we want public schools to respect the rights and values of a diverse population but also want to make the most of individual students' and teachers' talents and initiative, we must find new ways to govern schools" (Hill, 1994, pp. 396–397).

A major obstacle to student achievement is the bureaucratic nature of school systems. Some educators maintain that such bureaucracies inhibit the professional expertise and judgment of principals and teachers, denying them the flexibility they need to get the job done in the classrooms. The larger the system, the more intricate and frustrating is the bureaucratic structure. Educators in charter schools want more autonomy over organizational, personnel, and governance issues and decisions (Ellis & Fouts, 1994; Berman, Nelson & Seppanen, 1997).

Many Americans believe that the time has come for education to change, even to "end the near monopoly that is American K–12 public education." The choice movement is an attempt to do just that. "Education is the only place in American life where there is no choice," argues Chester Finn, who served as Assistant Secretary of Education under President Reagan and is a founding partner of the Edison Project, a for-profit education company that contracted to open three Massachusetts charter schools (Wallis, 1994, pp. 56–57).

When the charter school bill was being debated in the Minnesota legislature, proponents gave four reasons to support it:

1. Charter schools fit with the current thinking regarding outcome-based education and parent choice. Because children have different needs and aspirations, they need different education settings.
2. Charter schools contribute to teacher empowerment.
3. Charter schools have student learning at heart.
4. Regular schools face restrictions that charter schools don't. (Randall, 1992, p. 37)
Each charter school is, in effect, in charge of its own destiny. What they all have in common, though, is that students, parents, teachers, and the community feel they are better served by having these options available (Smith, 1992). Charter school founders cite a need to gain parental involvement and attract students whose needs are not being met in the public schools as reasons they pursued opening a charter school (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997).

Karl Borden and Edward A. Rauchut do not agree that public education is abysmal. Borden and Rauchut claim that "the reason to privatize is that, no matter how good a government system is, everything we know about how organizations work in a free market economy tells us that a competitive, private system would work better" (Borden & Rauchut, 1996, p. 20). In a New York Times column in January 1989, Edward B. Fiske wrote, "Americans admire competition in most areas of normal life. Why not build it into public education?" (Fiske, 1989, p. 10).

Borden and Rauchut believe in the free market system because it is in harmony with basic economic laws regulating human behavior. One fundamental economic concept that serves as a conceptual foundation supporting educational privatization is the 'diffusion of knowledge' (Borden & Rauchut, 1996). The authors state that the essential characteristic to diffusion of knowledge is the transmission of knowledge throughout the globe. "Centralized bureaucracies, relying on one-size-fits-all approaches to decisionmaking, are inherently incapable of amassing, processing, and deriving decisions from the sea of data that surrounds us. And contrary to the bureaucrat's belief, there is no one, right way to construct a school curriculum" (Borden & Rauchut, 1996, p. 20).

Private markets are open to change, innovation, redesign, imagination and experimentation. "Competition takes us into the future with a myriad of alternative answers to questions we haven't even asked yet, while central planning designs solutions to yesterday's problems" (Borden & Rauchut, 1996, p. 20).
"Offering parents the choice of private or government schools, and empowering that choice with a voucher, is not the jump into the void that choice opponents characterize. Nothing could be further from the truth. A privatized system of universal education, based on the fundamental laws and principles of free market economics, will outperform our current socialized, centrally planned educational system" (Borden & Rauchut, 1996, p. 23).

**Key reasons charter school are formed**

Many citizens have been asking a long time for schools to change, for schools to be more client-centered (Loveless & Jasin, 1998). "The charter school movement is linked to the impetus to change the managerial system of schooling" (Smith, 1997, p. 19). Two of the main reasons identified for the establishment of charter schools are to enable those people who are dissatisfied with our present educational institution a route to pursue an educational vision and to gain autonomy (King, 1998). Additional reasons include a desire to serve a special student population, for financial reasons, and to gain parent involvement and ownership (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997).

Americans may gradually be warming to the idea of public funding for private schools. "In 1993, 74 percent of Americans opposed the private school choice concept. By last year, opposition had fallen to 65 percent" (Education USA, September 1996, p. 7). By the end of August, 1997, there were 241 charter schools in existence in Arizona serving approximately 30,000 students. That growth is up from 46 charter schools in the state two years ago with 8,000 students (Van Der Werf, 1997).
Charter Schools Defined

School choice has become a major topic creating both excitement and concern as the American public school system seeks to restructure and better face the needs of their clients in the 1990s. School choice has emerged as one of the major educational reform issues of the Nineties (Ellis & Fouts, 1994). Charter school founders identify better teaching and learning for all kids, running a school according to a vision or certain principles and/or philosophy, and innovation as the top three reasons for starting a charter school (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997). Charter schools have autonomy from state and district regulations and requirements. Charter schools are governed by the charter that is written specifically for the school detailing its structure and programs. The charter concept is simple: Provide school choice to families without government micromanagement and bureaucracies under the umbrella of public education (Manno, Finn Jr., Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997).

Many advocates for charter schools believe that the movement may grow strong enough to drastically change the way public education and school districts operate (Millot, Hill & Lake, 1996). As of November, 1996, there were 480 charter schools open in sixteen states and the District of Columbia. Add to that number another twenty-nine district-sponsored schools in the state of Arizona. A total of 105,127 students in this country were educated in a charter school as of November 1, 1996 (The Center for Education Reform Charter School Statistics, 1996).

There are three basic forms of choice. With the simplest form, parents exercise their rights by choosing any school within an individual district. Another form of parental choice increases the options to include all school districts within an entire state. In its most radical form, commonly known as expanded choice, parents receive vouchers representing a fixed amount of state and federal money to purchase a year of education for their children in any school—public or private (Frick, 1994; Ellis & Fouts, 1994).
Minnesota offers the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, High School Graduation Incentives, and Open Enrollments in their state plan (Fiske, 1989). At the present time in Iowa, only two types of school choice are available, the postsecondary enrollment options act and open enrollment.

Different kinds of charters do exist. The U.S. Department of Education identifies them as pre-existing public, pre-existing private, and newly created. "Pre-existing publics generally enjoy a good working relationship with the sponsoring school board and superintendent. The second group consists of private schools that wanted to attract tuition-paying students and found the charter movement to be a minor bonanza. The third group, the one hyped by the advocates, consists of newly created schools" (Schneider, 1997, p. 44).

Charters are written agreements between the school and the authority granting the charter permission, with goals, objectives, accountability and responsibilities of all parties clearly outlined. A charter's governing body is usually composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and other representatives from the community. Most charters are tuition free with funding from public sources. Charters are structured so that all funds flow directly from the granting authority to the charter school and the school is allowed to determine how to spend the funds without intervention from the granting authority (Wohlstetter & Anderson, 1994).

**Common characteristics of charter schools**

The following key findings have been determined about charter schools:

- Most charter schools are small: the average size is approximately 200 students.
- Approximately two-thirds of the schools are designed to serve a cross-section of students.
- About one-half are designed to serve "at-risk" students’ curriculum.
• The most frequently cited reasons for chartering a school were "better teaching and learning for kids."
• "Leased commercial space" is the most frequent description used to describe the charter schools' location.
• Charter schools use a variety of ways to report student progress. The most common are standardized tests and student portfolios.
• The biggest barriers in starting a charter school are lack of start-up funds, finances, and problems with facilities.
• In advising others who may consider operation of a charter school, respondents recommended: "Establish a clear vision and mission," "give plenty of time to planning" and "be prepared to work hard."
• In advising legislators, charter school operators urged them to provide significant autonomy for the schools via contract with groups other than the local districts, direct funding from the state and freedom from local labor-management agreements.

Common characteristics of charter schools include low student-to-staff ratios and small class sizes; personalized learning, including individualized learning plans for students; interdisciplinary approaches using real-world projects and lessons; parent involvement and a focus on integrating the school with the community; nontraditional schedules, and creative financing (ASBA Journal, 1997; Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997; Manno, Finn Jr., Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997).

There are several common characteristics of most charter schools. Most charter schools are small and most charter schools are newly-created. Over one-half of the charter schools are in existence due to the charter opportunity. Charter schools have a racial composition that is similar to statewide averages or have a higher proportion of students of color. Most charter schools have a smaller proportion of students with special needs. However, Minnesota and Wisconsin have
charter schools specifically designed to serve disabled students. Charter schools usually have a lower proportion of limited-English-proficient students. Again, Minnesota and Wisconsin are the exceptions with charter schools enrolling a large number of limited-English-proficient students. Lastly, charter schools do enroll approximately the same proportion of low-income students as their counter public schools (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997).

Charter schools are grounded in a philosophy of the education marketplace. Accountability rests in the fact that a charter must compete for students; therefore, it must have a program of such quality as to attract a sufficient number of students to maintain necessary funding. A second type of accountability rests with the charter meeting its educational outcomes. "Charter school legislation in the U.S. ties accountability to pupil performance, specifying that the contract may not be renewed if a school fails to meet the specified requirements for pupil performance" (Wohlstetter & Anderson, 1994). Charter school advocates believe that the educator-client relationship can be pivotal in causing schools to focus on student outcomes (Loveless & Jasen, 1998).

A major problem facing organizers of charter schools is locating start-up funds for renting adequate facilities, instructional materials and equipment, insurance, and other needs the school will have. Other start-up problems include political opposition to the school and management challenges, lack of true autonomy in key areas, and cash flow problems. The potential of failure continues to be a recurring theme among charter zealots. Despite the advantages of smaller school and class size and students and staff who are there because they choose to be there, newly created charter schools often cater to those students who failed in regular public schools (Schnieder, 1997; Finn Jr., Manno, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997; Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997). Given this student population, zealots are soft peddling the notion that all charter schools will raise student achievement. In fact, they say, some will fail. And that's okay (Schneider, 1997).
Start-up resources have been a drawback to the growth of charter schools in the United States. A few states "prime the pump." For example, New Mexico offers planning grants of $5,000 for up to ten schools interested in developing charters and in the 1960s, California offered one-year planning grants of $30 per student (Wohlstetter & Anderson, 1994). Massachusetts provides $10,000 of start-up funds (Loveless & Jasen, 1998).

The question is not one of whether we need to reform and restructure public education. That is a given, and choice can drive change in education. When an entire system changes, roles, relationships and responsibilities are forced to change. Choice gives power to parents and students in communities and removes it from a district's board of education and superintendent. With the concept of choice, boards of education, superintendents, administrators, and teachers are all forced to look at systemic change if they are to keep the students in their local district (Fiske, 1989).

"'The strongest argument that voucher proponents have is equity,' says Abigail Thumstrom of the Pioneer Institute, a Boston-based think tank. 'We have to keep asking ourselves: Why is choice a middleclass entitlement?"' (Harrington-Lueker, 1993, p. 21).

Michael Kirst, a public policy specialist at Stanford, believes that regulation of vouchers would increase public support. Kirst says, "If voucher proponents move toward regulation, they risk losing their base (particularly among conservative Christian and other private schools), but if they deregulate, they lose public support" (Harrington-Lueker, 1993, p. 21).

Two possible approaches to coping with potential problems are legislation and controlled choice. The first approach would be to lobby for legislation to govern any school that redeems vouchers paid for by public money. This would mean establishing rules governing admissions practices, promotions, discipline policies, and curriculum tracking (Goldberg & Lynch, 1995). Politically, charter legislation has effectively stalled voucher proposals in several states. Charter
schools are a compromise between defenders of public schools and advocates of educational choice (Loveless & Jasin, 1998).

Controlled choice would be another tack related to the legislative approach. Controlled choice is a modified choice strategy under which parents may apply to more than one school, acceptance being subject to controls for racial/ethnic composition and openings.

Another approach is to deal with the problem that is the underlying issue regarding society’s desire for educational choice. One of the central problems with educational choice is the lack of planned alternatives in public education from which parents may choose. "The remedy we propose is a comprehensive system of specialized schools designed to provide comprehensive services to meet the needs of most students while simultaneously fostering desegregation goals" (Goldberg & Lynch, 1995).

Parents want success for their children. Choice may offer options where some students may be more successful than in a traditional public school. A public school administrator was quoted in the Casper Star-Tribune, "School Seeking Profit in Kansas Guarantees Students’ Success," by Anne Lamoy, August 15, 1996, as saying, "They promised they’d have customer satisfaction. I can’t promise that to the patrons of the Wichita Public School District. We’re not set up like that" (p. C3).

**History of Education in the United States**

Central to understanding and mentally dealing with the concept of choice is the need to have an understanding of the history of the American public school institution. "An important cultural value of American life is the freedom to make choices about the important elements of our lives" (Ellis & Fouts, 1994, p. 132). The American public school system has had a monopoly on the
education market of our children. Nowhere else in American society do we see such a monopoly and lack of choice existing.

Since the eighteenth century, philosophers such as Adam Smith, Thomas Paine, and John Stuart Mill have argued that the fairest, most efficient method of funding education is for the government to give parents tuition money and let them spend it at whatever schools they choose. In the late 1950s, economist Milton Friedman promoted the idea of tuition vouchers based on libertarian principles (Wells & Biegel, 1993). In the late 1960s, Christopher Jencks in the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity developed a detailed federally funded voucher program.

Education in this country began with the Puritans of New England. Their political ideas and their form of church governance made it important for them to have a trained, educated leadership and a literate group of followers. Legislation of the Massachusetts General Court in 1642 required parents and guardians of children to ensure that their charges could read and understand the principles of their religion and the laws of the commonwealth.

In 1647, the General Court enacted the "Old Deluder Satan Act," which required all towns of fifty or more families to appoint a reading and writing teacher for the children. Towns of one hundred or more families were required to employ a Latin teacher so that students would be prepared to enter Harvard College. The purpose of the Act of 1647 was to outwit Satan. The Puritans believed that Satan led people into lives of sin because of their ignorance. Therefore, educated people, who were literate and who read the Bible, would be able to use their knowledge to resist Satan and his temptations. The Puritans also believed that the ability to search the Scripture in English would also hinder missionaries of the Anglican or Catholic Churches, who would "delude" the unlearned with their frequent use of Latin (Ornstein & Levine, 1989; Travers & Rebore, 1990).
In the mid-nineteenth century, the system of free public education for all and state compulsory attendance came into existence. By the beginning of the 1900s, more than 90 percent of the nation's elementary and secondary schools were public. "In 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant argued that "every child in the land may get a common school education unmixed with atheistic, pagan, or sectarian teaching'" (Wells & Biegel, 1993, p. 211).

"The widening distinction between public and sectarian education reflected the Protestant-versus-Catholic disputes over what was to be taught in publicly funded schools. Because the early common schools were, in most cases, founded and controlled by Protestants, their curriculum was far from secular and included the King James Bible and the textbooks containing anti-Catholic statements" (Wells & Biegel, 1993, p. 212).

The establishment of Catholic schools in all parishes came about in 1884 as a result of the Third Plenary Council of Catholic archbishops. These efforts were not without a fight from the majority Protestants. In the 1920s in Oregon, voters passed an initiative that equated compulsory school attendance with compulsory public school attendance. The initiative was launched and supported by Protestant right-wing extremists, including the Ku Klux Klan, in an attempt to thwart the efforts by Catholics and other religious groups to establish private schools. The Oregon law was challenged, and in 1925 the Supreme Court ruled in the case of Pierce v. The Society of Sisters that parents had the right to send their children to private—religious or secular—schools (Wells & Biegel, 1993).

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the G.I. Bill of Rights, provided $14.5 billion in federal aid to veterans who used the money to attend universities, colleges, high schools, trade schools, and training programs. The bill paid for tuition, fees, books, and living expenses and could be spent at public or private, including religious institutions. The politically popular G.I. Bill most closely resembled a federal tuition voucher or scholarship
program for parents with children in private elementary and secondary schools, which explains why present-day voucher advocates are quick to compare their proposals with this bill and why President Bush chose to call his 1992 voucher proposal the G.I. Bill for Children (Wells & Biegel, 1993).

"The National Defense Education Act of 1958, passed at the height of the Cold War and in the shadow of the Soviet satellite, Sputnik, provided substantial federal support to secondary schools and higher education to increase and upgrade defense-related course offerings, including science, math, engineering, and foreign languages" (Wells & Biegel, 1993, pp. 214–215). Many programs funded by this act were available to private and/or religious-affiliated schools, as well as public education institutions.

In the 1960s, the situation came to a head with the Kennedy Education Bill. In 1961, the president asked for $2.3 billion to be used for construction of public school classrooms and increasing public school teachers' salaries as well as construction loans and student scholarships for public and private colleges. The bill was defeated. In 1963, President Kennedy proposed another similar bill, excluding dollars for parochial schools, which was also defeated by Congress (Wells & Biegel, 1993).

The key breakthrough came in 1965, when the Eighty-ninth Congress and President Johnson signed Public Law 89-10, also known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This legislation doubled the federal government's expenditures on education in such a way that it allowed a compromise on public aid to parochial schools. The compromise centered around what later came to be known as the "child-benefit theory," a policy argument that attempted to sidestep the church-state issue by targeting funds directly to needy children rather than directly to religious schools (Wells & Biegel, 1993).
The argument involving the use of federal funds for private, nonsectarian schools has continued. With the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, it has only resurfaced periodically with issues such as private school choice (Wells & Biegel, 1993). Paul D. Houston, in "School Vouchers: The Latest California Joke," says, "The notion of choice in schools creates a tension between two democratic beliefs that have historically coexisted."

...the most recent models of choice have moved in a very different and more ominous direction. These models, most commonly called "voucher systems," call for public money to be made available to parents to use in any educational setting, public or private. Even if we disregard for the moment the problems this scheme would cause the already-underfunded public systems as resources are drained to support private schools, it is clear that such a proposal raises serious constitutional questions about separation of church and state and about issues of discrimination. (p. 63)

Houston insists that the support for private-school vouchers disregards the value of the church-state separation. Tax dollars would be used for religious education (Houston, 1993; The Des Moines Register, 1997).

There are two basic principles that courts usually rely on when making decisions concerning public aid and private schools. First, the courts are more likely to find such aid constitutional if the greater number of people benefit from the statute. Second, the courts look at who the initial recipient of the aid will be.

In 1971, Lemon v. Kurtzman, the Supreme Court determined basic guidelines from previous rulings in a three-part test. "A statute or policy violates the establishment clause if any one of the following can be proved: 1) its purpose is not secular; 2) its principal/primary effect either advances or inhibits relations; 3) it fosters an excessive entanglement with religion" (Wells & Beigel, 1993, p. 216).

The 1973 case Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty v. Nyquist provided the Supreme Court with its first opportunity to consider whether public money could be used to subsidize parents' costs of private religious education. The Elementary and Secondary
Opportunity Program reimbursed parents with an annual taxable income of less than $5,000 at $50 per elementary student and $100 per high school student. Parents with incomes greater than $5,000 but less than $25,000 could subtract a designated amount from their adjusted gross income on their state income taxes. Up to $1,000 could be deducted for each of as many as three dependents (Wells & Biegel, 1993). The Court found this New York program to be a violation of the establishment clause. "Writing for the majority, Justice Powell explained that both the tuition reimbursement and the tax credits failed the second prong of the Lemon test, since the assistance would have a 'primary effect' that advanced religion" (Wells & Biegel, 1993, p. 220). In 1982, 1983, and 1984, the Reagan administration tried to push a federal tax credit for private school parents through Congress. It failed.

Ten years later, the Supreme Court heard Mueller v. Allen, which challenged Minnesota legislation allowing parents to deduct such expenses as tuition, textbooks, and transportation from their state income tax. This statute was not limited to private school students but provided a tax deduction for all parents. A cap of $500 per elementary age child and $700 per secondary age child was also placed on the amount parents could deduct. "The Court held that 'Establishment Clause objections to the Minnesota law were invalid because the law channeled the assistance through the individual parents and not directly to the schools'" (Wells & Biegel, 1993, p. 221).

In 1985, the Supreme Court employed the entanglement analysis in Aguilar v. Felton and struck down the use of federal funds in the New York City Public Schools to pay public school teachers to provide Chapter I services in private schools. The Court determined that the required monitoring of parochial schools in which public school teachers were providing Chapter I services violated the excessive-entanglement test (Wells & Biegel, 1993).

The federal child care legislation of 1990 gave this growing coalition of private school choice supporters a major boost. This legislation provided grants to states to expand the existing
tax credit for families that pay child care and provided cash or vouchers for child care to low-income parents. Because nearly one-third of all child care is provided by religious organizations, Congress could not exclude sectarian centers from the aid package (Wells & Biegel, 1993).

In the last ten years the Supreme Court has become more lenient on the church-state issue of public aid to parochial school children's parents as long as the funding does not go directly to the private or parochial school and as long as students attending nonsectarian schools also benefit from the program. Additional guidance may be provided by such cases as Zobrest v. Catalina Foothills School District. "The Zobrest case focuses on whether state funds can be used to provide a sign language interpreter to a deaf student while he attends a private religious high school. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals heard the dispute and determined that the state-paid interpreter violated the effects prong of Lemon" (Wells & Biegel, 1993, p. 224).

Catholic schools account for approximately one-third of all private schools, but enroll over 50 percent of all students attending private schools. The Catholic Conference and the National Catholic Education Association staunchly advocate for private school choice programs. Many fundamentalist Christian educators are joining them as fundamentalist private schools continue to grow. This includes the National Education Association, the National Council of Churches, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Jewish Congress and others (Wells & Biegel, 1993).

Policymakers' rejection of such proposals is, to a great extent, fostered by a long-held American belief in the separation of church and state (Wells & Biegel, 1993). Those who are opposed to charters and especially vouchers claim it is a clear violation of church and state. Supporters of charters and vouchers say that it is not a violation of church and state because the money is not given to the schools, but is given to the parents of children to use as they determine is best for their children. Advocates of charters and vouchers cite similar federal programs,
including the G.I. Bill and the federal child care legislation passed in 1990, which provides tax
credits and vouchers to parents who use church-run day-care centers, as evidence that private
school choice plans are constitutional (Wells & Biegel, 1993). In 1992, the Bush administration
developed the G.I. Bill for Children, a program to give low-income parents $1,000 in federal
funds to spend at the public or private schools of their choice (Wells & Biegel, 1993).

City Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota, opened in 1992. Thirty-five schools opened a year
later in 1993 in the states of California, Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.
Minnesota led the way in establishing charter legislation in 1991. California followed with its
legislation in 1992 and Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, and
Wisconsin followed in 1993. At the present time, the state of Arizona leads in the number of
charter schools. Arizona adopted charter legislation in 1994 leading the way with the most lenient
laws.

Two years ago, a charter school bill was introduced in Iowa. Teacher unions and the State
Board of Education voiced opposition to it. Michael Connolly, the Dubuque, Iowa, Democrat
who sponsored the legislation, said in an article in the June 9, 1996, issue of The Des Moines
Register, that he believes some people see charter schools as the demise of public education.
Connolly says that it was not his intention in sponsoring the legislation to do away with public
schools. He wanted to "stir the pot a little." The state of Iowa's Board of Education position
statement says, "At this point, however, it is neither appropriate nor responsible for the State
Board to advocate for the introduction of Charter Schools in Iowa" (Position Statement, 1994,
p. 1). The State Board of Education of Iowa believes that based on the Code of Iowa,
256.11(8)(1993), schools may apply for exemptions from one or more of the requirements, thus
eliminating one of the needs for charter legislation.
According to Lamar Alexander in a 1993 article in *Phi Delta Kappan*, "School choice will not be an issue in the year 2000 because it will then be commonplace" (p. 762). Charter schools and related legislation have grown dramatically since 1991 when the state of Minnesota passed the first law.

**Charter School Legislation**

Minnesota was the first state to pass charter legislation in 1991 with the first charter school opening in 1992. California followed with charter legislation in 1992. Five more states followed with charter legislation in 1993; three states passed legislation in 1994; seven in 1995; and seven in 1996. Of the sixteen states plus the District of Columbia with legislation as of November 1996, all except nine state have charter schools in operation.

**Federal charter school legislation guidelines**

Federal charter legislation in Public Law 103-382 identifies eleven features that states should follow when determining their state’s charter school laws. The intent of this part of Public Law 103-382 was to establish guidelines that states could follow in passing their own charter legislation (Public Law 103-382, *Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994*, 1998; Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997). Charter school laws vary from state to state indicating that the extent to which the federal guidelines are followed is not consistent. The federal statute identifies the following principles:

1. Charter schools are public schools that are exempted from significant state or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

2. Charter schools are created by developers as public schools or adapted from existing public schools, and are operated under public supervision and direction.
3. Charter schools operate in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives determined by the schools' developers and agreed to by the authorized public chartering agency.

4. Charter schools provide a program of elementary or secondary education or both.

5. Charter schools are nonsectarian in their programs, admissions policy, employment practices, and all other operations and are not affiliated with a sectarian school or a religious institution.

6. Charter schools do not charge tuition.

7. Charter schools comply with federal civil rights legislation.

8. Charter schools admit students based on a lottery if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated.

9. Charter schools agree to comply with the same federal and state audit requirements as do other elementary and secondary schools in the state unless the requirements are specifically waived.

10. Charter schools meet all applicable federal, state, and local health and safety requirement.

11. Charter schools operate in accordance with state law.

The American Federation of Teachers established their own guidelines in 1996 for charter school legislation. The AFT proposal contains the following features: 1) Charter schools must be based on high academic standards; students from charter schools must be held to the same standards as students from public schools. 2) Charter schools students must take the same tests as public students in their state or districts. 3) Charter school staff should be covered by the collective bargaining agreement. 4) Only certified teachers should be hired by charter schools. 5) Charter schools should not be allowed unless there is approval from the local school
district. 6) Information about the charter schools should be required to be available to the public (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997).

There are similarities and differences in the two sets of guidelines. Some state laws are more like one set of principles than the others. "Each state's charter law has grown out of its individual state context, regulatory environment, balance of political forces, and perspectives on how charter schools might be implemented" (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997, p. 5).

In 1992, the Bush Administration proposed scholarships of $1,000 in new federal dollars for each child of a middle- or low-income family in a participating state or locality. "Families could spend the scholarships at any lawfully operated school—public, private, or religious" (Alexander, 1993, p. 765). This was also known as the "G.I. Bill for Children." The President's program was proposed as a demonstration program in 1993 and would have been the largest new program in the federal budget for the fiscal year 1993.

**Voucher proposals**

Christine Todd Whitman, governor of New Jersey in 1993, is in support of pilot programs instituting vouchers. The Illinois Legislature, also in 1993, considered a pilot voucher program for the Chicago Public Schools.

Senate President James Philip proposed giving vouchers of up to $2,000 to 2,000 of the city’s low-income public school students. The vouchers, which could be used to pay tuition at private schools, would be paid out of the state aid Chicago currently receives. A similar plan—which would have provided 200 Baltimore school children with tuition vouchers of $2,900 each—was defeated in the Maryland Legislature last year (1992). (Harrington-Lueker, 1993, p. 21)

In November of 1993, Americans for School Choice had begun a push in Michigan. Then Governor John Engler, who serves on the board of directors for Americans for School Choice, had advocated a move to charter schools. In Georgia, a group of minority parents were
instrumental in hoping to resurrect a 1961 statute that would permit use of private funds for public schools. In 1993, Florida, Oregon, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Arkansas were also sites pushing for vouchers (Harrington-Lueker, 1993).

Connie Koprowicz of the National Conference of State Legislatures believes that regulations aren’t what the voucher movement is about. "Says Koprowicz: ‘One of the basic arguments in favor of vouchers is that they’ll allow competition and innovation. If you start putting regulations on new schools, you’ll face the argument that you’re just adding to the status quo.’" "Adds Koprowicz: ‘Deregulation is the point of the movement. Take that away, and you might as well stay with what you’ve got’" (Harrington-Lueker, 1993, p. 21).

Last year, state lawmakers approved legislation allowing vouchers of up to $2,250 for 1,500 low-income Cleveland students to attend kindergarten through grade three in private and religious schools in Cleveland or public schools outside the city’s school district. Religious schools make up the bulk of Cleveland’s eligible private schools. At least 6,812 families had applied for the vouchers, according to Ohio Governor George Voinovich. Cleveland was a natural voucher pilot site because state officials wanted to test the effort in a large urban area, said Tom Needles, Voinovich’s executive assistant. "We don’t provide money to the school," he said. "We provide money to the parent." (Education USA, Jan. 1996, p. 9)

The question of whether or not to allow vouchers becomes more of a problem when discussing the pros and cons of charter schools. The January 29, 1996, issue of Education USA reports that the Ohio Federation of Teachers asked a state court to halt the voucher program for low-income Cleveland school children scheduled to start the 1996-97 school year. The OFT claims that the voucher initiative violates constitutional church-state separation mandates in Gatton v. Goff. The American Civil Liberties Union has raised the same complaint about a Milwaukee voucher program.

During June 1996, American Association of School Administrators Executive Director Paul Houston testified in congress against a voucher proposal called the Low Income School Choice Act. "There are admirable and desirable qualities" in both private and public schools, Houston
continued. "To tamper with a co-existing system and risk destruction of one or the other would be a huge mistake" *(Leadership News, July 1995, p. 1)*. Representative David Weldon, a Republican from Florida and a cosponsor on the legislation, "called Houston’s testimony ‘shrill’ and offensive" *(Leadership News, July 1995, p. 1)*. "The real reason voucher initiatives failed was because of the intense lobbying by the teacher’s unions and the educational establishment," according to Frank Riggs, a Republican from California and also a cosponsor of the legislation *(Leadership News, July 1995, p. 1)*.

In early October, Americans for School Choice, a national organization formed to spearhead the drive to provide public money for private schooling, announced plans to launch voucher proposals in 25 states by 1996 *(Harrington-Lueker, 1993)*. "Charter schools can be the doorway to institutional change if we encourage them and test them as a legitimate offshoot of the public schools by incorporating the concepts of parent choice, participation, shared decision-making, and realms of accountability" *(Lieber, 1997, p. 15)*.

**Charter bills proposed**

In the 1994 Arizona legislative session, two versions of a charter bill were offered. Proponents argued that choice would produce competition for the public schools which in turn would drive the public school to make needed improvements in quality and efficiency *(Garn & Stout, 1997)*. Proponents also argued that choice would allow parents to make a decision about where to school their child that is in the best interest of the child. Opponents, at the same time, argued that choice would be inequitable, increasing segregation and threatening Arizona’s democracy.

In most states with charter legislation, one can get a charter by applying through the state Board of Education, through a separate state Board of Charter Schools, or through an existing
public school board and the district's board of directors. The state of Arizona had 114 charters issued with the beginning of their 1996 legislation session. Forty-four were issued by the regular state board, the charter school board issued 45, and the remainder were issued by local districts. Originally in Arizona, districts could charge up to $175,000 for a charter. "Rep. Sue Lynch and Rep. Mike Gardner have introduced bills that would preclude districts from chartering school outside their boundaries" (Fischer, 1997, p. 10). This would hopefully close that loophole.

**Proposed changes in current laws**

The state of Arizona has noted some problems in its legislation that need to be addressed. Associate Superintendent Jamie Molera points particularly to one outgrowth of the for-profit system—the ability of the owners of failed schools to keep the equipment they bought with state funds. Senator Mary Hartley will be advocating a change in that law. At the present time, the school gets the money up front and the amount is determined by the number of students enrolled. The school then is to use the money to purchase instructional equipment and materials which belong to the school. "One possibility would be for the state to have a lien on any equipment purchased" (Fischer, 1997, p. 11).

Another problem that needs to be addressed in Arizona is the provision allowing school districts to issue their own charters. Several districts have taken advantage of the provision, chartering schools hundreds of miles outside their boundaries. This leads to the question of whether or not the boards are simply selling charters (Fischer, 1997).

Others in Arizona, such as Armando Ruiz, a former legislator and one of the first people to open a charter school, still contend that the laws need to be more liberal, especially with transportation dollars, if they intend to really make charter schools an alternative for all families. "John Kakritz, chief executive officer of the Arizona Charter Schools Association, wants more
state funds overall, saying charter schools are working at a financial disadvantage to their public counterparts" (Fischer, 1997, p. 11).

At least two other areas may involve legislative battles in Arizona. Originally, the state provided the same $1.95 a mile per student for transportation that it does for regular schools. What happened, though, was that some charter schools were paying parents who were doing their own driving a lesser fee and pocketing the balance. Now, the state provides $174 annually per student (Fischer, 1997). One charter school sponsor said that his school was cut from $100,000 in transportation funds to $70,000. "Some of the students who were involved in our school wanted to come to our school but couldn’t afford it anymore when the transportation dollars weren’t there. He suggests giving charter schools the same transportation aid that is available for small school districts. That, he says, would be about $600 per year per student" (Fischer, 1997, p. 12). Opponents argue that the state is spending more to help a youngster go to a charter school than to a public school. A student wishing to go to another public school in or out of the district in which he lives does not have access to those dollars.

Senator Tom Patterson (Arizona) has introduced a bill that would allow schools to limit the admission to their charter school. Senator Mary Hartley of Phoenix wants stiffer laws to ensure there is no favoritism with admissions.

Arizona is presently looking at a state-wide system of offering parents public money to pay tuition. Both Milwaukee and Cleveland have voucher plans allowing parents to use public money for tuition in private and parochial schools. Cleveland, Ohio’s plan has been challenged in court at the state level. The court ruled that vouchers could be used to pay tuition in a religious school. In Milwaukee—the first city in the nation to provide private school vouchers to its students—a group of parents has brought suit to expand the program. Arizona is considering a voucher plan that would initially apply only to low-income families enrolled in public schools. Discussion has
also taken place regarding a tax credit for parents paying private school tuition and of a state-wide voucher program applied to all Arizona students equally. The key is to focus on what works best in educating kids, according to at least one Arizona senator, Brenda Burns (Mattern, 1997).

**Most supportive legislation**

"Scholars and those who follow education policy are in general agreement that Arizona's legislation is the most supportive of charter schools of any of the states" (Garn & Stout, 1997, p. 14). Finn and others have asserted that states which wish to foster a strong environment for the growth of charter should adopt eight policies. They are:

1. Charters should be given directly by the State, free of any review or authorization from local school districts. Arizona charters can be granted by two State agencies or any local school district. They are totally self-governing.

2. Charters should be available to virtually any person, group, or agency that submits an acceptable application. Arizona charters have been granted to individuals, government agencies, community-based organizations, former independent schools, and to for-profit corporations.

3. Charter schools should be given a great deal of legal and fiscal autonomy. Without arguing the case in detail, we assert that Arizona charter schools have a great deal of autonomy in most important matters. They are waived from numerous laws, regulations, and contractual provisions.

4. Few, if any, limits should be placed on the numbers of charters that can be granted. That this provision prevails is evident in the fact that Arizona has more charter schools than any other state in the United States. A critical mass of charter schools is allowed to exist.
5. Employment in charter schools should not be restricted to persons holding teaching certificates. Arizona law expressly allows employment of persons without teaching certificates.

6. The State should make available start-up funds, particularly for capital costs. Financial provisions should be fair.

7. Nonsectarian private schools should be eligible to receive charters. Arizona law provides for this.

8. The state should provide ongoing technical assistance. Although some directors have complained that the available technical assistance is not adequate, it is available from several State sources. In addition, charter school directors have established an organization which employs a full-time executive. (Garn & Stout, 1997; Finn Jr., Manno, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997)

Problems Regarding Charter Schools

One concern regarding school choice is that no states have laws providing funding for public schools that may lose students due to choice. Therefore, the schools that lose students due to choice will also lose the money those students would bring into the system.

Richard Sagor, in "Creating a Level Playing Field" (Phi Delta Kappan, September 1993, p. 65), says, "I am prepared to promote personally and to encourage my colleagues in public education to promote publicly supported public/private educational choice—with one condition: the playing field must be level!" "State legislatures and the federal government could pass legislation that immediately extends any and all regulations affecting public schools to any and all private schools that receive public funds" (Sagor, 1993, p. 65). A level playing field should be the first prerequisite to any voucher plan (Houston, 1993; Sagor, 1993). Sagor recognizes that
this proposal would be both unpopular and impractical. Therefore, he offers an alternative to
allow each state to pass legislation mandating that henceforth any and all new regulations and
statutes pertaining to public schools apply to all schools receiving public funds.

When legislators desire to pass a good law, they should apply it to everyone, since they have a constitutional and ethical responsibility to provide "equal protection" for all citizens. But if, in the wisdom of the legislature, a law is not important enough to impose on the private sector, then, in the interest of fairness, the same discretion should be given to the public schools. (Sagor, 1993, p. 66)

There are two conditions which must be met for the playing field to be level. The vouchers must constitute the complete and total cost of academic tuition to ensure that no schools become the exclusive province of the financially able, with an additional discount supplied by the government. Growing support for private-school vouchers ignores the inequity that would result when the vouchers don't cover the full cost of student tuition. Middle and upper class parents would likely supplement their own money to the voucher, but low-income parents would have to settle for the public schools where there would be fewer resources (Sagor, 1993; The Des Moines Register, 1997).

The second condition is that "a school must comply with all the regulations extended to 'zoned' public schools. This simple rule will ensure that existing statutes, regulations, and judicial rulings that foster inclusion and that protect the rights and needs of children will not be abridged by schools receiving public funds" (Sagor, 1993, p. 66).

Jonathan Kozol, author of Savage Inequalities, opposes all forms of choice.

The idea behind choice, basically, is that if you let people choose, everybody will get the school they want. Everybody will have an equally free choice; everybody will have equal access. And, those I hear defend choice say it will not increase class or racial segregation. In fact, in virtually every case that I have seen none of these conditions is met. People very seldom have equal choices, and even when they theoretically have equal choice, they rarely have equal access. (Ellis & Fouts, 1994, p. 136)
One of the existing strengths and potential weaknesses of private schools is that they do not exist for everyone. Private schools can cater to and accept a specific type of child. Many educators are concerned that, like a private school, a charter school will be selective in its clientele (Harrington-Lueker, 1997).

Researchers at the University of California, Irvine, Arizona State University, and WestEd, found no hard evidence that charter schools were actively screening out some students. However, their study looked at the language in the parent contracts and found that in 27 of the 34 charter schools that responded to their survey, parents were asked to sign contracts pledging they would be active in the school their child attended. For example, a contract may stipulate that the parent spend 30 hours a year working in the school. Thirteen of the contracts stated that students would be expelled if parents did not comply with the service requirements. Though most administrators said such expulsions were rare, the schools with the strictest parent contracts had fewer students with professional parents and a higher number of students with limited English speaking skills and lower achievement. The result appears to be a situation where the school is not actually screening children out. Self-selection is occurring because the contracts are not enabling professional parents or parents in a home where they both must work to choose the charter school for their children (Viadero, 1997).

Civil rights laws

Charter schools are not exempt from heeding civil rights laws. The fundamental equity issues reflected in the Constitution, the Voting Rights Act, Title VI, and Title IX cannot be overlooked by charter schools or the governmental agencies or subdivisions that sponsor them. As of December 1997, a nearly all-white charter school in South Carolina on Hilton Head Island, had its state board approval stayed by a state court judge, and the local district is seeking a judgment
against the state, state board and the proposed charter school due to noncompliance with the Voting Rights Act, Title VI, and the districts Office of Civil Rights agreement (Childs & Reagle, 1997).

George Garcia, superintendent of the Tucson Unified School District in Tucson, Arizona, the state with the most lenient charter school laws, says, "In times of limited funding, our legislature and governor have chosen to be free-spending with charters. But the legislation leaves a lot to be desired when it comes to supervision, monitoring, and accountability" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 8).

Some opponents believe that choice will be a cause of severe financial harm on many public school districts' budgets and that the law overwhelmingly benefits children of white, middle-class parents, many of whom had been paying to send their children to out-of-district schools before any laws were passed. Most resistance to charter schools is based on money and the fear of scarce resources divided among staff, materials, supplies, and facility maintenance (Houston, 1993).

The reality is that public schooling is only going to worsen. The reality is that public funding of schools will continue to decline relative to other public needs, resulting in insidious erosion of education programs and services. Eventually all school districts will slide into mediocrity until the public no longer believes in public education. When this occurs, dollars will flow quickly to other institutions offering education. (Lieber, 1997, p. 15)

There are a lot of promises being made by the conservatives who believe in choice. Among the promises they make are: 1) that everybody will have an equal choice, 2) that information will be so well disseminated that even the least educated parents will have access to all the data that they need, and 3) that choice will not in any way conduce to desegregation or deeper segregation of our schools. (Hayes, 1992, p. 334)

**Transportation**

Transportation is not usually a part of any choice plan. Parents are responsible for their own children's transportation if they choose to enroll the children in another district or school.
There's a reason that transportation is always left out of the interdistrict choice plans: the people who are the strongest advocates of choice, the conservatives, are also those who have historically resisted school busing because they are also the people who have historically resisted desegregation (Hayes, 1992).

Judith A. Harper in her article, "Where in the World is Lamar Alexander?", makes the following statements regarding her opposition to choice:

The secretary does not seem to realize that parents with limited resources might be unable to travel across town to stand in line to get their children schools—or that they might be just a bit disturbed by one more act of discrimination via exclusion or limited access. Nor does he seem aware of the fact that, without substantial fiscal support, the establishment of national goals as identified in America 2000 will get this country and his department no further than A Nation At Risk did years ago. (Harper, 1992, p. 763)

**Segregation**

Harper believes that, "Alexander should reconsider the impact of choice, vouchers, and tax credits in a society in which minorities and economically disadvantaged citizens continue to come out less prepared by and more frustrated with a system that whittles away and ultimately destroys their hope for the future" (Harper, 1992, p. 763).

In *Education Voucher and Desegregation Programs: Prospects and Remedies*, authors Ronald G. Corwin and Robert Dentler say, "We are concerned about the possibility that education voucher plans will set back thirty years of effort to desegregate schools in this country" (Goldberg & Lynch, 1995, p. 41). The authors believe that the case for privatization with respect to education through vouchers thrives on at least three myths: 1) competition from the private sector will create segmented markets with many different types of schools providing for every need; 2) public bureaucracies are unnecessary and wasteful; and 3) better schools, producing
smarter kids, will be propagated by free enterprise and nurtured by concerned parents (Goldberg & Lynch, 1995, pp. 41–42).

Opponents to the voucher system believe that vouchers will aggravate the problem of segregation. "Vouchers are likely to aggravate the segregation problem in at least three ways: by increasing the political disadvantage of minorities, by segregating academically superior students, and by diverting attention and resources from other alternatives for desegregating and otherwise improving schools" (Goldberg & Lynch, 1995, p. 48).

Willis D. Hawley in "The Predictable Consequences of School Choice," identifies predictable outcomes of choice plans. "1) Choice reduces diversity and increases the potential for social conflict. 2) Choice will reduce financial support for public education and children with special needs. 3) The costs of private schools will increase. 4) Choice, school reform, and academic standards" (Hawley, 1996, pp. 47, 56). Hawley suggests that if we find these consequences of choice undesirable, we establish policies to help reduce and eliminate any negative effects. For example, vouchers could be limited to the poor. Schools that participate in various choice programs could be required to have diverse student bodies and could be required to offer minimal state curricula programs, and extensive assistance could be provided to parents to help equalize the knowledge they have and their access to distant schools (Hawley, 1996). Even with some constraints adopted, choice will "leave the nation with weaker schools overall, greater disparity in the quality of education experienced by the have and have-nots, and more divided along class, racial, ethnic, and religious lines" (Hawley, 1996, p. 47). Choice will allow society to evade its responsibility for education for the masses.

Many opponents also argue that school choice has very little, if any, effect on the quality of education. Stan Bippus, superintendent of the 7,300 student Central Consolidated School District in Shiprock, New Mexico, offers an example of misplaced faith in parental choice. The Central
Consolidated School District, located in northwestern New Mexico on a Navaho reservation, has dealt for years with school choice. The district has 16 schools competing for Native American students who may choose to go to five other Bureau of Indian Affairs schools funded totally by the U.S. Department of Interior. All five schools are also located on the reservation and within the local district’s attendance boundaries.

Bippus contends that parents select a school for their children based on other reasons than quality of education. The most common reason given by elementary school parents is their perception of school safety, not program quality. This leads to a widespread misperception that schools of choice are safer. Another major attraction for parents is the full-day kindergarten program at schools of choice. Decision making on school selection becomes truly muddled at the secondary level. "The No. 1 reason we lose high school students to schools of choice is athletic recruiting. The No. 2 reason is discipline. The No. 3 reason we lose students is due to transfers" (Bippus, 1997, p. 33). Bippus asserts that the choice schools receive $600 more in per-pupil aid at the federal level than his district receives at the state level. Yet his district produces more students who are scholarship winners and students with higher ACT scores than the two secondary schools of choice. He also contends that his schools’ attendance is higher and drop-out rates are lower.

Bippus argues that his school district’s primary reaction to choice is not a need to increase quality of education but rather to market his schools. "...One thing we have learned is that we will attract and retain few students based on our success in the classroom" (Bippus, 1997, p. 34). Thus, marketing just may be the key to effective competition among schools.

The nature of public schools cannot lend itself to a market construct. In our demographic society, public schools carry out their functions "in the name of the people." Introducing the market model for competition—the law of supply and demand—where winners make all the money and losers go broke is a tragic idea to introduce into an institution whose purpose is to transmit democratic values and ensure equity for all. (Garcia & Garcia, 1997, pp. 30-31)
Growing support for private school vouchers indicates a need to restore the understanding that the public schools belong to everyone, and that it is everyone's obligation to see that they are high quality for all students. If freedom from regulations and laws and autonomy lead to an increase in student success, one must question why this doesn't apply to all schools. Charter advocates say that if the goal in education is for all students to be successful, perhaps then the characteristics that appear to be common in charter schools should become common in all public schools, too.

School choice is and will continue to be one of the great debates in education. There will continue to the pro and con sides of the issue. In *Research on School Restructuring*, by Arthur K. Ellis and Jeffrey T. Fouts, the following table of pros and cons is given (p. 135):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monopoly of the public sector will be broken and competition will improve the public schools.</td>
<td>Public money to private schools will drain resources from public schools and reduce the quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice enhances the power and involvement of parents in the educational process.</td>
<td>Education is a public good and should be controlled by the public democratic process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice will help to reduce the bureaucracy needed and waste in education.</td>
<td>Consistency in regulation of schools is for quality reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice will help to meet the economic needs of individual students.</td>
<td>Choice will not aid the lower social classes and will promote inequalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice will help to eliminate the deleterious charter effects of politics in education.</td>
<td>Choice programs will encourage private and schools of dubious quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational choice is a matter of personal liberty and therefore should be a priority of the government.</td>
<td>Public money to private, religious schools violates the principle of separation of church and state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charter School Successes

Those who support charters see charter schools as a way to allow schools to operate free from most restrictions and mandates. They feel that this will result in increased student achievement because of more creative and diverse programming and that it will result in the public school becoming more aggressive in change and improvement (Iowa Association of School Boards Update, 1994; Vanourek, Manno, Finn Jr., & Bierlein, 1997).

Charter schools focus on results. Charter schools tend to have stricter accountability of their administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Charter schools tend to have higher expectations than many public schools and do not hesitate to hold all constituents to those expectations through accountability.

Four building blocks have been identified as used by charter schools more successfully than public schools to create and sustain a learning community for students. The school mission is the foundation from which everything else in the school is derived. High quality instructional programs clearly describe the school’s curricula and pedagogy, and detail how educators will lead all students to achieve and perform at high levels. The instructional program follows directly from the school’s mission statement. One of the very basic premises of the charter school is that they should be allowed greater autonomy in exchange for greater accountability for results. Charter school’s require performance standards for judging whether or not the school meets its goals; assessment strategies for evaluating student performance; and consequences—based on the school’s success or failure in meeting its goals. Finally, school leadership is an important factor in enabling effective teaching and learning in charter schools. Leaders play many roles and typically have responsibilities that are managerial and instructional (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997; Manno, Finn Fr., Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997).
"If a superintendent is committed to making fundamental change in a school system that resisted reform—or if he or she wants to create more options for children and their families—then charter schools are an ally, not an enemy" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 8). Charter school advocates say that charter school laws which will allow someone other than the local board to grant the charter will result in a higher number of charter schools. "And having a significant number of charter schools is what is crucial, they say" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 8). The goal isn’t just to create isolated schools. It’s to use charter schools as tools to bring a real and appropriate level of pressure on the [education] system as a whole.

In the April 1996 issue of Education USA, the nation’s largest teacher union is said to be joining the charter movement.

The National Education Association last week said it will sponsor at least five new charter schools and study the possibility of helping launch more over the next five years. "If done right, charter schools have the capacity to remove the bureaucratic handcuffs that can often hinder individualized and effective teaching and learning," NEA President Keith Geiger said at an April 16 news conference. The 2.2 million member NEA will spend $1.5 million on the five-year project to help charter school officials establish budgets, train staff and get community support. NEA also will pay researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles to evaluate the program’s success. (Education USA, April 1996, p. 2)

According to the August 26, 1996, issue of Education USA, "Minority students in the nation’s first publicly funded school choice program posted higher standardized test scores than their public school peers." The study was conducted by Paul Peterson of Harvard University and Jay Green of the University of Houston. The study used students who applied to the choice program and were accepted or rejected based on a lottery system. Test scores for 1,034 charter school students were examined and 407 regular public school students, all African American or Hispanic.

"Contrary to critics’ assertions, charter schools don’t lure top students from public schools while leaving problem pupils behind," the Hudson Institute says in a new report (Education USA,
February 1996, p. 5). It is certain that charter schools are serving a disadvantaged and educationally needy student population and that these students (and their parents) have no doubt that they are getting a better education there (Vanourek, Manno, Finn Jr., & Bierlein, 1997).

The results of a two-year study indicate that at least half the charter schools in existence are designed to serve "at-risk" students, including minority, low-income, disabled or disruptive. "In the six states with the most charter schools, minority students—who often are at risk of academic failure—make up 40 percent of charter school enrollments, compared to 31 percent in other schools" (Education USA, February 1996, p. 5). A Hudson Institute Study found that 12.6 percent of children in their sample were special education students. It is clear that charter schools are enrolling a sizable population of disabled students (Vanourek, Manno, Finn Jr., & Bierlein, 1997). Dr. John Baracy, Superintendent of the Roosevelt Elementary School District in Arizona, a district which has lost up to 50 students to charter schools, believes that charter schools provide an alternative to public education that some students need (Fischer, 1997). Seventeen of the original 46 charter schools established in Arizona focused on youth who had not been academically successful in the traditional regular school (Garn & Stout, 1997).

"Clearly, the privatization movement is rolling forward," agreed Denis P. Doyle, a visiting fellow at the Heritage Foundation think tank in Washington. "But I don't expect it to be a smooth and linear process" (Education Week, November 1995, p. 15).

Charter School Failures

Two cases of failed charter schools have gained national attention. "In Los Angeles, the Edutrain charter school closed its doors, deeply in debt and rocked by allegations of financial mismanagement, when the Los Angeles school board revoked its charter in December 1994" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 10). Additional problems the school was having included poor
management, poor recordkeeping, and inflated attendance reports. "According to reports in The Los Angeles Times, the school also used some of its funding to lease a sports car and hire a bodyguard for the principal" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 10). At this time, the school district and the state are still discussing the issue of who will be held liable for Edutrain's debt. The Los Angeles Times estimates that the debt is somewhere between $300,000 and $1 million.

Citizen 2000, a K-8 charter school in Phoenix, also had its charter revoked after charter organizers filed for bankruptcy late last year. A grand jury in Arizona charged the school's founder and principal, Lawndia White Venerable, with 31 counts of theft, fraud, and misuse of public funds. Ms. Verable allegedly used the Citizen 2000 funds to pay off her credit cards and to secure a loan on a $324,000 home. "The indictment against Venerable also alleges that Citizen 2000 intentionally inflated its attendance figures by 100 students last year in an attempt to keep a $250,000 overpayment of state funds" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 10).

San Diego had two schools where charters were revoked last year. One school was a middle school which was cited for safety violations and failure to meet its required enrollment. The other school was a K-6 elementary school developed in partnership with the Urban League. Its charter was revoked due to a power struggle between teaching staff at the school and members of the Urban League.

Some schools have had their charters taken over by sponsors. Some charter schools simply never opened. Central Michigan University revoked 14 of the 43 charters it had granted. All of the revoked charters had been awarded in 1995, yet two years later had not yet opened due to problems securing start-up funding and finding appropriate facilities to rent. "The revocations meant that CMU could then make these charters available to other interested groups" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 10).
Financial Issues

Many school districts have agreed to provide services such as transportation, payroll, special education, and others. A source of conflict between charter school organizers and public school administrators has been in determining what services the local district will provide and at what cost to the charter school. However, the main issue of concern is the money leaving the local public schools and going with the students to the private schools.

Flagstaff, Arizona, has adopted a philosophy of inclusion toward charter schools in its district. Eight charter schools currently exist in Flagstaff, none of which are chartered by the school board. The charters have enrolled approximately 150 of the school district's students according to Superintendent Kent Matheson. "Those numbers, though, have resulted in a $515,000 budget shortfall for the district" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 11).

Joe Rao, charter school coordinator for the Los Angeles Unified School District, where there are 14 charters, says, "You have to strike a balance...and make sure that no student in the district is negatively affected, not the student in the charter school and not the student in one of others" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 12).

In President Clinton's proposed budget for the fiscal school year 1998–99, he offers a 96 percent increase over last year of $100 million. "Jonathan Schuur, the U.S. Education Department's unofficial charter school expert, recently said, 'I'm excited about the direction this could go.' He cited the reform efforts begun a decade ago in Minnesota, where open enrollment and public school choice were initiated" (Penning, 1997, p. 32). The Department of Education has distributed "A Call to Action for American Education." Within this publication, the President calls for the expansion of choice and accountability in public education.
Accountability

Charter schools, local school districts and the public are all wrestling with the question of how to determine whether or not a charter school truly is successful and doing what it is supposed to be doing. Five of the 14 charters in the Los Angeles Unified School District are eligible for renewal in 1998. Districts may hire an outside contractor to evaluate the charter schools' performance. Outside evaluators should have no preconceived notions, so their findings are more likely to satisfy both sides (Harrington-Lueker, 1997).

At the present time, no one really knows, however, if charter schools are a success. "...They're all too new, too untested, and too diverse for anybody—scholar or pundit—to truthfully say they're boosting their students' achievement" (Schneider, 1997, p. 44). Only in states where solid educational standards and assessments exist, will we ever have satisfactory information regarding the performance of charter schools. In states where testing is either left to the local school district or charter school or there is no testing in place, arrangements for good solid data on charter performance will not happen (Finn Jr., Manno, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997). Howard Fischer says of the Arizona charter school situation, "As a whole, though, the jury is still out: The charter schools are too new and a planned statewide testing system to measure their success has yet to get off the ground" (Fischer, 1997, p. 12).

Jefferson County, Colorado, had three charters up for renewal in 1997. External evaluators were used and all three charters were renewed, one with a recommendation that it be re-evaluated again in a year. "Both sides like the use of external evaluators. 'Going to an outside consultant gets around the politics of charter schools,' says one charter school advocate" (Harrington, Lueker, 1997, p. 12).

A study of charter schools and their success in Arizona concluded that some of these schools appear to be quite good and some not. What little information is available suggests that
test scores of students mirror the kinds of students who are enrolled (Garn & Stout, 1997). High performing students perform high, low achieving students perform low, and average students perform average. NFL-YET Academy [sic.], a charter school in south Phoenix, students scored higher in reading, language and math on the Stanford 9 tests than students in the neighboring school district at almost all elementary grade levels. The NFL high school students also scored higher than the high school students at the nearby public school in everything but reading. At another Arizona charter school, Bright Beginnings, students scored 20 percentage points higher than the average scores of student in the nearby public school district. (Van Der Werf, 1997).

This may be true for the state of Arizona, but in Michigan, the charter schools scored significantly lower than the state’s schools. Some Michigan charter schools, however, have only been open for a few months, so scores must be viewed with caution. Many Michigan charter schools are designed to serve at-risk students which also gives them a disproportionate number of students at risk of failure (Schnailberg, 1997).

Charter schools need to be accountable for producing high quality results, but not overburdened with rules and regulations. Most states are struggling with the issue of how to hold the schools accountable and yet not impose upon them thereby limiting the creativity and educational philosophies under which the charters started. The issue of charter school accountability and how it is dealt with may "make or break" charter schools of the future.

Future Issues

The charter school concept should be looked at as an opportunity to redesign all schools. As some citizens are designing new schools, other citizens should be redesigning the existing public schools. "Charter schools are not just about instruction; they are also about governance" (Smith, 1997, p. 19).
A key question of future interest that needs to be addressed is whether or not charter schools will show instructional ability beyond the regular traditional schools. Another question should address the successes and failures of charter schools (Garn & Stout, 1997). Can anything be learned now that might predict which will fail? A third issue involves the competitors. For-profit schools, with large amounts of venture capital at-risk, are beginning to spring up in Arizona and other states. How successful will they be and how will they impact the other charter schools in this country? A final issue is the relationship of charter school policy and continuing legislation interest in vouchers and tax credits (Garn & Stout, 1997). If vouchers and tax credits become a reality as a source of funding, what impact will that have on charter schools, as well as public schools? Finally, the issue of accountability continues to be debated. What is effective accountability?

Most charter schools are not accredited. In Arizona, only four of the charter high schools are accredited, compared to 90 percent of the public high schools that are accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (Van Der Werf, 1997). Data does indicate that Arizona students from some charter high schools are scoring better on standardized tests than their public school counterparts. On the Stanford 9 tests, higher scores were received by students in reading, language, and math at one school with a select population, the NFL Academy, than students attending the neighboring public high school. Students at other charter schools in Arizona scored up to 20 percentages higher than the average scores of students in local public high schools (Van Der Werf, 1997).

Frank Smith uses an administrative strategy known as the Advocacy Design Center process. It is a self-assessment and design process that can be applied to both charter and non-charter schools. The Advocacy Design Center (ADC) was developed collaboratively between faculty at the Teachers College at Columbia University and the Paterson, N.J., Public Schools, a district
whose management was taken over in 1991 by the state (Smith, 1997). The ADC process was
designed to provide a mechanism for extending assistance to the Paterson, N.J., Public Schools.
The process is now also available to groups designing charter schools and to groups transforming
existing schools. "The Advocacy Design Center process assumes that charter school design and
public school transformation should:

- create advocates who understand and care deeply about their school design;
- recognize that each school has its own character, culture, or belief system;
- create functional school communities that establish patterns of collaborative work to
  nurture the growth of youth;
- include diverse voices in the design/transformation process so that schooling is a
dynamic center for democratic governance;
- focus on the school in a holistic way, on the school as an institution and not on a set of
  fragmented and disjointed projects aimed at "fixing" the existing model of schooling;
- provide a framework for the public discourse so that professionals and other citizens
can express their different perspectives, while playing on a more level playing field and
  moving toward a shared meaning regarding school design;
- make clear that the choice of a design reflects a group's values, not solely technical
  expertise; and provide access to research on differing models of schooling, so that there
  is an informal discourse and a true sense of design choice about and among types of
  schools. (Smith, 1997, p. 20)

Charter advocates predict that legislators in an estimated nine states, including Oregon,
Washington, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, and Oregon will likely consider charter
legislation in the coming year [1998]. A similar number are expected to strengthen laws they
already have passed, paving the way for even more schools to open (Harrington-Lueker, 1997).

In the President's 1997 State of the Union address, President Clinton called for the creation
of 3,000 charter schools by the year 2000.

To make that rhetoric a reality, the 1997 federal budget also calls for $51 million in
funding to cover start-up costs for charters. In addition, the U.S. Department of
Education has contracted for a $2.1 million study to evaluate the effectiveness of
charters and identify the characteristics of successful charter schools, and the
administration has requested $100 million in charter school funding for FY 1998.
(Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 7)
Charter schools present a consumer-driven system creating diversity and choice. Charter schools have become a safe haven for children and parents who have had "bad" experiences in the more traditional public education institution. They are particularly popular with parents of primary age students. Families and teachers are seeking charter schools for educational reasons such as high academic standards, small class sizes, a focus on learning and teaching, and new instructional methodologies. The Hudson Institute Study concluded that satisfaction levels are highest of students, teachers, and parents when it comes to educational matters and teachers feel empowered. "There are striking levels of satisfaction among all the constituents of charter schools, their focus is on education, their students are flourishing academically, and they are havens for children—of all races, backgrounds, and abilities—who were not thriving in conventional schools" (Vanourek, Manno, Finn Jr., & Bierlein, 1997, p. 9).

For charter schools to be successful there are some enabling conditions to be considered. The charter schools with the greatest control over budgets, personnel issues, school governance and curriculum were better able to create and sustain an effective learning community. Support organizations that provide a variety of services, workshops, site visits, individual school assistance and assessments, outreach, and other networking opportunities help to assure a charter school’s success. Finally, a base of supportive parents will facilitate the creation of charter schools and nurture it as it grows and develops (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997).

Data in Table 1 reveal that literature regarding charter schools began to be published in 1994 and 1995. Six documents were published in 1995. Seven documents were available in 1996 and seven were available in 1997. At the present time, few dissertations have been written on this topic. Five of the research documents located were written anonymously. Much of the research includes existing legislation, case studies of charter schools, and summary reports and progress reports regarding the charter school movement.
Table 1. A summary of the literature on charter schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Researcher(s)</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Economist</td>
<td>Passing legislation allowing charter schools has been a difficult, state-by-state battle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Grube</td>
<td>Vaughn Next Century Learning Center had a $1.2 million surplus at the end of one year. Student attendance is 99.7% and test scores soared 300%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Nikiforuk</td>
<td>Good charter legislation breaks school board monopolies and enables communities to bypass parliamentary. The also mirror important trends in business. Charter schools give local boards incentive to place greater emphasis on effective schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Pipes</td>
<td>To restore excellence to America's publicly funded schools, the monopoly must be broken by 1) private management of public schools, 2) charter schools, or 3) school choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Specter</td>
<td>In 1994, the Republican Party won Congress with the Contract with America. In 1996, Senator Arlen Specter plans to win the presidency with 10 commitments of his own to the U.S. Specter's fifth commitment is to improve education with innovations like privatization and charter schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Bostock</td>
<td>The Committee for Economic Development concluded that it is in companies' best interests to push for school governance changes at the state and local level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Mattoon, Testa</td>
<td>In October, 1994, Midwest policymakers and researchers met to address school reform efforts and reevaluate each in an attempt to help the region's policymakers choose models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Ravitch, Viteritti</td>
<td>An agenda for school change includes: 1) Setting standards, 2) school closings, 3) school autonomy, 4) new schools, 5) central administration, and 6) real choice for the poor. There is a need for a system of schools that is dynamic, diverse, performance based, and accountable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Researcher(s)</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Kass</td>
<td>A case study of the City on a Hill Charter School is presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Bierlein, Fulton</td>
<td>Charter schools could serve as laboratories to study whether funding schools directly results in resources being more closely connected to student performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Finn, Bierlein, Manno</td>
<td>States should develop and fund a charter school loan fund or revolving fund to advance start-up resources to charter school developers at low or zero interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Cowans</td>
<td>Charter schools that form as independent legal entities have more liability problems than those that remain under local school district auspices. Another problem may be that insurance companies shy away from anything new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Wishnick, Wishnick</td>
<td>Past efforts investigating teacher association attitudes towards charter schools have contributed little to explaining teacher association leaders’ disposition to support or not support the charter school movement. One explanation may be a lack of information or exposure respondents have had with charter schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Barnes</td>
<td>The school choice movement is a response to the problems of policymakers being historically unwilling or unable to establish programs that effectively lead to racial integration and educational equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Harvard Law Review</td>
<td>Connecticut and South Carolina statues contain restrictions that threaten to undermine the reform goals hoped for through charter school legislation. The Connecticut law contains impediments so serious that they could subvert the purpose of the law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Researcher(s)</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Ravitch</td>
<td>Vaughan Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles serves 1,200 low-income Hispanic children. As a charter school, it has improved attendance and test scores while raising teachers' salaries and parent involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Economist</td>
<td>Three schools in Boston tell the truth about President Clinton's education policy: why his proposals point in the right direction and why they are timid to a fault. All three schools are charter schools and they are proving that inner-city schools need not let children down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Government Finance Review</td>
<td>A 1995 Survey from the Education Commission of the States and the Center for School Change is reviewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Finn Jr., Manno, Bierlein, and Vanourek</td>
<td>A summary report of charter schools and their status. The following areas were studied: perception of students, teachers, and parents, birth-pains and life cycles of charter schools, policy perils, accountability, educational impact, and how charter schools are different.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The purposes of this study were multiple. The study should identify what prompted the charter school movement in the United States and how charter schools are formed. The level of satisfaction parents and staff have toward charter schools versus public schools was sought. Information regarding the knowledge level and perceptions of Iowa school superintendents toward the charter schools movement was also sought and should provide valuable information within the state of Iowa.

Information for potential patrons who might choose to enroll their children in a charter school was determined. Information regarding the advantages/strengths and disadvantages/weaknesses of existing charter schools was sought. Readers will be provided with a basic understanding of what the charter movement is.

An additional purpose was to attempt to identify how effectively charter schools are addressing standards areas as identified in the publication *World Class Schools*. Chalker and Haynes's nine world class standards include the areas of 1) educational expenditure, 2) time on task, 3) class size, 4) teachers, 5) students, 6) curriculum, 7) assessing student achievement, 8) school governance, and 9) parents, home, and community. The initial research questions were developed to incorporate these nine world class standards. The specific questionnaires were then developed with questions designed to cover each of these nine standards.

**Hypothesis of the Study**

The study will address the following operational hypothesis:

- The satisfaction level of parents of students attending a charter school and staff working in a charter school is significantly higher toward charter schools than their satisfaction level toward public schools.
Sample Design

It was anticipated that this study would help contribute to the database of information and the literature resulting from states with charter legislation. Four states were selected to be surveyed in the sampling process. Minnesota and New Mexico were selected because they are states where legislation has been in place since 1991 and 1993 respectively, yet have few charter schools in existence. Minnesota had nineteen schools as of November 1996 and New Mexico had five as of that same date. Arizona and California were selected to be a part of the sample because they are the two states with the most charter schools. Arizona first adopted legislation in 1994 and had 164 schools as of November 1996. California adopted its legislation in 1992, and had 109 charter schools also as of November 1996.

A survey instrument to determine perceptions of staff members working in charter schools and parents of students in charter schools was developed. The instrument was designed so a comparison of their experiences in a charter school versus their experiences in a public school could be made. The instrument was developed based on items found in instruments created by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Study of School Evaluations. Information from World Class Schools, New Standards for Education was also used to develop survey items and the world class standards areas were the basis for the questions.

There were four phases to gathering the research information. Following is a description of each phase used:

Phase 1. A letter and one page information sheet were sent to all charter schools in the four states selected by the researcher and then identified in the Center for Education Reform Directory. From the information sheets returned, the following numbers of charter schools expressed an interest in being further contacted for the purpose of this study: Arizona—thirty-five out of 164
schools contacted; California—twenty-nine out of 109 schools contacted; Minnesota—eleven out of nineteen schools contacted; and New Mexico—one out of five schools contacted.

Phase 2. The survey instruments were created. A judgement panel in the School Improvement Model Project's office at Iowa State University reviewed the instruments and made suggestions to improve both survey items and instructions. Two graduate classes, 615C "Dissertation Seminar" and 657 "Advanced Supervision of Instruction", also reviewed the surveys, as well as the accompanying letters. Significant changes in combining survey items, eliminating items, and rewording for clarity were made as a result of the input. These groups helped to reduce the large number of possible survey items and helped establish face validity.

Information to determine the level of knowledge regarding charter schools and other issues of educational reform of superintendents in the state of Iowa was sought through a questionnaire. Iowa school superintendents were surveyed regarding their perceptions and knowledge level of the charter school phenomena.

Phase 3. Surveys were sent to all 377 Iowa superintendents. A cash incentive of $1.00 was enclosed with each letter and survey. Seventy-six charter schools in the states of Arizona, California, Minnesota, and New Mexico were sent surveys. Each charter school director was sent ten parent surveys to distribute through students to parents of their students. Each director was also sent ten staff surveys to distribute to his/her staff. Both surveys were designed to identify perceptions and feelings of success toward the parents’ and staffs’ experiences with children in the public school system and the charter school. An award of $300 was given through a lottery to a director of one of the charter schools.

Phase 4. All surveys were to be returned to the School Improvement Model Project's Office by November 17, 1997. Response from the Iowa superintendent questionnaire was successful at eighty-five percent, 319 out of 377 surveys returned. The response from the charter
school surveys was not acceptable as of November 17, 1997. On November 19 and 20, 1997, a follow-up letter was sent to all charter school directors who had indicated they would participate in the study.

On December 17 and 18, 1997, all charter schools that had not yet returned completed surveys were telephoned. One school requested another packet be sent and committed to returning it completed. Five schools apologized and committed to returning the surveys when they returned to school in January after the holiday break. Three schools appeared to no longer be operating—the phone numbers had been disconnected and there were no current phone numbers available through directory assistance. Two packets were returned with "address unknown" stamped on them. Eleven schools indicated that they had changed their minds and did not wish to participate in the survey. Reasons varied from being tired of filling out surveys on charter schools to just not wanting to participate.

One school had not opened as originally scheduled. Eight schools said they had returned some surveys, but in envelopes that would not be identifiable to us. One school administrator indicated that she had sent the surveys out but no one had returned them to her. She explained that her staff and parents were Spanish speaking and did not know English well and she suspected that was why none of the surveys had been returned. Messages were left with secretaries at seven of the schools on December 17 and 18 to remind the directors to return the surveys and request a return phone call. These seven schools did not return the phone calls. Twelve schools requested that a copy of the parent survey and staff survey be faxed to them and they committed to duplicating the surveys, distributing them, and returning them by mid-January, 1998. All faxes were sent on December 17 and 18, 1997.

As of January 31, 1998, forty-five percent of all charter schools from the original contact had returned questionnaires. Six schools could not be located or were not operating. Forty-nine
percent of the schools located and operating returned questionnaires. Three surveys were returned separate from their schools with no return addresses. One hundred and forty-three parents of children attending a charter school responded to the questionnaire and one hundred and ninety-six staff members working in a charter school responded to the questionnaire. Table 2 illustrates a summary of questionnaire response results.

Table 2. Charter school questionnaire results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of charter schools</th>
<th>Percent of total</th>
<th>Questionnaire results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Returned surveys by Nov. 19 deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Schools were telephoned Dec. 18 and 19; said they had returned surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Schools were telephoned Dec. 18 and 19; copies of both surveys were faxed; said they would duplicate and distribute surveys and return them by mid-January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Phone messages were left on Dec. 18 and 19 requesting surveys be returned as soon as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Additional packet was sent to this school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>School personnel committed to returning the surveys by mid-January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Administrator distributed surveys; Spanish-speaking staff and parents with little English; no surveys returned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Decided not to participate in study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools no longer operating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Packets returned marked &quot;address unknown&quot;; new addresses could not be located</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>School did not open fall 1997 as anticipated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Treatment of Subjects

The proposal for this study was reviewed and approved by the Iowa State University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research. Committee approval is in Appendix A. A cover letter accompanying each of the questionnaires can be viewed in Appendix C, Letters 1 through 4. The cover letters informed subjects of the purpose of the research, guaranteed their confidentiality in responding, and notified them that the returned survey with responses constituted modified informed consent.

A card accompanied the superintendents’ and directors’ letters. Cards were maintained apart from questionnaires and were for the sole purpose of sending an abstract of the questionnaire results to those respondents requesting that information. The directors’ cards that were returned were also used in a random drawing process as the source for names and addresses of the incentive award winner. One cash incentive award was given of $300. The selection process for awards is addressed in Phase 3, in the "Sample Design" section.

Data Collection

In October 1997, a questionnaire packet was mailed to each Iowa district superintendent. The packet contained a letter explaining the study, a questionnaire, a card, and a return envelope postage paid. The superintendents’ letter explained the purpose of the study. A total of 377 questionnaires were mailed to Iowa superintendents. An appreciation donation of $1.00 was enclosed with each questionnaire to the Iowa superintendents. Surveys were requested returned by November 17, 1997.

Also in October 1997, a packet was mailed to each of the charter school directors in the states of Arizona, California, Minnesota, and New Mexico who had earlier indicated through a response form that their school would participate in the study. Each packet contained a letter to
the director explaining the study and giving directions, a card to be returned for an abstract of the results and to be entered in the lottery incentive, ten parent letters and questionnaires with individual envelopes for confidentiality, ten staff letters and questionnaires with individual envelopes for confidentiality, and a return envelope for all questionnaires with postage paid. Responses were requested returned by November 17, 1997.

Because of the burden to directors in distributing the questionnaires, it was determined that it would be prudent to provide an incentive to encourage participation. Therefore, a lottery was devised. Each charter school director was advised in the letter that the combination of his/her returned questionnaires and the card constituted entry in a random drawing for a cash prize. A total of 76 charter schools in the four states were sent questionnaire packets, resulting in 760 parent surveys and 760 staff surveys being sent. During the week of November 24, a follow-up letter was sent to all charter school directors who had not returned any surveys encouraging their participation in this study. A copy of the follow-up letter can be viewed in Appendix C, Letter 5. Follow-up phone calls were made on December 17 and 18, 1997. (Refer to Phase 4, in the "Sample Design" section for detailed information.)

All Iowa superintendent respondents and charter school directors were offered an abstract of the completed study as a response incentive. Nineteen Iowa superintendents requested an abstract of the results. Seventeen charter schools directors requested an abstract.

Data Analysis

All questionnaire information was transferred to electronic scanforms. Scanning of the instruments was then completed by the Iowa State University Testing and Evaluation Services Department through the Iowa State University Computation Center’s mainframe computer. The
Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE) assisted in processing the data and establishing files to use with the SPSS statistical software program.

All data were analyzed using the SPSS student version statistical software package. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the information provided by the Iowa superintendents' survey. A frequency distribution was used to identify the number of times each score or group of scores occurred (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1994). The main descriptive statistics used to answer the research questions addressing Iowa superintendents' knowledge of and openness toward the charter school movement were the mean, median, and standard deviation to each response. The average scores and the variability of scores for the sample were also determined. The questionnaire did not contain right or wrong answers.

A chi-square nonparametric test was done on the superintendents' responses because the questionnaire used a nonordered scale. The chi-square test was used to establish group values for purposes of comparison.

The formula for the chi-square test is as follows (Hinkle et al., 1994, p. 555):

\[ \chi^2 = \sum \frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe} \]

f = frequency  
o = observed outcome  
e = expected or predicted outcome

A paired t-test was used to analyze the differences in questionnaire responses for a charter school and for a public school within the parent population. A paired t-test was also used to analyze the differences in questionnaire responses for a charter school and for a public school within the staff population. The t-test is a commonly used statistical tool in causal-comparative studies. It is "used to determine whether two means, proportions, or correlation coefficients differ
significantly from each other" (Borg & Gall, 1989). Because the groups were not equivalent, causality could not be established. The t statistic was used to compare group responses.

The formula for a t-test is as follows (Hinkle et al., 1994, p. 223):

\[ t = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu}{S_{\bar{X}}} \]

A one-sample t-test was used to determine how effectively charter schools are meeting the standard areas as identified in *World Class Schools*. The value was set at three because that is the middle of the scale on the questionnaire that parents and staff answered. A set value was used because the questionnaire had not been used before. The middle of the scale was used to test responses.

An alpha level of .05 was determined *a priori* to any data collection. A .05 level of statistical significance is the probability that the difference occurred by chance is less than the significance level (.05). An alpha level of .05 was determined due to the fact that a .05 alpha level is commonly used in educational research.
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

The problem of this study was to determine the viability of charter schools in the United States in the late 1990s. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What really prompted the charter school movement in the United States?
- How are charter schools formed?
- What is the satisfaction level of parents of students attending a charter school and staff versus their satisfaction level toward public schools?
- In a state where charter school legislation does not exist, to what degree are Iowa school superintendents knowledgeable and/or open to charter schools?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages and strengths/weaknesses of existing charter schools of which potential patrons should be aware?
- How effectively are charter schools addressing the standards areas as identified in *World Class Schools*?

Findings are reported in the order of each research question. Descriptive data are given for research questions which involved the use of a questionnaire. The descriptive data consists of the mean and standard deviation for all responses.

**Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis will be addressed through the findings:

**Operational Hypothesis:** The satisfaction level of parents of students attending a charter school and staff working in a charter school is significantly higher toward charter schools than their satisfaction level toward public schools.
Null Hypothesis: The satisfaction level of parents of students attending a charter school and staff working in a charter school is not significantly higher toward charter schools than their satisfaction level toward public schools.

Research Questions

Research Question One — What really prompted the charter school movement in the United States?

The Review of Literature identified two main reasons for the establishment of charter schools. One of the key reasons was to enable people who are dissatisfied with the present educational institution a way to pursue their educational vision and the second key reason was for those schools and their creators to gain autonomy (King, 1998). Additional reasons include the desire to serve a special student population, for financial reasons (i.e., pre-existing private schools wanting to receive public funds which enable disadvantaged students to attend the school, pre-existing private schools wanting to accept additional students whose parents could not pay the tuition if it continued as a private school, and to be better able to raise funds for special projects), and for parent involvement and ownership (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997).

Research Question Two — How are charter schools formed?

Charter school formation is determined by the particular state’s charter school legislation. Most charter schools can be identified as pre-existing public, pre-existing private, and newly-created. Pre-existing public charter schools are schools that exist within a local school district but become charter. Such schools are sponsored by their local school board and superintendent. Pre-existing private charter schools are private schools that charge tuition and decide to become charter schools. Newly-created charter schools are schools that are begun by someone who has an educational vision and/or seeks autonomy in their school.
Charter schools are self-governing educational facilities that operate under contract between the organizers of the charter school and the sponsor. The organizers are often teachers or parents or a private organization.

Charters are written agreements between the school and the authority granting the charter permission. Goals, objectives, instructional design, assessment methods, management, finances, accountability, and responsibilities are all identified. Most charter schools are run by a governing board composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and other representatives from the community.

Charter schools usually receive government funding and may not charge tuition. They must be nonsectarian and nondiscriminatory. To renew a charter, schools must prove that they have met the expectations of the governing boards and they must continue to attract students. Charter schools are free from most state and local regulations (McBrien & Brandt, 1997).

Research Question Three — What is the satisfaction level of parents of students and staff attending a charter school versus their satisfaction level toward public schools?

One hundred ninety-six staff members working in charter schools responded to the questionnaire. Staff members responded to each item from their experiences in a charter school and from their experiences in a public school. Some staff had experience only in a charter school setting. One hundred forty-three parents of students attending a charter school responded to the questionnaire. Parents responded to each item from their experiences in a charter school and also from their experiences in a public school. Some parents had experience only in a charter school. Table 3 describes both parent and staff responses to statements about parent involvement in schools. Paired t-tests were done on all questionnaire data. The alpha level was set at .05. Both questionnaires used a Likert scale with five rankings: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree,
Table 3. Charter school questionnaire—Parent involvement*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents Mean (N=143)</th>
<th>Parents SD</th>
<th>Staff Mean (N=196)</th>
<th>Staff SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient opportunities for parent involvement are provided and parents are actively involved in their child’s education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents understand the school’s programs and operation and are informed regarding school policies and procedures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience is that parent-teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate with me regularly regarding my children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress reports are adequate and appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents feel welcome.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with our school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.
3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Neither disagree nor agree was purposefully put in the middle of the scale as a neutral response. Table 4 identifies the results of a paired t-test on these same items concerning parent involvement.

Table 3 indicates that both parents and staff have more positive perceptions regarding parent involvement in charter schools than they do in public schools. The first item addresses the opportunities for parents to get involved in the schools. The mean response for parents and staff respectively is 4.6 and 4.3 for the charter school. Both parents and staff have a mean response of 2.8 for the public school on this item.

Parents had a mean response of 4.6 and staff had a mean response of 4.4 regarding parents' understanding of the charter school's program and operations and school policies and procedures. The mean response falls to 3.2 for parents and 3.1 for staff for the same item about public schools.

Parents and staff had a mean response of 4.6 and 4.5 respectively for the item—My experience is that parent-teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate with me regularly regarding my children—for the charter school situation. Mean responses dropped to 2.9 for parents and 3.0 for staff when responding to the same item for public schools.

Table 3 also indicates that the parents' mean response toward the item addressing progress reports as being adequate and appropriate is 4.5 and the staff mean response is 4.0 for charter schools. The mean drops to 3.2 for parents and 2.3 for staff regarding the same item in public schools.

Parents averaged a 4.8 mean for how welcome they feel in the charter school, while staff averaged a 4.5 mean for the item about how welcome parents feel. The mean for parents is 3.0 when responding to this item for a public school and the mean for staff responding to this item in regard to public schools is 3.1.
The information in the table indicates that the degree of respect for teachers and satisfaction with the school is greater for both parents and staff when responding to charter schools. Parents had a mean score of 4.8 for charter schools and 3.5 for public schools when responding to the item—"I respect the teachers." Staff had a mean score of 4.2 for charter schools and 3.2 for public schools when responding to the same item. The table illustrates that parents had a mean of 4.7 for the charter school and 2.4 for the public school when responding to the item—"I am satisfied with our school." Staff had a mean of 4.4 for the charter school and 3.0 for the public school when responding to the same item.

Table 4 indicates that with the alpha level set at .05, all responses are significantly positive. Parents and staff indicate by their responses that they are positive regarding these items. Two items—Progress reports are adequate and appropriate; and, I am satisfied with our school—were not addressed on the staff questionnaire.

Table 5 illustrates parent and staff satisfaction with resources in both school settings. Table 6 shows the results of a paired t-test on these items. When asked whether technology is adequate to support teaching and learning, parents had a mean score of 3.9 for the charter school and 3.3 for the public school. Staff had a mean of 3.8 for the charter school and 2.9 for the public school.

The parent mean for the item—"School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are adequate to support teaching and learning"—was 4.1 for charter schools and 3.4 for public schools. The staff mean for that same question was 3.9 for the charter school and 3.3 for the public school.

Both items identified in Table 6 are significant and responses are positive. Parent and staff responses indicate they are positive about the technology available in charter schools, as well as charter school facilities and teaching supplies.
Table 4. Charter school questionnaire paired t-test—Parent involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient opportunities for parent involvement are provided and parents are actively involved in their child's education.</td>
<td>N 108  ( \bar{x} ) 1.7  SD 1.4  t 12.7  df 107  Sig. 0.00*</td>
<td>N 138  ( \bar{x} ) 1.5  SD 1.4  t 12.7  df 137  Sig. 0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents understand the school's programs and operation and are informed regarding school policies and procedures.</td>
<td>N 106  ( \bar{x} ) 1.3  SD 1.2  t 10.8  df 105  Sig. 0.00*</td>
<td>N 136  ( \bar{x} ) 1.3  SD 1.3  t 11.0  df 135  Sig. 0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience is that parent-teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate with me regularly regarding my children.</td>
<td>N 107  ( \bar{x} ) 1.8  SD 1.4  t 13.1  df 106  Sig. 0.00*</td>
<td>N 132  ( \bar{x} ) 1.5  SD 1.3  t 13.5  df 131  Sig. 0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress reports are adequate and appropriate.</td>
<td>N 107  ( \bar{x} ) 1.3  SD 1.4  t 9.7   df 106  Sig. 0.00*</td>
<td>-- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents feel welcome.</td>
<td>N 107  ( \bar{x} ) 1.7  SD 1.5  t 12.1  df 106  Sig. 0.00*</td>
<td>N 136  ( \bar{x} ) 1.4  SD 1.2  t 13.6  df 135  Sig. 0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the teachers.</td>
<td>N 105  ( \bar{x} ) 1.2  SD 1.2  t 10.4  df 104  Sig. 0.00*</td>
<td>N 136  ( \bar{x} ) 0.9  SD 1.3  t 8.5   df 135  Sig. 0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with our school.</td>
<td>N 106  ( \bar{x} ) 2.3  SD 1.4  t 16.8  df 105  Sig. 0.00*</td>
<td>-- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- --</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

*p < .05.
Table 5. Charter school questionnaire—Resources^a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents Mean (N=143)</th>
<th>Staff Mean (N=196)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>3.9 1.1</td>
<td>3.8 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.3 1.2</td>
<td>2.9 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.1 1.0</td>
<td>3.9 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.4 1.2</td>
<td>3.3 1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^aLegend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

Tables 7 and 8 illustrate parent and staff responses to items addressing staff commitment. The first item is: Teachers give children personal encouragement so each child is motivated to do his/her best. Both parents and staff responded with a mean of 4.6 for charter schools. The mean for parents when responding to the same item for public schools was 2.8 and for staff it was 3.4. Table 8 follows with the results of a paired t-test on these items.

Parents and staff both indicated that they felt teachers were more available before, after, and during school hours to help children in the charter schools than in the public schools. This is supported in Table 7 with mean scores of 4.5 for parents and 4.3 for staff. The mean for the same item regarding public schools was 3.0 for parents and 3.2 for staff.

Table 7 indicates the satisfaction level for three items. One of the items states—I am satisfied with how children are treated by teachers, counselors, administrators. The mean response from parents regarding this item for charter schools is 4.7 and for public schools it is
Table 6. Charter school questionnaire paired t-test—Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

*p < .05.
Table 7. Charter school questionnaire—Staff commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents Mean (N=143)</th>
<th>Parents SD</th>
<th>Staff Mean (N=196)</th>
<th>Staff SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers give children personal encouragement so each child is motivated to do his/her best.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available before, after, and during school hours to help children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with how children are treated by teachers, counselors, administrators.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children get satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children get satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses they should take.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children get encouragement and support to not drop out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.
Table 8. Charter school questionnaire paired t-test—Staff commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers give children personal encouragement so each child is</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivated to do his/her best.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available before, after, and during school hours to</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with how children are treated by teachers,</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counselors, administrators.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children get satisfactory help from school staff in handling</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children get satisfactory help from school staff in planning the</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>courses they should take.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children get encouragement and support to not drop out.</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.05*</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children with special needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

*p < .05.
3.0. The mean response from staff for this item is 4.5 for charter schools and 3.1 for public schools.

The second item—Children get satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal problems—received a mean response of 4.3 from parents when answering about charter schools and 2.9 from parents about public schools. The mean response from staff for this item was 4.2 for charter schools and 3.0 for public schools. Another item—Children get satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses they should take—had a mean response of 4.0 for charter schools and 3.0 for public schools from parents and a mean response of 3.9 for charter schools and 3.1 for public schools from staff.

Table 7 indicates that both parents and staff felt more positively about the charter school in regard to the item—Children get encouragement and support to not drop out. Parents had a mean score of 4.3 for charter schools and 3.1 for public schools while staff had a mean response of 4.4 for charter schools and 3.3 for public schools.

In regard to the item addressing whether or not the school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs, parents and staff had a mean response of 4.0 for charter schools while parents had a mean response of 2.9 for public schools. For the same item, staff had a mean response of 3.5 for the public schools.

Table 8 indicates that parents have some concern regarding the item—The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs. However, responses are still significant. No provisions are usually made for special education children in charter schools.

Four items on the survey addressed the area of school climate and are reflected in Tables 9 and 10. As to whether or not the schools are clean and pleasant and well maintained, parents had
a mean response of 4.4 for charter schools and 3.7 for public schools and staff had a mean response of 4.2 for charter schools and 3.5 for public schools.

Table 9 also indicates that parents and staff both perceive that children are safer in a charter school than in a public school. The parents’ mean response to the statement—Children feel safe at school—is 4.6 for the charter school and 2.9 for the public school. Staff mean responses are also 4.6 for the charter school and 2.9 for the public school.

Discipline policies are perceived as being more fair and consistently enforced in the charter schools. Parents had a mean response of 4.3 for this item for charter schools and only 2.7 for public schools. Staff had a mean response of 4.2 for charter schools and 3.1 for public schools.

Parents responded to the item—Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and ethnic equity—with a mean of 4.3 for the charter schools and 3.4 for the public schools. Staff had a mean of 4.5 for charter schools and 3.7 for public schools.

On the paired t-test, Table 10 shows that parents and staff had significantly more positive responses to all items in the area of school climate. All items were significant at .00.

Table 11 illustrates perceptions about items regarding educational programs in both charter schools and public schools. Table 12 also illustrates the responses to these same items on a paired t-test.

Parents’ overall responses are more positive than staff responses to all items for both the charter schools and the public schools. The first item addresses whether the school offers high quality educational programs and teacher expectations for children. Parents had a mean response of 4.5 for charter schools and only 2.6 for public schools, while staff had a mean response of 4.4 for charter schools and 3.1 for public schools.

The item—Children see the relationship between studies and everyday life and are being prepared to deal with future issues and problems—received a mean score of 4.4 from parents for
Table 9. Charter school questionnaire—School climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=143)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=196)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children feel safe at school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline policies are fair and consistently enforced.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racial and ethnic equity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

Parents had a mean response of 4.4 for the item—Our school is doing a good job of teaching all subject areas—when responding about a charter school. Their mean dropped to 2.8 when responding to this item about a public school. Staff had a mean of 4.1 for charter schools and 3.2 for public schools.

Table 11 illustrates that parents and staff both feel that charter schools are helping children understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as get along with others more effectively.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>( \bar{x} )</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>( \bar{x} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained.</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children feel safe at school.</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline policies are fair and consistently enforced.</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic equity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

*p < .05.
Table 11. Charter school questionnaire—Educational program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=143)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=196)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school offers high quality educational programs and teachers</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have high expectations for children.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children see the relationship between studies and everyday life</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and are being prepared to deal with future issues and problems.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is helping children understand moral and ethical</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities, as well as get along with others.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

than public schools. The table indicates that parents had a mean score of 4.4 for charter schools and 2.0 for public schools and staff had a mean score of 4.3 for charter schools and 2.8 for public schools.

Parent and staff responses to all items in Table 12 are significantly more positive for charter schools, resulting in a .00 significance level and indicating their satisfaction with these items in the charter school.
Table 12. Charter school questionnaire paired t-test—Educational program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school offers high quality educational programs and teachers have high expectations for children.</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children see the relationship between studies and everyday life and are being prepared to deal with future issues and problems.</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas.</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is helping children understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as get along with others.</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

*p<.05.
Tables 13 and 14 indicate that both parents and staff perceive their concerns are better reflected in decisions affecting the school in charter schools than in public schools. The table cites the parent mean of 4.1 for the charter school and 2.3 for public schools and the staff mean of 4.2 for charter schools and 2.4 for public schools.

Table 14 indicates that both parents and staff are significantly more positive about their role in decision making in the charter school setting. Both parents and staff indicate by their responses that they believe their concerns are reflected in decisions affecting charter schools, but not as much in public schools.

Table 13. Charter school questionnaire—Decision making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean SD (N=143)</td>
<td>Mean SD (N=196)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My concerns are reflected in decisions</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affecting the school.</td>
<td>4.1 .9</td>
<td>2.3 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 1.0</td>
<td>2.4 1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

Tables 15 and 16 indicate responses to an item asked only of parents—Transportation services are adequate. Tables 15 and 16 indicate that parents are slightly less satisfied with transportation services available from charter schools than public schools. The mean for charter schools is 3.3 and the mean for public schools is 3.5. Table 16 shows a mean of -.3 for this item on a paired t-test. The significance level is .05. This indicates that parents are not positive about the transportation being adequate in relation to charter schools. Charter schools do not usually provide their students transportation so this is an expected area of some concern.
Table 14. Charter school questionnaire paired t-test—Decision making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My concerns are reflected in decisions affecting the school.</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

*p < .05.
Table 15. Charter school questionnaire—Transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=143)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation services are adequate.</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

Table 16. Charter school questionnaire paired t-test—Transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation services are adequate.</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>-.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.055*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

*p < .05.

Tables 17 and 18 both illustrate results on issues unique to staff. Table 17 identifies items asked only of staff and the frequency information, while Table 18 identifies items asked only of staff and the results of a paired t-test on these items.

The reader can see from Table 17 that staff ranked all items more positively for charter schools than for public schools. The item—Teacher preparation time is adequate and class sizes are appropriate—is ranked much more positive for charter schools with a mean of 4.0 and only
Table 17. Charter school questionnaire—Staff issues*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(N=196)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher preparation time is adequate and class sizes are appropriate.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my job and our school.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures appear to be appropriately prioritized and funded.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching responsibilities are equitable among staff.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' opinions are listened to and respected.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree.

2.3 for the public school setting. Teachers also are more satisfied with their jobs in the charter schools. The mean response for this item was 4.4 for the charter schools and 3.0 for the public schools.

Staff perception of the item—Expenditures appear to be appropriately prioritized and funded—was more positive in charter schools. The mean for charter schools is 4.0, while it is only 2.7 for the public schools. Also, staff responded positively to the question of whether they
Table 18. Charter school questionnaire paired t-test—Staff issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher preparation time is adequate and class sizes are appropriate.</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my job and our school.</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures appear to be appropriately prioritized and funded.</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching responsibilities are equitable among staff.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' opinions are listened to and respected.</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree; 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

*p < .05.

see teaching responsibilities as equitable among themselves. The mean response for charter schools is 4.2 and it is 3.4 for public schools to the item—Teaching responsibilities are equitable among staff.

Teachers indicate they believe their opinions are listened to and respected more in charter schools. The charter schools received a mean of 4.3 for this item, while the public school received a mean of 2.8.

All items were significant, thus indicating staff are positive about these items in the charter school setting.

The questionnaire requested that parents identify the main reason(s) for enrolling their child in a charter school and not enrolling their child in a public school. The main reasons given for
enrolling their child in a charter school were (in rank order): 1) better program, 2) individual attention, 3) more parent participation, 4) discipline and safety concerns with the public school, 5) smaller class sizes, and 6) higher expectations. The main reasons given for not enrolling their children in a public school were: 1) overcrowding, 2) lack of parent involvement opportunities, 3) lack of individual care, 4) lack of discipline and safety concerns, 5) non-nurturing/poor learning environment, 6) unhappiness with the educational programs, 7) low standards and expectations, and 8) student/teacher ratio too high. Fourteen parents (9 percent) did not respond to the short answer questions.

Thirty-five of the parent respondents (24 percent) to the entire questionnaire had no experience with their children in a public school and, therefore, left the public school responses blank. The response variance is large and, thus, the mean is misleading for many of those responses.

A final question was asked of staff respondents requesting that they list the main reason(s) they left the public school to teach in a charter school. The most frequently given reasons were (in rank order): 1) smaller staff/student ratios, 2) more student-centered environment, 3) more flexibility, and 4) better educational programs. Sixty-five percent of the staff did not respond to the short answer question.

Fifty-seven of the staff respondents (29 percent) to the entire questionnaire had never taught in a public school and, therefore, did not respond to the public school items. Thus, the variance is large and the mean may be misleading.

In general, both parents of students attending a charter school and staff are more positive about charter schools than public schools, and parents are more positive than staff.
Iowa Superintendents' Perceptions of Charter Schools

Information from Iowa school superintendents was sought as Iowa is a state with no charter school legislation, and thus, no charter schools. Iowa school superintendents may be typical of many superintendents across the Midwest, and, therefore, much can be learned from them regarding their perceptions of charter schools.

Three hundred and nineteen Iowa superintendents (85 percent) responded to the questionnaire out of the three hundred and seventy-seven Iowa superintendents sent the questionnaire. Four questionnaires were sent back unanswered, making the total number of completed questionnaires three hundred and fifteen. The typical superintendent had twenty-eight years in the field of education. The average number of years in the state of Iowa was twenty-four. This information is illustrated in Table 19.

Table 19. Iowa superintendent responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Number of years in education</th>
<th>Number of years in education in Iowa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>315/377</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Superintendents were asked to identify one or two advantages of charter schools. Table 20 contains the most frequent responses to that question with the number of respondents for each answer and the percentage.

Table 20 illustrates that of the fifty-four respondents, 17 percent believe that fewer state regulations and less red tape is an advantage for charter schools. Twenty-four superintendents, or 8 percent, see the opportunity to be more innovative and flexible as an advantage. Thirteen
Table 20. Advantages of charter schools (from Iowa superintendents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fewer state regulations and red tape</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. More innovation and flexibility</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Focus on clear, narrower school goals</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Creates competition/may cause public schools to change</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. More parent support and involvement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents identified the ability for charter schools to focus on clear, narrower goals as an advantage. Likewise, thirteen superintendents also indicated that they felt an advantage of charter schools is that they can create competition which may cause public schools to change. Finally, ten respondents indicated that an advantage of charter schools is that there can be more parent support and involvement.

Table 21 indicates that of the three hundred and fifteen superintendents who responded to the questionnaire, 66 percent serve in districts of 1,000 or fewer students, 21 percent serve in districts with one thousand and one students to two thousand students, and 13 percent serve in districts with student populations of two thousand or more students. Therefore, the majority of Iowa school superintendents responding to this questionnaire are serving in districts with a student population of less than one thousand students.

Table 21. Iowa superintendents—Size of district (N=315)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of district you serve?</th>
<th>1000 or &lt;= 66%</th>
<th>1001-2000 = 21%</th>
<th>2001 or &gt; = 13%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Research Question Four — To what degree are Iowa school superintendents knowledgeable and/or open to charter schools?

Table 22 indicates that three hundred and fourteen Iowa superintendents responded to the item asking about the amount of knowledge they have regarding the charter school movement. Sixteen percent indicated they did not have much knowledge, 76 percent indicated they had some knowledge, and 8 percent indicated they had very much knowledge.

Table 22. Iowa superintendents questionnaire—Knowledge of charter schools (N=315)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Not much (%)</th>
<th>Some (%)</th>
<th>Very much (%)</th>
<th>No. responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount of knowledge regarding the charter school movement?</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charters as viable option in school reform?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive of creating charter schools?</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six respondents chose not to answer the questions as to whether they believe charter schools are a viable option in school reform. Seventeen percent of the superintendents said yes, charter schools are a viable option. Thirty-six percent believe that charter schools are not a viable option, and 48 percent indicated that they are not sure.
In response to the question of whether they are supportive of creating charter schools, five superintendents did not respond. Thirty-seven percent indicated that they are supportive. The most frequent short answer responses from superintendents who were supportive were: 1) void of "red tape", regulations, and unions; 2) it's an alternative for children; and 3) if it will work, we should let it happen.

Nine percent of the superintendents indicated that they are not supportive of creating charter schools and gave five main reasons: 1) It will take money away from public education; 2) concern that charter schools will take the "best" kids; 3) respondents indicated a strong support for public education only; 4) respondents indicated that they do not see a need in Iowa for charter schools; and 5) public schools could excel if they were free from rules and regulations.

Fifty-four percent responded that they are not sure whether or not they are supportive of creating charter schools. The most commonly given reason was that the respondent simply did not know enough about charter schools to have an opinion.

Table 23 indicates responses given by Iowa superintendents regarding success of charter schools and success of public schools if allowed waivers to be free from state regulations. Three hundred superintendents responded to the question in relation to charter school success and two hundred and ninety-eight responded to the question in relation to public schools.

Thirty-three percent of the superintendents indicated that they believe with this freedom, charter schools will be successful, and 57 percent indicated that they believe public schools could be more successful with this same freedom. Twenty-two percent indicated that they do not believe the freedom from state regulations will make charter schools successful and 13 percent indicated that such freedoms would not help public schools be more successful either. Forty-four percent of the Iowa superintendents indicated that they are not sure whether freedom from state regulations
Table 23. Iowa superintendents questionnaire—Waiving regulations (N=315)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Not sure (%)</th>
<th>No. responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charter schools must identify achievement goals their students will reach. In order to stay open and be waived from regulations, they must demonstrate that students reach these goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With this freedom from regulations, do you think charter schools will be successful?</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With this freedom from regulations, do you think public schools could be more successful?</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

will allow charter schools to be successful and 30 percent indicated that they are not sure whether this freedom would help public schools be more successful than they presently are.

Table 24 identifies responses to questions about charter schools and competition in relation to public schools, concerns about district sponsored charter schools, and personnel issues.

When asked the question—Will competition with charter schools cause more innovation and change in public schools?—two hundred and ninety-five superintendents responded. Thirty percent said yes, 35 percent said no, and 35 percent said not sure.

Three hundred and one respondees answered the question regarding their concerns about district sponsored charter schools. Fifty-seven percent indicated that they would have concerns with district sponsored charter schools. They gave one key reason—loss of funds for public education. Twenty-three percent indicated that they would have no concerns. The main reason given with the response of no concern was that there would still be local control. Twenty percent indicated that they were not sure.
Table 24. Iowa superintendents questionnaire—Charter school questions (N=315)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Not sure (%)</th>
<th>No. responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will competition with charter schools cause more innovation and change in public schools?</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you have concerns regarding district sponsored charter schools?</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should individuals without a teacher’s license be allowed to teach in a charter school?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should charter schools be allowed to hire only nonunion teachers/personnel?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two hundred ninety-seven superintendents responded to the question asking whether individuals without a teacher’s license should be allowed to teach in a charter school. Sixty-four percent were not sure. Twenty-three percent were opposed, responding no, and 14 percent said yes. Whether or not charter schools should be allowed to hire only nonunion teachers and personnel received two hundred and ninety responses. Fifty-six percent said no, 20 percent said yes, and 24 percent indicated they were not sure.

Table 25 addresses the responses to questions about sponsoring agencies for charter schools. When asked whether the following agencies should be allowed to sponsor charter schools, the responses were as follows: state boards of education received 30 percent yes, 57 percent no, and 13 percent not sure; local boards of education received 47 percent yes, 41 percent no, and 12 percent not sure; universities received 24 percent yes, 59 percent no, and 17 percent
Table 25. Iowa superintendents questionnaire—Charter sponsoring agencies questions (N=315)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Not sure (%)</th>
<th>No. responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that the following agencies should be allowed to sponsor charter schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State boards of education</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local boards of education</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Education Agencies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private persons (i.e., teachers, parents)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have concerns regarding charter schools run by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State boards of education</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local boards of education</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

not sure; Area Education Agencies received 11 percent yes, 75 percent no, and 14 percent not sure; and private persons received 28 percent yes, 57 percent no, and 15 percent not sure.

When asked the question—Do you have concern regarding charter schools run by state boards of education, local boards of education, and universities?—the following responses were received. Seventy-two percent had concerns with state boards of education, 5 percent had no concerns with state boards of education, and 13 percent were not sure. Fifty percent had concerns with local boards of education, 33 percent and no concerns, and 16 percent were not sure. Lastly, 71 percent had concerns with universities running a charter school, 16 percent did not have any concern, and 13 percent indicated that they were not sure.

Sixty-nine percent of the two hundred and ninety-four respondents to the question—Does Iowa need educational reform?—said yes, as is indicated in Table 26. Fourteen percent said no
and 17 percent indicated that they were not sure. Seventy-seven of the superintendents responding to this question indicated in short answer form that standards and accountability are needed in Iowa. Forty-two additional respondents indicated in short answer form that there is a need in Iowa for standards.

The question—Is it really possible to fix public schools?—received one hundred and eighty-four responses. Eighty-three percent of the superintendents indicated that they believe it is possible to fix public education. The one short answer response that outnumbered all others as to how superintendents thought it could be done was through standards. Other short answer responses included less regulations, more accountability of schools to the public, smaller schools and smaller class sizes, dissolving or modifying unions and collective bargaining, fully funding state mandates and programs, and eliminating teacher tenure. Five percent of the superintendents indicated that they do not feel it is possible to fix public education, and 13 percent indicated that they are not sure.

Table 27 indicates the results of a chi-square test done on each questionnaire item relating to charter schools. A chi-square test was done because the questionnaire used a nonordered scale and the researcher wanted to determine whether response patterns differed by school district size.
Table 27. Superintendents questionnaire—Chi-square (N=315)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Observed N</th>
<th>$x^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Residual$^b$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charters are a viable option in school reform?</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you supportive of creating charter schools?</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With freedom from regulations, do you think charter schools will be</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>successful?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With freedom from regulations, do you think public schools could be</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more successful?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will competition with charter schools cause more innovation and</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>-9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change in public schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that the following agencies/individuals should be</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowed to sponsor charter schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State boards of education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local boards of education</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-60.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend: Yes, No, Not Sure.

$^b$The residuals for each item are in three breakdowns: top number represents responses from superintendents in districts of 1,000 or fewer students; middle number 1,001–2,000 students; and bottom number 2,000+ students.

*p < .05.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Observed N</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Residual $^b$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Education Agencies</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>232.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private persons</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you have concerns regarding district</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charter schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should individuals without a teacher’s license be allowed to teach</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>126.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a charter school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should charter schools be allowed to hire only nonunion teachers/</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>-39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personnel?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it possible to fix public schools?</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>315.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>140.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have concerns regarding charter schools run by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State boards of education</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>207.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>117.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local boards of education</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>195.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>114.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Iowa need educational reform?</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>166.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>104.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-47.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only one question—Will competition with charter schools cause more innovation and change in public schools?—was not significant at .51. The residuals (chi-square values) for each item are in three breakdowns—the top number represents responses from superintendents in districts of 1,000 or fewer students; the middle number is for responses by district size of 1,001 to 2,000 students; and the bottom of the three numbers is by district size of 2,000 or more students.

Residuals greater than two are contributors to the significance value. The first question—Charters are a viable option in school reform?—is significant. Superintendents responding from medium size schools were positive with a residual of 7.0. Large size school superintendents were even more positive with a residual of 45.0, thus contributing to a significant chi-square value.

The second question asked whether Iowa superintendents are supportive of creating charter schools. Again the chi-square value is significant with superintendents from medium size districts having a residual of 62.7 and from large size districts having a residual of 11.7, both indicating a positive response, while superintendents from small size districts were less positive.

The next item in the table indicates whether superintendents believe that with freedom from regulation, will charter schools be successful. The chi-square value is significant at 21.8, but with only superintendents from large districts positive with a residual of 33.0. The same question was then asked about public schools and whether they could be more successful with freedom from regulations. Again the chi-square value was significant at 91.0, but this time the superintendents responding from small size districts were positive with a residual of 71.7.

When asked the question of whether competition with charter schools will cause more innovation and change in public schools, the small size district superintendents did not contribute to the significant chi-square of 1.3, and thus, were not positive. Both the medium and large size
district superintendents did have positive responses. Their residuals were 3.7 and 5.7, respectively.

The next item asked superintendents about specific agencies/individuals and whether they felt each should be allowed to sponsor a charter school. The first agency asked about was the state board of education. The chi-square of 87.1 was significant with superintendents from middle size districts being the most positive with a residual of 70.7. The second agency identified was local boards of education. Again, the chi-square was significant at 65.4, but this time the contributors were superintendents from small districts responding positively with a residual of 41.7 and superintendents from middle size districts also responding positively with a residual of 23.7.

Universities were then identified and the chi-square was again significant. Middle size school district superintendents were the most positive with a residual of 76. Area Education Agencies and private individuals were the final two agencies/individuals addressed in the question of whether or not they should be allowed to sponsor a charter school. Both were significant with chi-squares of 232.7 and 85.5, respectively. Superintendents from middle size districts were the most positive with a residual of 124.7 for the Area Education Agencies and 72.3 for private persons.

Superintendents from small districts were the contributing group to the significant chi-square of 77.2 for the question—Would you have concerns regarding district charter schools? The residual for their group for this question was 71.7 indicating their group most often agreed that they had concerns.

The next two questions were both significant and middle size district superintendents were the most positive respondents to each question. The first question asked—Should individuals without a teacher’s license be allowed to teach in a charter school? The middle size district group’s residual was 90. The next question asked whether charter schools should be allowed to
hire only nonunion teachers and personnel. The middle size group's residual was 66.3. Both questions had significant chi-square values of 126.1 and 69.1, respectively.

The question—Is it really possible to fix public schools had a significant chi-square value of 315.0. Small district superintendents were the group contributing the most positively to this value. The residual for their group was 140.3.

The next three items on the questionnaire asked the superintendents whether they had concerns regarding charter schools run by 1) state boards of education, 2) local board of education, and 3) universities. All three chi-square values were significant. Superintendents from small districts were the most positive in their responses to each question with residuals of 117.7, 51, and 114, respectively.

The final question on the instrument asked whether superintendents believe Iowa is in need of educational reform. Again, the chi-square value was significant at 166.1, and again, the superintendents from small districts contributed the most positively to that value with a residual of 104. The next two questions were both significant and middle size district superintendents were the most positive for both questions. The first question was—Should individuals without a teacher's license be allowed to teach in a charter school? The middle size district group's residual was 90, indicating positive responses. The next question asked whether charter schools should be allowed to hire only nonunion teachers and personnel. The middle size group's residual was 66.3, again indicating positive responses. Both questions had significant chi-square values.

The question—Is it really possible to fix public schools—had a significant chi-square value. The superintendents contributing to this value by responding the most positively were from small districts. The residual for their group was 140.3.
Research Question Five — What are the advantages/disadvantages and strengths/weaknesses of existing charter schools of which potential patrons should be aware?

Parents identify six advantages or strengths of charter schools over public schools. Table 28 indicates the advantages with the percent of responses. Additional advantages and strengths given by parents include: 1) different philosophy, 2) more student-centered, 3) independent learning pace, 4) more variety in teaching styles, and 5) more nurturing environment. Disadvantages and weaknesses included lack of transportation provided by the school and lack of technology.

Table 28. Advantages/strengths of charter schools as identified by parents (N = 133)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantage/strength</th>
<th>Percent giving this answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual attention to child</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better program</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better discipline and less safety concerns</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More parent participation opportunities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller class sizes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher expectations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ten parents did not respond to this item.

Staff responses addressing advantages and strengths of charter schools can be viewed in Table 29. One hundred twenty-eight of the one hundred ninety-six staff respondents did not respond to this particular item.

Additional advantages or strengths listed include: 1) better discipline; 2) opportunity to do more; 3) more parent support and involvement; 4) less politics, and 5) more teacher involvement in decision-making. The disadvantages/weaknesses identified included lack of technology and lack of teacher preparation time.
Table 29. Advantages/strengths of charter schools as identified by staff (N=68)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages/strengths</th>
<th>Percent giving this answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smaller class sizes</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More flexibility</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More student-centered</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better programs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better treatment of teachers by administration</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Six — How effectively are charter schools addressing the standards areas as identified in World Class Schools?

Table 30 illustrates the results of a one sample t-test from the parent questionnaire responses. Questionnaire items were broken down to fit each of the nine standards areas as identified in Chalker and Haynes' World Class Schools. The test value was set at 3 as that is the middle response in the scale and the questionnaire has not been used before. The scale range is as follows: Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neither Disagree nor Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5.

The nine areas include 1) educational expenditures, 2) time on task, 3) class size, 4) teachers, 5) assessment of student achievement, 6) school governance, 7) parents, home and community, 8) students, and 9) curriculum.

At an alpha level of .05, all areas are significant. One item in the area of educational expenditures—Transportation services are adequate—was .011.

Table 31 provides the results of a one sample t-test to determine the effectiveness of charter schools meeting the standards areas as identified by Chalker and Haynes. The test value was again set at three with a significance level of .05. All items in the nine areas are significant at .00.
Table 30. Effectiveness of charter schools at meeting standards areas (Parent questionnaire results)—One sample t-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Item</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$ dif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Expenditures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation services are adequate.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>.011*</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time on Task</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available before, after, and during school hours to help my child.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Size</strong> (No parent questions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the teachers.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline policies are fair and consistently enforced.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment of Student Achievement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child’s progress reports are adequate and appropriate.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Governance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My concerns are reflected in decisions affecting the school.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.
Table 30. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Item</th>
<th>(\bar{x})</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>(\bar{x}) diff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents, Home, and Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient opportunities for my involvement are provided and I am actively involved in my child's education.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the school's programs and operation and I am informed regarding school policies and procedures.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience is that parent-teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate with me regularly regarding my children.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel welcome.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with our school.</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is helping my child understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as get along with others.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and ethnic equity.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers give my child personal encouragement so my child is motivated to do his/her best.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with how my child is treated by teachers, counselors, and administrators.</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child gets satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal problems.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Item</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$ diff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My child gets satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses he/she should take.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children get encouragement and support to not drop out.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child feels safe at school.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Curriculum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Item</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$ diff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My child sees the relationship between studies and everyday life and is being prepared to deal with future issues and problems.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school offers high quality educational programs and teachers have high expectations for my child.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 31. Effectiveness of charter schools at meeting standards areas (Staff questionnaire results)—One sample t-test (Test value = 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Item</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>( \bar{x} ) diff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Expenditures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures appear to be appropriately prioritized and funded.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time on Task</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available before, after, and during school hours to help students.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher preparation time is adequate and class sizes are appropriate.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and community members respect the teachers.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my job and our school.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching responsibilities are equitable among staff.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment of Student Achievement</strong> (No staff questions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*p < .05.
Table 31. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Item</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$ dif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Governance</strong>&lt;br&gt;Teachers' opinions are listened to and respected.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My concerns are reflected in decisions affecting the school.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents, Home, and Community</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sufficient opportunities for parent involvement are provided and parents are actively involved in their children's education.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents understand the school's programs and operation and are informed regarding school policies and procedures.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience is that parent-teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate regularly with parents.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents feel welcome.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and ethnic equity.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do a good job of helping students understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as get along with each other.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong>&lt;br&gt;I am satisfied with how students are treated by teachers, counselors, and administrators.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 31. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Item</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$ dif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students get satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they should take.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get encouragement and support to not drop out.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with special needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe at school.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers give students personal encouragement so students are</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivated to do their best.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students see the relationship between studies and everyday life and are</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being prepared to deal with future issues and problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We offer high quality educational programs and teachers have high</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>.00*</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expectations for students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first standards area addressed in Tables 30 and 31 is Educational Expenditures. Three items on both the parent and staff questionnaire were tied to this standards area. They include: 1) Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning; 2) The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained; and 3) School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are adequate to support teaching and learning. On both questionnaires, the items are ranked positive.

The parent questionnaire had one parent specific item for parents to respond to—Transportation services are adequate. In this case, parents found public schools more satisfactory than charter schools (p<0.05). Charter schools do not usually provide students with transportation.

The staff questionnaire also had a staff specific item—Expenditures appear to be appropriately prioritized and funded. The response is significantly positive as indicated in the table.

The second standards area is Time on Task. One item on both questionnaires addressed this area. The item—Teachers are available before, after, and during school hours to help my child/students—was significant on both sets of questionnaires, and therefore, positive.

The third standards area identified in Tables 30 and 31 is Class Size. The parent questionnaire did not address this item directly. However, Table 28 identifies it as being one of the top three reasons parents gave in a short answer response to why they have enrolled their child in a charter school and not in a public school. Table 29 lists smaller class sizes as the most significant reason staff gave in a short answer response to the question of why they have chosen to work in a charter school and not in a public school.

One item on the staff survey did address this standard area specifically—Teacher preparation time is adequate and class sizes are appropriate. Staff indicated that preparation time is more adequate in the public schools than in charter schools. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether
responses are to the first part of the item—Teacher preparation time is adequate—or the second part of the item—class sizes are appropriate.

The third standards area dealt with in Tables 30 and 31 is Teachers (teacher quality). There were two items addressing this area on the parent questionnaire and three items on the staff questionnaire. The parent questionnaire items were—I respect the teachers—and Discipline policies are fair and consistently enforced. Both items were found to be positive. The staff questionnaire items included: 1) Parents and community members respect the teachers; 2) I am satisfied with my job and our school; and 3) Teaching responsibilities are equitable among staff. All three items are significant and ranked positive by staff.

Table 30 indicates that the area of Student Achievement was addressed only on the parent questionnaire with the item—My child’s progress reports are adequate and appropriate. This item was seen as positive by parents.

Both the parent and staff questionnaires have one item that addresses the standards area of Governance. The item—My concerns are reflected in decisions affecting the school—was significant at .00 on both questionnaires, and therefore, positive.

Tables 30 and 31 indicate that both sets of questionnaires had six (on the staff questionnaire) to seven (on the parent questionnaire) items addressing the standards area of Parents, Home, and Community. Items addressing this area include: 1) Sufficient opportunities for my involvement are provided and I am actively involved in my child’s education; 2) I understand the school’s programs and operation and I am informed regarding the school policies and procedures; 3) My experience is that parent–teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate with me regularly regarding my children; 4) I (parents) feel welcome; 5) I (parents) am satisfied with our school; 6) The school is helping my child understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as
get along with others; and 7) Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and ethnic equity. All items were significant. Parents and staff ranked all items in this area as positive.

An additional standards area is Students (their contribution to the educational environment). There were seven items on both questionnaires. The are: 1) Teachers give my child personal encouragement so my child is motivated to do his/her best; 2) I am satisfied with how my child is treated by teachers, counselors, and administrators; 3) My child gets satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal problems; 4) My child gets satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses he/she should take; 5) Children get encouragement and support to not drop out; 6) The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs; and 7) My child feels safe at school. All items were significant and viewed as positive on both parent and staff questionnaires.

The final standards area is Curriculum. Three items on both sets of surveys addressed this area. One item is—My child sees the relationship between studies and everyday life and is being prepared to deal with future issues and problems. This item is significant. Two additional items are: Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas; and the school offers high quality educational programs and teachers have high expectations for my child. Both items were found to be significant and were seen as positive.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the viability of charter schools in the United States in the late 1990s. The charter school movement is a growing phenomenon that has expanded even as the research for this document was being gathered and written. There were six research questions to be answered as a result of this study.

1. What really prompted the charter school movement in the United States?
2. How are charter schools formed?
3. What is the satisfaction level of parents of students attending a charter school and staff versus their satisfaction level towards public schools?
4. To what degree are Iowa school superintendents knowledgeable and/or open to charter schools?
5. What are the advantages/disadvantages and strengths/weaknesses of existing charter schools of which potential patrons should be aware?
6. How effectively are charter schools addressing the standards areas as identified in World Class Schools?

In order to answer four of the research questions, three questionnaires were developed. One was developed and sent to Iowa school superintendents. One was developed and sent to parents of students attending charter schools in the states of Arizona, California, Minnesota, and New Mexico, and a similar questionnaire was developed and sent to staff working in charter schools in those same states. All questionnaires were developed and sent during the fall semester of 1997. All participation was strictly voluntary.
The response rate was 85 percent for the Iowa school superintendents. Seventy-six charter schools in the four states had indicated they would participate in the study by distributing ten parent questionnaires and ten staff questionnaires and returning them. The final response rate was 49 percent of the charter schools located and operating during the 1997-98 school year. This resulted in one hundred and forty-three parent questionnaires and one hundred and ninety-six staff questionnaires.

Status of Charter Schools: A Summary

The charter school movement appears to continue to grow in this country. Advocates of charter schools are positive and supportive. As of January 1997, the total number of states with charter schools was seventeen, increasing from ten in January 1996, and the total number of charter schools in January 1997 was four hundred twenty-eight, increasing from two hundred and fifty-two in January 1996 (Berman, Nelson, & Seppanen, 1997).

As of February, 1998, there are two bills being discussed in the Iowa legislature regarding charters schools. House File 2196 was submitted by Representative Phil Wise (Democrat) of Keokuk and Representative Steven Warnstadt (Democrat) of Sioux City. HSB 602 is also being discussed. HSB 602 is a bill filed by House Education chairperson Don Gries.

Parents of children in charter schools like charter schools better than public schools. Staff working in charter schools like charter schools better than public schools. Both groups of respondees are more positive toward charter schools than they are toward public schools. Overall, parents ranked charter schools higher than staff, though both parents and staff ranked charter schools higher than public schools on all items.
Iowa school superintendents indicated that they are generally "not sure" when it comes to issues of charter schools. Superintendents serving large districts of 2,000 students or more indicated a more positive perception of charter schools.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the viability of charter schools in the United States in the late 1990s. At the present time, the results of this study indicate that charter schools are a viable option. Economically, they are struggling, particularly with the lack of start-up funding available, but they are successfully making it, in spite of this obstacle.

Socially, some parents are dissatisfied with public education and charter schools are viewed as a viable option by them. Politically, the pressure is on to give parents choice in education. More and more states are considering legislation to give parents and educators the option of charter schools for children.

Educationally, it's simply too soon to tell. Parents and staff indicate very positive responses toward charter schools. However, with the first legislation in place in 1992, insufficient time has passed to adequately study student achievement in charter schools. More data need to be collected to determine student success and whether charter schools are truly succeeding educationally.

The following additional conclusions are presented in the order of each research question.

Research Question One

What really prompted the charter school movement in the United States?

The Review of Literature indicated two main reasons prompting the charter school movement in this country. 1) People are dissatisfied with the present educational institution and
wish to pursue their own educational vision. 2) Those schools and their creators who wish to pursue their own educational vision seek to do so with autonomy.

Research Question Two

How are charter schools formed?

Charter schools are formed through written charters or contracts within the guidelines of each state’s particular legislation. Goals, objectives, accountability, and responsibilities are all defined in the charter.

Research Question Three

What is the satisfaction level of parents and staff of students attending a charter school versus their satisfaction level toward public schools?

The satisfaction level is high of both parents and staff toward charter school versus their satisfaction level toward public schools. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question Four

To what degree are Iowa school superintendents knowledgeable and/or open to charter schools?

Most Iowa superintendents believe they have some knowledge of the charter school movement but are unsure whether or not they see charter schools as a viable option for the state of Iowa. The main concern shared by the superintendents was the loss of funding that would go to the charter school and leave the local district. Superintendents from districts of 2,000 or more students were more positive in their responses to charter schools.
Research Question Five

What are the advantages/disadvantages and strengths/weaknesses of existing charter schools of which potential patrons should be aware?

Most of the questionnaire responses from both staff and parents were so positive that it was difficult to determine disadvantages and weaknesses of charter schools. The advantages and strengths identified most by parents were 1) individual attention to the child, and 2) better program. The advantages and strengths identified most by staff were 1) smaller class sizes, and 2) more flexibility.

Both parents and staff felt that technology was lacking in the charter schools. Parents also identified lack of transportation as a disadvantage/weakness and staff identified lack of teacher preparation time as a disadvantage/weakness.

Research Question Six

How effectively are charter schools addressing the standards areas as identified in World Class Schools?

All areas were identified as being significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Charter schools are effectively meeting the standards areas of 1) educational expenditures, 2) time on task, 3) class size, 4) teachers, 5) assessment of student achievement, 6) school governance, 7) parents, home, and community, 8) students, and 9) curriculum.
Limitations

Use and interpretation of the previous conclusions should be limited by the following:

1. The charter school questionnaire respondents, except Iowa superintendents, are all parents of students in a charter school or staff working in a charter school and are, not surprisingly, more positive to items about charter schools than public schools. Further, there was no way to prescreen these respondents. Therefore, the ability to generalize from this information is limited.

2. Some respondents to the questionnaires about charter and public schools had no experience or background in the public schools and, therefore, could only answer for the charter school.

3. The questionnaire items asked of Iowa superintendents were limited to three possible responses: yes, no, not sure.

4. Answers to the research question identifying advantages/disadvantages and strengths/weaknesses of existing charter schools were taken from short answer response items. Many of the participants did not respond to the short answer requests for information.

5. Questionnaire items should have been more specifically matched to the standards areas as identified in *World Class Schools*.

6. Returns were lower than expected from charter school respondents. The actual number of respondents was one hundred forty-three parents and one hundred ninety-six staff.

7. Responses were perceptual, not confirmable or validated, and were not randomly obtained or related to causal determinations.
Discussion

The results of the study were expected. Parents of children in a charter school and staff working in a charter school should be excited and positive about what they and their school are accomplishing. Parents and staff indicate that they are very satisfied with charter schools. Parents and staff also indicate that charter schools are effectively meeting the world class standards areas of educational expenditures; time on task; class size; teachers; assessment of student achievement; school governance; parents, home, and community; and curriculum.

A weakness in this study was the sampling of only parents and staff in charter schools. Most parents with children in a charter school have their children there due to dissatisfaction with the public school system. Likewise, most staff working in a charter school are working in a charter school due to unhappiness with the public schools. Therefore, there was a natural tendency on the part of those filling out the questionnaires to be more positive towards charter schools than public schools.

An additional problem was in getting the respondents for the questionnaires to gather data about charter and public schools. The researcher contacted the directors of all charter schools in the states of Arizona, California, Minnesota, and New Mexico. The directors were given an explanation as to the purpose of the study and the objectives. The directors who indicated that they would participate were then each sent ten parent questionnaires and ten staff questionnaires and asked to distribute them and return them in a postage paid envelope. As it turned out, this was a burdensome task for administrators who are already busy. It was frequently delegated to a secretary who determined it to be a low priority task. It would be preferable for the researcher to have direct contact with the people actually filling out all questionnaires.

All three questionnaires had items that were not effective questions or were not as effective as they could have been at soliciting the needed information for this study. An example of this is
the item—Teacher preparation time is adequate and class sizes are appropriate—on the staff questionnaire. Many staff indicated that they would have liked to respond to this item as two separate items. Another example is the question on the superintendents’ questionnaire—Is it possible to really fix public schools? Many respondents were offended by the word "fix". More time and consideration should go into the preparation of questionnaires if further research is done.

Information from Iowa superintendents was sought only for the purpose of providing the framework of further research. No statistical tests could be performed as the information sought was descriptive only. Iowa superintendents did, however, indicate a need in their state for standards and accountability. Further, superintendents in Iowa’s smallest districts of 1,000 students or less, also indicated that they believe Iowa is in need of educational reform.

Recommendations

Research recommendations

As a result of this study, the following recommendations for further research can be made:

1. Efforts need to be made to contact parents and staff of students in a charter school directly and not be dependent upon a third party to distribute and collect questionnaire data.

2. Future studies need to include parents and staff who have experience in both the public school system and a charter school. Respondents need to include parents of students in a public school and parents of students in a charter school. Respondents also need to include staff presently working in a public school and staff presently working in a charter school.
3. More time and consideration needs to be given in developing items for the questionnaires. This includes the questionnaire given to Iowa school superintendents and the charter school questionnaire.

4. The Iowa superintendent questionnaire needs to be repeated with a Likert scale response mode. The researcher needs to avoid using a three item response mode.

5. More time needs to be taken to determine items specific to the standards as identified in Chalker and Haynes' *World Class Schools*.

6. The research question—How effectively are charter schools addressing the standards areas as identified in *World Class Schools*?—could be a study in itself. A comparison needs to be done between charter and public schools and the researcher needs to also seek information about how effectively public schools are addressing the standards areas.

7. An additional study needs to be done to compare charter schools and public schools in the areas of finance and economics. The financial and economic impact of charter schools on public education and the resulting consequences on student achievement need to be studied.

8. It is imperative that a study of student achievement/success, including gain scores, be done on charter schools to ensure a high quality education for the students who attend. In addition, a comparative study needs to be done of student achievement in neighboring public schools to ensure high quality education there, also.
Practitioner recommendations

As a result of this study, the following recommendations for practice can be made:

1. Charter school leaders need to identify and meet world class standards in their schools.
2. Charter school leaders need to communicate openly and honestly with parents to develop an understanding of what parents want in their children’s education.
3. Charter school leaders need to have a vision for their school(s) and a plan for how to achieve that vision.
4. Charter school leaders need to identify assessment measures and accountability and make that information public.
5. Charter school leaders need to seek ways to provide transportation for the students attending their schools.
6. Charter school leaders need to explore all options to provide more technology to students and staff in charter schools.

As the charter school movement continues to grow in the United States, more studies should be encouraged to keep the success or failure of the schools accountable to the public.
APPENDIX A. HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL FORM
Information for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects
Iowa State University
(Please type and use the attached instructions for completing this form)

1. Title of Project: The Viability of Charter Schools in the United States: A Feasibility Study

2. I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to insure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are protected. I will report any adverse reactions to the committee. Additions to or changes in research procedures after the project has been approved will be submitted to the committee for review. I agree to request renewal of approval for any project continuing more than one year.

3. Typed name of principal investigator: Ann R. Curphey
Date: 8/6/97
Signature of principal investigator: [Signature]

4. Department: Professional Studies in Education
Campus address: N225 Lagomarcino Hall
Phone number to report results: 4-5521

5. Signatures of other investigators:
Date: 8/6/97
Relationship to principal investigator: Dissertation Advisor

6. Principal investigator(s) (check all that apply):
- Faculty
- Staff
- Graduate student
- Undergraduate student

7. Project (check all that apply):
- Research
- Thesis or dissertation
- Class project
- Independent Study (490, 590, Honors project)

8. Number of subjects (complete all that apply):
- # adults, non-students
- # ISU students
- # minors under 14
- # minors 14 - 17

9. Brief description of proposed research involving human subjects: (See instructions, item 7. Use an additional page if needed.)

   I will be surveying staff and parents of schools in the states of Arizona, California, Minnesota and New Mexico. This will be primarily an attitudinal survey. One more state may be added if the sample is not large enough. All Iowa superintendents will also be surveyed regarding their knowledge and attitudes of charter schools.

(Please do not send research, thesis, or dissertation proposals.)

10. Informed Consent:
- Signed informed consent will be obtained. (Attach a copy of your form.)
- Modified informed consent will be obtained. (See instructions, item 8.)
- Not applicable to this project.
9. Confidentiality of Data: Describe below the methods you will use to ensure the confidentiality of data obtained. (See instructions, item 9.)

Schools involved will provide all data on a survey instrument. Individual responses will not be identified.

10. What risks or discomfort will be part of the study? Will subjects in the research be placed at risk or incur discomfort? Describe any risks to the subjects and precautions that will be taken to minimize them. (The concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes risks to subjects’ dignity and self-respect as well as psychological or emotional risk. See instructions, item 10.)

None

11. CHECK ALL of the following that apply to your research:

- A. Medical clearance necessary before subjects can participate
- B. Administration of substances (foods, drugs, etc.) to subjects
- C. Physical exercise or conditioning for subjects
- D. Samples (blood, tissue, etc.) from subjects
- E. Administration of infectious agents or recombinant DNA
- F. Deception of subjects
- G. Subjects under 14 years of age and/or Subjects 14 - 17 years of age
- H. Subjects in institutions (nursing homes, prisons, etc.)
- I. Research must be approved by another institution or agency (Attach letters of approval)

If you checked any of the items in 11, please complete the following in the space below (include any attachments):

Items A–E Describe the procedures and note the proposed safety precautions.

Items D–E The principal investigator should send a copy of this form to Environmental Health and Safety, 118 Agronomy Lab for review.

Item F Describe how subjects will be deceived; justify the deception; indicate the debriefing procedure, including the timing and information to be presented to subjects.

Item G For subjects under the age of 14, indicate how informed consent will be obtained from parents or legally authorized representatives as well as from subjects.

Items H–I Specify the agency or institution that must approve the project. If subjects in any outside agency or institution are involved, approval must be obtained prior to beginning the research, and the letter of approval should be filed.

Individual charter schools in the states of Arizona, California, Minnesota and New Mexico
All Iowa public schools
Checklist for Attachments and Time Schedule

The following are attached (please check):

12. ☑ Letter or written statement to subjects indicating clearly:
   a) the purpose of the research
   b) the use of any identifier codes (names, #s), how they will be used, and when they will be removed (see item 17)
   c) an estimate of time needed for participation in the research
   d) if applicable, the location of the research activity
   e) how you will ensure confidentiality
   f) in a longitudinal study, when and how you will contact subjects later
   g) that participation is voluntary; nonparticipation will not affect evaluations of the subject

13. ☐ Signed consent form (if applicable)

14. ☐ Letter of approval for research from cooperating organizations or institutions (if applicable)

15. ☑ Data-gathering instruments

16. Anticipated dates for contact with subjects:
   First contact: October 15, 1997
   Last contact: Month/Day/Year

17. If applicable: anticipated date that identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments and/or audio or visual tapes will be erased:

   Month/Day/Year

18. Signature of Departmental Executive Officer: Omai C. Robinson Date: 9/29/97
    Department or Administrative Unit: Professional Studies

19. Decision of the University Human Subjects Review Committee:
    ☑ Project approved  ☐ Project not approved  ☐ No action required

   Patricia M. Keith Date: 10/3/97
   Name of Committee Chairperson  Signature of Committee Chairperson
Please note that the letter to Superintendent of Schools is not yet signed by Dr. Manatt. I am sure this was just an oversight on his part. All letters and surveys were given to him together and I believe this particular letter was stuck to another paper in the stack and he simply overlooked it. All items were approved by him and signed over the weekend. I hope this does not cause a problem. Thank you.

Ann R. Curphey  
9/29/97
June 16, 1997

Dear Director:

For the past twenty years, the School Improvement Model (SIM) Project's Office at Iowa State University has assisted public schools, public school districts, and independent schools as they sought to restructure and reform. Recently, we have concluded that a completely new departure, the charter movement for schools such as yours, holds a great deal of promise.

We intend to build a database of charter school elements to be used by other educators attempting this reformation. Ann Curphey, a doctoral student with the SIM Project, will use this project as her dissertation.

At the present time, Iowa does not have any legislation supportive of charter schools. We have selected the two states, California and Arizona, with the most charters and the two states, Minnesota and New Mexico, with the fewest charters to begin gathering information. These four states are also indicative of states where charter legislation and resulting schools have been in existence the longest.

Your school address was located in the Center for Education Reform "National Charter School Directory." We are asking that you send a copy of your school's charter and complete the enclosed form by August 1, 1997. A self addressed stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you very much for your time and help.

Most Sincerely,

Richard P. Manatt
Director and Professor of Education

Ann Curphey
Graduate Assistant

enclosure 1
APPENDIX C. INFORMATION FORM
Name of School______________________

Your Name________________________

Address: __________________________

__________________________________

__________________________________

Phone Number _______________________

___ Secondary Grades _____________

___ Primary Grades _________________

________ Enrollment (1996-97)

Number of years school has existed _________

Start up date ________________

School theme ______________________

Position/Title ______________________

I am willing to be contacted for further information regarding this study.

Yes ________________ No ______________

Return to SIM office by August 1, 1997.
   Iowa State University
   N225 Lagomarcino Hall
   Ames, Iowa  50011
APPENDIX D. LETTER TO PARTICIPATING DIRECTORS
Dear Director:

Shortly after June 16, you received a letter requesting your help providing information to the School Improvement Model Project's Office. You indicated that you would be willing to provide information and help us build a database of charter school elements.

Because we are a state with no legislation supporting charter schools, we are hoping to use the information that is shared with us to help Iowa get started and pursue charter legislation. We recognize that Iowa has progress to make in this new, innovative area of school reform. Please distribute the enclosed ten staff surveys to nine of your staff and answer one survey yourself. Enclosed are also ten parent surveys. We suggest that the easiest way to distribute the parent surveys would be to simply send them home with ten students and request the parents return them to you through their child. Each survey has an envelope so staff and parents can return them to you sealed.

Enclosed is a self-addressed envelope for you to return all survey information to us. No individual respondents or schools will be identified. We realize what an imposition this is on you and cannot thank you enough for taking the time to help. Therefore, to show our appreciation, we will be conducting a lottery for $300.00. Please write your name and address on the enclosed card and return it immediately to us with the surveys. When both your card and the surveys have been received at Iowa State University, your card will be included in a random drawing to be conducted in December. We are asking that you return the enclosed surveys in the self-addressed stamped envelope no later than November 17, 1997. If you win, a check will be sent to you immediately. Your card will then be destroyed to insure the confidentiality of responses. If you would like an abstract of the results of these surveys, please make a note on the card.

If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to call me at 515-294-5521 (SIM office) or 515-685-2551 (home). Please feel free to call collect. Thank you so much for your help and cooperation.

Most Sincerely,

Richard P. Manatt
Director, School Improvement Model Project and Professor, Educational Administration

Ann Curphey
SIM Program Manager

enclosures
APPENDIX E. LETTER TO IOWA SUPERINTENDENTS
October 15, 1997

Dear Superintendent of Schools:

For the past twenty years, The School Improvement Model (SIM) Project’s office at Iowa State University has assisted public schools, public school districts, and independent schools as they sought to restructure and reform. Recently, we have concluded that a new phenomenon, the charter movement for schools, needs to be further studied and examined in the context of the state of Iowa.

Iowa has been an innovative state working on school reform issues since 1989. Many states view charter schools as another type of reform. Charters can be approved at the state level in some states and at the local school board level in other states. At the present time, Iowa does not have any legislation supportive of charter schools; however, the concept was introduced through a policy study in 1994. There are now 16 states and the District of Columbia with charter legislation in place. During the 1996-97 school year, there were 480 charter schools in existence serving 105,127 students in this country. (The Center for Education Reform Charter School Statistics) These figures do not include Arizona’s 29 district-sponsored charter schools.

Ann Curphey, a doctoral student with the SIM Project, is seeking to build a database of Iowa school superintendents’ attitudes and opinions regarding this growing educational phenomenon and other areas of school reform.

Enclosed is a survey for your consideration. The survey is voluntary and all responses will be kept confidential. Survey results will be available only to the researcher and Richard P. Manatt. All results will be kept by the researcher in a locked file. Please take a few minutes of your time and give us your thoughts. Enclosed is a one dollar bill from Ms. Curphey to show her appreciation for your time. Please enjoy a cup of coffee and a donut. We are asking that you return the enclosed survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope no later than November 17, 1997. If you would like an abstract of the results of this survey, please make a note with your name and address on the enclosed card. Thank you for your help.

As former school administrators, Ann and I both realize how valuable your time is. Please direct any questions to Ann Curphey at 515-294-5521. Thank you.

Most Sincerely,

Richard P. Manatt
Director, School Improvement Model Project
and Professor, Educational Administration

Ann Curphey
SIM Program Manager

enclosures
APPENDIX F. LETTER TO PARENT PARTICIPANTS
October 15, 1997

Dear Parent:

You have received a short survey to help us gather information regarding attitudes and opinions about your experiences with charter schools and public schools. We are requesting your help providing information to the School Improvement Model Project’s Office at Iowa State University. Because we are a state with no legislation supporting charter schools, we are hoping to use the information that is shared to help Iowa get started and pursue charter legislation. Survey results will also be used as a part of Ann Curphey’s doctoral dissertation.

Please be assured that all surveys are anonymous and there will be no way any individual survey respondent can be identified. We have requested that your school’s director distribute this survey to forty parents of students in his/her school. Each survey has an envelope for you to seal upon completion of the survey before returning it to your school’s director, who will then forward all surveys to us.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call Ann Curphey at (515)294-5521. The survey is voluntary. Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Richard P. Manatt
Director, School Improvement Model Project
and Professor, Educational Administration

Ann Curphey
SIM Program Manager and Graduate Student

enclosure
October 15, 1997

Dear Staff Member:

You have received a short survey to help us gather information regarding attitudes and opinions about staff experiences in charter schools and in public schools. We are requesting your help providing information to the School Improvement Model Project’s Office at Iowa State University. Because we are a state with no legislation supporting charter schools, we are hoping to use the information that is shared to help Iowa get started and pursue charter legislation. Survey results will also be used as a part of Ann Curphey’s doctoral dissertation.

Please be assured that all surveys are anonymous and there will be no way any individual survey respondent can be identified. We have requested that your school’s director distribute this survey to each staff member in his/her school. Each survey has an envelope for you to seal upon completion of the survey before returning it to your school’s director, who will then forward all surveys to us.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call Ann Curphey at (515)294-5521. The survey is voluntary. Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Richard P. Manatt
Director, School Improvement Model Project
and Professor, Educational Administration

Ann Curphey
SIM Program Manager and Graduate Student

enclosure
APPENDIX H. SUPERINTENDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Please respond to the following survey items by either checking the most appropriate response or giving a short answer. Thank you.

"The fact is we're good, but we're not as good as we once were and we're not as good as we need to be to be worldwide competitive. If we don't wake up to the fact that quality education is an absolute necessity, we're going to put our state in a position of really going downhill."
- Marvin Pomerantz, chair of the Iowa Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century, quoted in a July 20, 1997, DES MOINES REGISTER article

1. Size of district in which you presently serve?
   - 1,000 or less
   - 1,001 - 2,000
   - 2,001 or more

2. Number of years in education?

3. Number of years in Iowa?

4. Amount of knowledge regarding the charter movement?
   - not much
   - some
   - very much

5. Charters are a viable option in school reform?
   - yes
   - no
   - not sure

6. With which of these reform efforts have you had experience?
   - Extended day
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Block scheduling
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Authentic assessment
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Constructivism
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Nontraditional teaching techniques
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - School-within-a-school
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - At risk program
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Shortened day
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Service credits
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Performance based grades
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Transition programs
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Opportunity to learn
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Assessment driven reform
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Curriculum alignment to national standards
     - not much
     - some
     - very much
   - Extended school year
     - not much
     - some
     - very much

7. In addition to the reform efforts listed above, what other efforts have you promoted in your district?

8. Please list one - two advantages of charter schools.

9. Are you supportive of creating charter schools?
   - yes
   - no
   - not sure

Why or why not?
10. Charter schools must identify achievement goals their students will reach. In order to stay open and be waived from regulations, they must demonstrate that students reach these goals.

With this freedom from regulations, do you think charter schools will be successful?

_____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

With this freedom from regulations, do you think public schools could be more successful?

_____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

11. Will competition with charter schools cause more innovation and change in public schools?

_____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

12. Do you agree that the following agencies/individuals should be allowed to sponsor charter schools?

State boards of education  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure
Local boards of education  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure
Universities  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure
Area Education Agencies  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure
Private persons (i.e., parents, teachers)  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

13. A district charter school must be approved by the local board of education and is begun by a district; therefore, all funds stay with the local district. A private charter school is approved at the state department level and all funds at a per pupil cost leave the local district and go to the private charter school. Would you have concerns regarding:

district charter schools  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

Why or why not?

14. Should individuals without a teacher’s license be allowed to teach in a charter school?

_____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

15. Should charter schools be allowed to hire only nonunion teachers/personnel?

_____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

16. Is it possible to really fix public schools?

_____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

17. How would you do it?

18. Do you have concerns regarding charter schools run by:

State boards of education  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure
Local boards of education  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure
Universities  _____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

19. Does Iowa need educational reform?

_____ yes  _____ no  _____ not sure

20. If you believe achievement is not adequate, what would you do?
APPENDIX I. PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Charter School Parent Survey  Please indicate the answer closest to your experiences with public schools and charter schools by checking the most appropriate response to each statement. This survey is designed to identify your satisfaction with your charter school versus the public school. If your child(ren) has(have) only attended a charter school, please check here ______ and leave the public school responses blank. Seal your survey in the attached envelope and return it to your school in one week. Thank you.

1 = Strongly Disagree  2 = Disagree  3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree  4 = Agree  5 = Strongly Agree

1. Sufficient opportunities for my involvement are provided and I am actively involved in my child’s education.
   Charter
   Public

2. I understand the school’s programs and operation and I am informed regarding school policies and procedures.
   Charter
   Public

3. My concerns are reflected in decisions affecting the school.
   Charter
   Public

4. My experience is that parent - teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate with me regularly regarding my children.
   Charter
   Public

5. My child’s progress reports are adequate and appropriate.
   Charter
   Public

6. I feel welcome.
   Charter
   Public

7. I respect the teachers.
   Charter
   Public

8. I am satisfied with our school.
   Charter
   Public

9. My child sees the relationship between studies and everyday life and is being prepared to deal with future issues and problems.
   Charter
   Public

10. Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning.
    Charter
    Public

11. School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are adequate to support teaching and learning.
    Charter
    Public

12. Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas.
    Charter
    Public
1 = Strongly Disagree  2 = Disagree  3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree  4 = Agree  5 = Strongly Agree

13. The school is helping my child understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as get along with others.

14. The school offers high quality educational programs and teachers have high expectations for my child.

15. Teachers give my child personal encouragement so my child is motivated to do his/her best.

16. Teachers are available before, after and during school hours to help my child.

17. I am satisfied with how my child is treated by teachers, counselors, and administrators.

18. My child gets satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal problems.

19. My child gets satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses he/she should take.

20. Children get encouragement and support to not drop out.

21. The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs.

22. Transportation services are adequate.

23. The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained.

24. My child feels safe at school.

25. Discipline policies are fair and consistently enforced.

26. Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and ethnic equity.

27. Please identify the main reason(s) for enrolling your child in a charter school.

28. Please identify the main reason(s) for not enrolling your child in your local public school.
APPENDIX J. STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE
Charter School Staff Survey  Please indicate the answer closest to your experiences with public schools and charter schools by checking the most appropriate response to each statement. This survey is designed to identify your satisfaction with your charter school versus the public school. If all your educational experience has been in a charter school, please check here ______ and leave the public school responses blank. Seal your survey in the attached envelope and return it to your school in one week. Thank you.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1. Sufficient opportunities for parent involvement are provided and parents are actively involved in their children's education.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2. Parents understand the school's programs and operation and are informed regarding school policies and procedures.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

3. My concerns are reflected in decisions affecting the school.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

4. My experience is that parent - teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate regularly with parents.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

5. Teacher preparation time is adequate and class sizes are appropriate.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

6. Parents feel welcome.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

7. Parents and community members respect the teachers.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

8. I am satisfied with my job and our school.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

9. Students see the relationship between studies and everyday life and are being prepared to deal with future issues and problems.
   Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

10. Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning.
    Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
    Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

11. School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are adequate to support teaching and learning.
    Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
    Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

12. Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas.
    Charter [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
    Public [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
158

1 = Strongly Disagree  2 = Disagree  3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree  4 = Agree  5 = Strongly Agree

13. We do a good job of helping students understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as get along with each other.

14. We offer high quality educational programs and teachers have high expectations for students.

15. Teachers give students personal encouragement so students are motivated to do their best.

16. Teachers are available before, after and during school hours to help students.

17. I am satisfied with how students are treated by teachers, counselors, and administrators.

18. Students get satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal problems.

19. Students get satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses they should take.

20. Students get encouragement and support to not drop out.

21. The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs.

22. Expenditures appear to be appropriately prioritized and funded.

23. The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained.

24. Students feel safe at school.

25. Discipline policies are fair and consistently enforced.

26. Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and ethnic equity.

27. Teaching responsibilities are equitable among staff.

28. Teachers' opinions are listened to and respected.

29. Please list the reason(s), if any, you left the public schools.
APPENDIX K. GENERAL PURPOSE NCS ANSWER SHEET
### General Purpose - NCS™ - Answer Sheet

See important marking instructions on side 2.

APPENDIX L. FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PARTICIPATING DIRECTORS
November 19, 1997

Dear Director:

Sometime shortly after October 15, 1997, you should have received a packet containing ten staff surveys and ten parent surveys and additional information on how to distribute the surveys. Prior to that date, you had indicated a willingness to provide information and help the School Improvement Model Project’s Office build a database of charter school elements. The surveys were to be returned to our office on November 17, 1997.

At the present time, we have received no returned surveys from your charter school. This is a reminder to please collect the surveys and return them to us in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope that was enclosed. Don’t forget to return the 3x5 card with your name and address. With the return of these items, your name will be entered in a lottery for $300.00. If you have recently returned the surveys, thank you in advance.

The survey results are important to us and will provide valuable information to the state of Iowa. Thank you for your cooperation with this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Ann Curphey at (515)294-5521.

Sincerely,

Richard P. Manatt
Director, School Improvement Model Project
and Professor, Educational Administration

Ann R. Curphey
SIM Program Manager and
Graduate Student
APPENDIX M. STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS
Table 32. Staff questionnaire results: Charter and public paired t-test (N=138)*

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<thead>
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<th>Item</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<td>Sufficient opportunities for parent involvement are provided and</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents are actively involved in their children’s education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents understand the school’s programs and operations and are</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informed regarding school policies and procedures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My concerns are reflected in decisions affecting the school.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience is that parent-teacher communication is promoted and</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers communicate regularly with parents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher preparation time is adequate and class sizes are</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents feel welcome.</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and community members respect the teachers.</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my job and our school.</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students see the relationship between studies and everyday life</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and are being prepared to deal with future issues and problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree.

*p < .05.
Table 32. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas.</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do a good job of helping students understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as get along with each other.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We offer high quality educational programs and teachers have high expectations for students.</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers give students personal encouragement so students are motivated to do their best.</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available before, after, and during school hours to help students.</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with how students are treated by teachers, counselors, and administrators.</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal problems.</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses they should take.</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get encouragement and support to not drop out.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs.</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures appear to be appropriately prioritized and funded.</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe at school.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline policies are fair and consistently enforced.</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 32. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic equity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching responsibilities are equitable among staff.</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' opinions are listened to and respected.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX N. PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS
Table 33. Parent questionnaire results: Charter and public paired t-test (N=108)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient opportunities for my involvement are provided and I am actively involved in my child’s education.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the school’s programs and operation and I am informed regarding school policies and procedures.</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My concerns are reflected in decisions affecting the school.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience is that parent-teacher communication is promoted and teachers communicate with me regularly regarding my children.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child’s progress reports are adequate and appropriate.</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel welcome.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the teachers.</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with our school.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child sees the relationship between studies and everyday life and is being prepared to deal with future issues and problems.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology is adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities and teaching supplies and materials are adequate to support teaching and learning.</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

*p < .05.
Table 33. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our school is doing a good job teaching all subject areas.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is helping my child understand moral and ethical responsibilities, as well as get along with others.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school offers high quality educational programs and teachers have high expectations for my child.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers give my child personal encouragement so my child is motivated to do his/her best.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available before, after, and during school hours to help my child.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with how my child is treated by teachers, counselors, and administrators.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child gets satisfactory help from school staff in handling personal problems.</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child gets satisfactory help from school staff in planning the courses he/she should take.</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children get encouragement and support to not drop out.</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school appropriately addresses and deals with concerns of children with special needs.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation services are adequate.</td>
<td>-.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is clean and pleasant and well maintained.</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child feels safe at school.</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline policies are fair and consistently enforced.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 33. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students, teachers, and administrators are sensitive to racial and ethnic equity.</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX O. FREQUENCIES—SUPERINTENDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE
Table 34. Frequencies—Superintendents questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount of knowledge regarding the charter movement?</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend: Not Much, Some, Very Much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charters are a viable option in school reform?</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, No, Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With which of these reform efforts have you had experience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended day</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block scheduling</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic assessment</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nontraditional teaching techniques</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-within-a-school</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At risk program</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortened day</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service credits</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance based grades</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition programs</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to learn</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment driven reform</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum alignment to national standards</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended school year</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Much, Some, Very Much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you supportive of creating charter schools?</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, No, Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 34. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charter schools must identify achievement goals their students will reach. In order to stay open and be waived from regulations, they must demonstrate that students reach these goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With this freedom from regulations, do you think charter schools will be successful?</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With this freedom from regulations, do you think public schools could be more successful?</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will competition with charter schools cause more innovation and change in public schools?</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that the following agencies/individuals should be allowed to sponsor charter schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State boards of education</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local boards of education</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Education Agencies</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private persons (i.e., parents, teachers)</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A district charter school must be approved by the local board of education and is begun by a district; therefore, all funds stay with the local district. A private charter school is approved at the state department level and all funds at a per pupil cost leave the local district and go to the private charter school. Would you have concerns regarding:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District charter schools</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should individuals without a teacher’s license be allowed to teach in a charter school?</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should charter schools be allowed to hire only nonunion teachers/personnel?</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 34. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it possible to really fix public schools?</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have concerns regarding charter schools run by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State boards of education</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local boards of education</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Iowa need educational reform?</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, No, Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge several people who were instrumental in helping me successfully complete my study. Most certainly, I wish to thank my major professor, Richard Manatt, for his inspiration, support, counsel, and friendship throughout this project. He has truly been a great mentor to me and I have great respect for him. I would also like to extend sincere appreciation to POS committee members Shirley Stow, William Poston, Mary Strong, and Russell Mullen. They have all taught me so very much in many ways.

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Finally, but certainly not least, I wish to give praise and glory to Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, my Yahweh. I had the privilege of knowing Christ as my personal Savior at age nineteen. Since that time, I have seen His majesty in my life in many ways.

Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends
Of the earth does not become weary or tired.
His understanding is inscrutable.
He gives strength to the weary,
And to him who lacks might He increases power.
Though youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly, 
Yet those who wait for the Lord 
Will gain new strength; 
They will mount up with wings like eagles, 
They will run and not get tired, 
They will walk and not become weary. 

Isaiah 40:28-31

What an honor to have this life and have so many opportunities in how we choose to live it!